

Oman's Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi in a Phone Talk With His Iranian Counterpart Muhammad Javad Zarif Condemned the Assassination of Top Iranian Scientist

IRAN NEWS

Iranian Consul General in Sulaimaniyah Announced Iran's Readiness to Cooperate With the Kurdistan Region in the Fields of Agricultural and Water Projects, Especially Dam Construction Projects

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Health Minister Says COVID-19 Death Toll Falling

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Health, Treatment and Medical Education Saeed Namaki said after about one month, coronavirus daily death toll reached to below 400 cases for the second consecutive day.

Speaking in an online meeting, Namaki said while international organizations had predicted that COVID19 death toll will reach 800-1000 cases per day in Iran, it decreased thanks to cooperation of and patience of people, officials and organizations like Basij, Iranian Red Crescent Society, NGOs and Interior Ministry.

He urged people not to forget medical staff efforts and to take healthcare issues seriously.

Meanwhile Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said on Sunday that some 389 more Iranians have died from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) over the past 24 hours bringing the total deaths to 47,874. Sima Sadat Lari said that with the 389 new victims, the country's total COVID-19 deaths mounted to 47,874.

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Tehran Cautions OIC Against Normalization Of Israel Ties

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - A ranking Iranian diplomat deplored as a treason against Muslims the move by certain members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to normalize relations with the Israeli regime.

Iranian Foreign Ministry Director General for International Peace and Security Reza Najafi addressed the 47th session of the OIC's Council of Foreign Ministers in Niger's capital, Niamey, on Saturday.

Najafi expressed serious concerns about a decision by certain OIC countries to forge formal diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv, saying, "Any interaction with the fake and illegal Zionist regime, whose life involves 60 years of crime, murder, torture and displacement of thousands of Palestinians, is considered a betrayal of Muslims and a violation of the fundamental principles of the OIC and will deal a serious blow to the unity of the organization's member states and the Muslim Ummah."

"A few members of the organization betrayed the Muslim Ummah by revealing their secret relations with the Zionist regime," Press TV quoted him as saying.

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Assassinations, Sanctions Both Seek to Prevent Iran From Progress



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Head of the High Council for Human rights has said that the aim of the assassination of the Iranian elites and sanctions implemented against Iranians, is to prevent the Iranian nation from progress.

In an interview with Iran Press, Ali Baqeri Kani said: "The experience of the past four decades has shown that the pressures have imposed costs on Iranian people, but it cannot stop people from progressing."

Ali Baqeri-Kani said that assassination and sanctions are two sides of the same coin against the Iranian people, which began during the Obama administration.

Baqeri-Kani referred to the martyrdom of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, head of the Research and Innovation Organization of the Ministry of Defense, adding that this crime is a continuation of Trump's policy of maximum pressure, constituting the crippling pressure of the Obama's era that was imposed on the Iranian nation.

The Judiciary official said that this policy has two prongs; one is the policy of sanctions imposed during the Obama's era and targeted various areas related to the basic needs of the Iranian people, and that American officials even extended it to the medical equipment and medicine.

He added: "Of course that Western governments have committed crimes in other areas as well. When Obama was in the office, five Iranian nuclear scientists were assassinated."

Baqeri-Kani said: "Of course, the assassination of Martyr Fakhrizadeh is exactly in the same direction, both assassination and sanctions to prevent the progress of the Iranian nation."

"Sanctions impose pressure on Iran, but Iran does not stop progressing, and these crimes increase national awareness," Baqeri-Kani noted.

The high ranking official urged the world to condemn the assassination of Martyr Mohsen Fakhrizadeh strongly and that these crimes should not go unanswered.

Baqeri Kani added that a rapporteur for the UN Human Rights Council prepared a report on the assassination of Martyr Qassem Soleimani and blamed the Americans, but unfortunately, he was forced to resign. Westerners behave in such a way that no dissenting voice is raised.

"We will correspond with UN officials and related institutions and ask them to condemn the assassination of Martyr Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, but the Westerners are acting in their own interests. For the past 12 years, the Zionists assassinated our nuclear scientists, and they did not condemn," the official added.

He said: "The actions of the Westerners, which are paving the ground for the assassination, should be costly for them." "The silence of international authorities and the adoption of the double standard policy by international authorities means legitimizing terrorism," he said.

Baqeri Kani added that the assassination was a terrorist act. Still, the West is reluctant to condemn such an act, and legitimizing terrorism is no less a crime than terrorism, and this is a fact, and terrorism is one of the tools of the US foreign policy.

Majlis to Finalize Halt of Additional Protocol Implementation

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iranian lawmakers reviewed on Sunday an urgent counteractive plan that includes the halt of the implementation of the Additional Protocol to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

According to Abolfazl Aboutorabi, a senior member of the Parliament, lawmakers agreed to turn an urgent strategic motion, which aims to counteract unilateral sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic by Western countries, topped by the United States, to a double-urgency motion.

Out of 246 lawmakers present at today's session, 232 voted in favor of the new move.

"It was decided to finalize and put into force the 'strategic action plan', which includes stopping the implementation of the Additional Protocol [to NPT]," he added.

Aboutorabi noted that the Parliament is also addressing the details of the martyrdom of top Iranian physicist, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, who was assassinated in Absard, Damavand County, Tehran province, on Friday.

The lawmakers had given green light to the urgent strategic motion in early November, but the plan has turned into a double-urgency due to the assassination of the Iranian nuclear scientist. The plan obliges the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) to produce at least 120 kg of 20-percent enriched uranium annually and store it inside the country within two months after the adoption of the law. According to the motion, the AEOI should start the installation, gas injection, enrichment, and storage of nuclear materials up to an appropriate enrichment degree within a period of three months using at least 1,000 IR-2m centrifuges.

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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



21st Century, Living With State Terrorism

The operation for assassination of Brigadier General Dr. Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, as the follow-up of other terrors against scientists who have been active in the nuclear or defensive sciences, is per se considered a new and strange message on the threshold of 2021. Although in principle one cannot disregard terrorism in these years in the world without pointing to the evils becoming common.

In the past century, if someone was assassinated, it was considered as a filthy, inhuman and unjust act in the views of the public in the world but today, governments themselves are founders and planners of measures, getting man's understanding away from the filths of their acts. In the daytime and with the money of a certain current some people are organized to deprive people or even a nation of their security and to shed blood for their own goals (Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi Arabian dissident, is an example).

If we review the past years literature, we meet this point that over hundreds of books and thousands of articles have been written and complied regarding denouncement of the act of assassination and all people in the world once upon a time used to consider this act as inhuman one.

Today they kill someone who is a scientist, university teacher and instructor of science of technology in Iran out of jealousy and resentment, and the Secretary General of the so-called United Nations is not even ready to condemn this abominable act. In his opinion, governments are entitled to meet their goals through killing of innocent people.

Today's world literature calls Hezbollah community or Palestinians as terrorists but it does translate the killing of an innocent people who merely serves science and his people as terrorism. But we believe one cannot consider as terrorist those who (like Palestinians) fight for liberation of their occupied lands and their most basic rights.

Support of popular struggle against foreign occupiers and domination of colonialism as well as the right for military fight and self-defense against the occupiers have been approved and recognized in the UN documents and charters but the current UN officials have disregarded them especially when they rely on their own personal interests regarding to implementation of those charters. Some UN General Assembly resolutions from 1972 to 1991 have emphasized this issue. Despite this fact, since 1994 and in all of approvals of the UN, the liberation movements have not been excluded from the terrorist activities, and since 1996 there have been some theories that disregarding this distinction means it is not an issue for the UN. Today the world public conscience never accepts the defense of the people displaced from their lands to be called terrorist act. Of course, supposing that the acts of these groups are considered a manly act, they should also be conducted like military men and they should be committed to the international human rights and humanitarian rights. For example, they should not hurt civilian and children for their acts, or the military measures against them should be proportionate to the goals.

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Zarif Urges Europe to Abandon Double Standards On State Terrorism

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's foreign minister has called on the international community, especially the European Union, to give up their double standards and condemn the assassination of top Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

In a tweet addressing German-speaking people, Mohammad Javad Zarif said there are traces of Tel Aviv's involvement in the crime.

"Terrorists assassinated an eminent Iranian scientist," he tweeted.

"Such a cowardly act which has serious signs of Israel's involvement indicates the bellicosity of its perpetrators out of desperation," he added.

He called on European states to denounce the assassination, which he dismissed as an act of "state terrorism."



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President Condoles on Passing of Senior Politician

TEHRAN (MNA) – President Hassan Rouhani has offered condolences on the passing of senior Iranian cleric and politician, Hojjatoleslam Seyyed Mohammad-Ali Shahidi.

In a message on Sunday, Rouhani expressed commiseration over the passing of Shahidi, a former vice president and head of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs Foundation, to Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the seminaries, his honorable family of and his pupils.

“This compassionate and devoted cleric, throughout his life with his blessings and revolutionary efforts, served in the different sectors, including the Parliament and Armed Forces,” Rouhani said.

His selfless struggles in the path of development will undoubtedly remain in the memory of the grateful people of Iran, the president added.

Enemies Not to Regret Except With a Strong Response

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Referring to the assassination of Iranian top scientist Fakhrizadeh, Majlis Speaker said that the enemies of Iran will not regret it, except with a strong response.

“The enemies of the Iranian people, once again by using the methods of assassination as one of the most inhumane behaviors, showed that they were afraid of the increase of Iran’s power and chose to remove our scientists to confront the nation,” said Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf in an open session of the Parliament on Sunday.

“The people of Iran have been facing such losses for more than four decades and experience has proven that they have been able to continue the path of their martyrs stronger than before,” he added.

He highlighted, “In this regard, in addition to revenge against the perpetrators and commanders of the assassination of Martyr Fakhrizadeh, it is the duty of all relevant forces, organizations and institutions to turn the threat of this tragic loss into an



opportunity to strengthen various economic, security, defense and nuclear fields.”

“The criminal enemy will not regret (its moves) unless there is a strong reaction (from Iran) that would both create deterrence against the enemy’s possible future mistakes and take revenge on them for this crime,” the speaker said of assassination of Fakhrizadeh.

Qalibaf further said that martyrdom of Fakhrizadeh will open a new window for Iran’s progress and will “make the rude terrorists and their sponsors regret (what they did).”

He also called on Iranian officials to refrain from sending any signal of weakness or trust in the US political system.

U.S., Israel Angered by Martyred Iranian Scientist’s Achievements

TEHRAN (FNA) - Judiciary Chief Seyed Ebrahim Raisi strongly condemned the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientist in a Friday terrorist attack near Tehran, and said that martyr Mohsen Fakhrizadeh’s achievements had made the Washington and Tel Aviv regimes furious.

“U.S. and Zionists believe that science and technology should be monopolized, but Martyr Fakhrizadeh was one of the people who opposed their belief,” Raisi said.

Iran’s judiciary chief, however, underlined that Iran’s scientific movement will not be stopped by assassinating the country’s top scientists.

FM Urges Int’l Community to Condemn State Terrorism

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran’s foreign minister has called on the international community to condemn state terrorism and build a consensus against tension and adventurism in the region.

In a tweet to Chinese people, Mohammad Javad Zarif made the comment on the heels of the assassination of top Iranian nuclear and missile scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

“Terrorists assassinated yet another eminent Iranian scientist,” read the tweet.

“These cowardly assassinations are a flagrant breach

of international law, moral principles and humanity,” said the top diplomat.

“It falls upon the international community to confront such acts,” he said.

“Iran is at the forefront of the war on terrorism in order to maintain peace and stability in the region and in the world.

He urged the world community to denounce terrorism and tackle tensions in the region.

Fakhrizadeh was assassinated by terrorists in an area to the east of Tehran on November 27, 2020.

Israeli Infiltration in Iran Must Be Blocked

TEHRAN (IFP) - A senior Iranian military commander says every effort should be made to block the Israeli regime’s infiltration.

Brigadier General Esmail Kosari made the comment in the wake of the assassination of eminent Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

“As for Israel’s intelligence and operational infiltration into Iran, we cannot say that such a thing does not exist,” said Kosari, a top general of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC).

He said Leader of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khameni has stressed time and again in recent years that the enemy’s infiltration must be stopped.

“Much of the infiltration has been blocked, and individuals involved have been arrested by security agencies,” he added.

He said there are some “unwise” people who fall for the enemy’s money and become their agents.

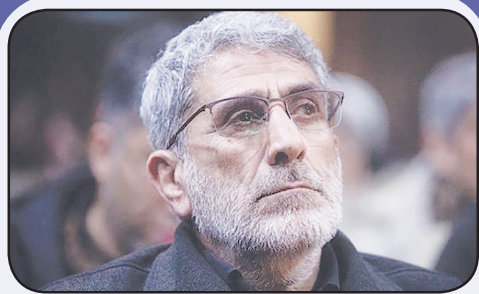
“However, the remaining infiltrators will be arrested thanks to efforts by intelligence forces,” he said.

Fakhrizadeh was assassinated by terrorists in an area to the east of Tehran on November 27, 2020.

Many Iranian authorities say there is ample evidence implicating the Israeli regime’s role in the killing.



IRGC-Quds Force to Work Closely to Avenge Scientist’s Killing



TEHRAN (IFP) - A senior military commander says Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) will work in tandem with all other forces to take vengeance upon those behind the assassination of Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

Brigadier General Esmail Qa’ani, the commander of the IRGC’s Quds Force and a successor of the late Qassem Soleimani, made the announcement in a message following the act of terror that targeted the eminent scientific figure, Fakhrizadeh.

“We will ally ourselves with all other forces defending Islamic Iran to take revenge on terrorists and their masters for the killing of this dear martyr (Mohsen Fakhrizadeh) and all other martyrs,” the message read.

The top general added such terrorist acts will not halt Iran’s development, and will only give fresh impetus to the nation’s scientific progress.

He also expressed condolences to all Iranians, especially Fakhrizadeh’s bereaved family, on the tragic incident.

NDF Earmarks \$238m to Stabilize Stock Market

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran’s National Development Fund (NDF) has paid 10 trillion rials (about \$238.09 million) for the stabilization of the country’s stock exchange market, the board chairman of the Capital Market Stabilization Fund told IRNA on Sunday.

Mohammad-Ebrahim Agha-Babaei said that 10 trillion rials was transferred from the National Development Fund to the Capital Market Stabilization Fund on Thursday, November 26.

It was previously announced that one percent of the National Development Fund’s reserves was supposed to be transferred to the Capital Market Stabilization Fund, to stabilize the stock market, and bring growth back to this market.

The agreement that had been raised for some time on the issue of depositing some reserves of the National Development Fund in the Capital Market Stabilization Fund was accompanied by some problems and ambiguities on the part of the National Development Fund, which led to delays in its implementation, Agha-Babaei noted.

He said that the National Development Fund was set to allocate resources to the Capital Market Stabilization Fund in several sections, adding that the resources allocated to the Capital Market Stabilization Fund are a kind of facility that is repaid annually at an interest rate of 12 percent.

In the first part, the National Development Fund has deposited 10 trillion rials with the Capital Market Stabilization Fund at an interest rate of 12 percent for a period of five years, which can be extended, he added.

Garment Production up 70%

TEHRAN (MNA) - Production of garments in Iran increased 70 percent during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20), compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to the vice-chairman of Iran Textile Exporters and Manufacturers Association (ITEMA).

Majid Nami said the ban on foreign brands import and the closure of borders due to the spread of the coronavirus and the reduction of smuggled garments have contributed to this success.

Since the beginning of this year, garment production has fluctuated, but in general, the production situation has been satisfactory for the producers, he stated.

Today, the share of Iranian brands in the market has increased significantly compared to the last year, Nami underscored.

According to the last data released by the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Iranian garment manufacturers exported

\$35.19 million worth of clothing items to 29 foreign destinations in the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-August 21).

“Iran exported 4,527 tons of clothing to 29 countries in the mentioned period, while last year the destination countries for the Iranian clothing were only Afghanistan, Russia, Iraq, and Yemen,” Ruhollah Latifi has announced.

According to Latifi, Iranian garments are exported to Iraq, Kuwait, Australia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Germany, Korea, Japan, UAE, UK, Venezuela, Ivory Coast, Italy, Turkey, Canada, Qatar, Oman, Nigeria, Switzerland, Pakistan, Georgia, Spain, and Denmark.

As reported, during this period less than 2.5 tons of the said products worth \$514,441 were imported into the country which were mostly entered the country by passengers or via mail since the import of clothing is banned.

UN Urged to Help Identifying Culprits Behind Assassination of Scientist

TEHRAN (FNA) - The Islamic Republic of Iran’s Human Rights Headquarters in a statement condemned assassination of the country’s nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, and called on the UN to cooperate with Tehran in identifying and prosecuting the criminals who have conducted the terrorist attack.

“The Human Rights Headquarters calls on the

UN Secretary-General, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the President of the Human Rights Council, as well as the western governments, to expeditiously and explicitly condemn the assassination of martyred scientist Fakhrizadeh without any reservation,” the statement said on Sunday.

It also asked them to “use all mechanisms for

Iran to Decide Where to Respond to Israeli Assassination of Fakhrizadeh

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – It has become quite clear to Iran that the Zionist regime was behind the assassination of top Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, a ranking military commander said, adding that it will be the Islamic Republic to define the scene for retaliation.

It is “absolutely clear” to Iran that the Zionist regime assassinated Fakhrizadeh, President of the Supreme National Defense University of Iran Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi said in a televised interview on Saturday night.

“They (Israel) made trouble for us. The Islamic Republic will respond in a way and on a ground defined by itself,” the general warned.

“The Zionist regime must remain in a constant state of convulsion. What is important is that the Zionist regime is inside a glass house,” he added. With the green light given by the U.S., the Zionist regime carried out the assassination plot with the help of internal mercenaries, Vahidi added.

He further urged a revision of Iran’s interaction with the International Atomic Energy Agency, saying it will be meaningless for Iran to remain in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) if the country’s nuclear sites and scientists are to be targeted.

Zimbabwe Calls for Iranian Contribution to Fight Terrorism

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Zimbabwean Vic-President Kembo Mohadi called for promotion of political and economic relations with Iran and expansion of international cooperation to combat the sinister phenomenon of terrorism.

Mohadi made the remarks in a meeting with Iran’s Ambassador to Harare Abbas Navazani.

In the meeting, the Iranian ambassador stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation in the economic fields.

Navazani also appreciated Zimbabwe for its support against anti-Iran human rights resolutions.

Further, the two sides stressed the need to boost economic cooperation despite the US sanctions. The areas of economic cooperation include industry, agriculture and health.

Netanyahu Must Await Iran Response for Fakhrizadeh Terror

TEHRAN (MNA) – A member of the Expediency Council said that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu must await the harsh response of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the assassination of prominent nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

Hojjatoleslam Gholamreza Mesbahi Moghadam made the remarks in an interview with Mehr News Agency on Sun. and added that the assassination of the top Iranian scientist will not incur any hurdle on Iran’s missile and nuclear program.

Although the Islamic Republic of Iran has lost the most prominent nuclear scientists, other Iranian peers could continue the way taken by martyred scientists in this field, he highlighted.

Member of Expediency Council reiterated that assassination of ‘Fakhrizadeh’ will cost dearly for Zionists, so that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu must wait for Iran’s harsh punishment for this terrorist attack.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:53
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:11
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:27
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:55

121. They (his dupes) will have their dwelling in Hell, and from it they will find no way of escape.
122. But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, we shall soon admit them to gardens, with rivers flowing beneath, to dwell therein for ever. Allah's promise is the truth, and whose word can be truer than Allah's?
Surah 4. Women (121 - 122)

No Possibility To Develop Trade With Turkey

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce Mehrdad Saadat Dehghan criticized Turkey's inspection process at the border checkpoints which harms the goods export and transit to or through this country.

Speaking to ILNA, Saadat Dehghan said it is Turkey Customs Office's right to inspect the cargoes which are imported into Turkey or transited through this country, adding that but this inspection should not cause any damage on the goods as sometimes the goods are damaged and forced to be returned to the country.

He said in recent weeks there have been some problems with Turkish Customs Office and the related Turkish bodies were informed but it was disregarded. He begged the Iran-Turkey Joint Commission, Iran Customs Administration and Iran Trade Promotion Organization to take this issue seriously and resolve it.

He added that trucks carrying Iranian goods have sometimes to wait up to 70 days at Turkish Customs due to illogical reasons.

Saadat Dehghan added that sometimes truck carrying engine oil which just is being transited via Turkey but is stopped at Turkish border for long time while there is no legal problem for its transit. He warned that with current condition and long delay for release of the trucks, Iranian goods cannot be taken to their destinations on time and the exporters do not afford to pay the costs of the long delay.

He added that sometimes Iranian goods are damaged at the border and they are returned to the country and they are not even in a condition to be re-exported.

He reiterated that with the current condition, exports to Turkey become meaningless and all are recommended to forget exporting to Turkey because they will suffer



losses, emphasizing that with the current attitude of Turkey, there is no possibility to develop trade with this country.

On the current domestic problems, Saadat Dehghan said that sanctions, forex problems and transportation are of the other woes affecting the trade with Turkey and above all Turkey's behavior for solving these problems has caused exports to Turkey to lose its meaning.

He further said that imports from Turkey have also faced problems and transited cargos via Turkey face domestic restrictions which make traders lose interests for exports to Iran, and the truth is that Turkish traders cannot export to Iran.

Saadat Dehghan noted that in the time when borders were closed due to the Coronavirus pandemic, Iran's exports to Turkey had declined by 90 percent but after opening of the borders it improved and again recent problems have created hurdle for Iran's exports.

According to the latest report released by Turkish Statistical Institute, Iran's trade with Turkey stood at \$2.28 billion during the first three quarters of 2020 (January-September) to register a decrease of 59.76% compared with the corresponding period of 2019.

Iran exported \$782.3 million worth of goods to Turkey during the period to register a 78.3% year-on-year drop. Imports from Iran's neighboring country stood at \$1.5 billion, down 27.3% YOY.

Monthly trade between Iran and Turkey fell to under \$300 million in the ninth month of the year, mostly due to a fall in Iran's exports to the neighboring country.

Iran Elected as Member of IPHRC

TEHRAN (IP) - During the 47th meeting of foreign ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Niamey, Niger, Iran's representative was elected as a member of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC).

Hossein Rezvani was elected for a four-year term (2021-2024) with the highest votes among the other candidates for membership in this commission from the 18 Asian member states.

Bangladesh and Uzbekistan were the other candidates for the commission, which failed to win more votes.

Iran's representative was elected to the commission following diplomatic efforts and extensive consultations before the meeting by the General Directorate of Human Rights and Women of the Foreign Ministry, IRNA reported.

The Independent and Permanent Commission of Human Rights of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation is an independent expert body of the organization with advisory capacity, whose existence was approved in 2011 during the 11th Summit of the Heads of Islamic Countries and started work in 2017.

The commission is based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Iran, Qatar to Establish Joint Trade Committee

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Farzad Piltan, the director-general of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO)'s Office of Arabian and African Countries, declared that the decision was made during the two countries' seventh Joint Economic Committee meeting that took place in Isfahan in the current month.

Both sides held professional talks in this regard through video conference in the first 15 days of this month in the form of numerous working groups under the responsibility of the Iranian Energy Ministry and the Ministry of Industry and Trade of Qatar, according to Piltan.

The official stated that, both sides also settled on supporting the activities of the two countries' private sectors, exchanging trade delegations; taking a part in each other's exhibitions, and appointing joint trade advisers between the two countries, also forming the joint trade committee.

504,000 Tons of Commodities Traded on IME

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) played host to trade of 504,759 tons of commodities worth more than 47,000 billion rials last week.

According to a report by the IME's international affairs and PR the IME experienced a 10% growth in trading volume within last week.

The mineral and industrial trading floor saw trade of 65,574 tons of commodities with a trading value of 11,163 billion rials. Commodities sold here included 61,954 tons of steel, 400 tons aluminum, 3,100 tons of copper, 120 tons of molybdenum and 5 kg of gold bars.

The IME's domestic and export pits of the oil and petrochemical trading floor of the IME traded 427,953 tons of commodities worth 36,262 billion rials altogether. Statistics reveal that 214,500 tons of vacuum bottom, 110,832 tons of bitumen, 51,647 tons of polymeric products, 24,307 tons of chemicals, 30,000 tons of lube cut, 1,355 tons of insulation, 2,441 tons of base oil, 150 tons of argon and 2,720 tons of sulfur were sold on its floor.

Based on this report, the exchange experienced trade of 1,232 tons of various commodities on its side market.

Tehran, Ashgabat Keen to Expand Trade Ties



MASHHAD (IRNA) - Iranian ambassador to Turkmenistan Gholam-Abbas Arbab-Khales said on Sunday that Iranians are highly willing to expand trade relations with Ashgabat.

Arbab-Khales added that Iran and Turkmenistan traders and officials are making many efforts for preserving and even boosting bilateral trade exchange despite many restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic is an indication of their willingness in this regard.

Recently, within the framework of economic diplomacy of Iranian Embassy in Ashgabat, we held talks with the chairman of the Union of Entrepreneurs and Industrialists of Turkmenistan, on the fields of bilateral cooperation.

The Union of Entrepreneurs and Industrialists of Turkmenistan is a large economic organization that manages about 69 % of its industrial, entrepreneurship and private sector activities and aims to regulate the country's productive economy since 2008, he continued.

Iranian ambassador to Turkmenistan said that in the meeting with the chairman of the Union of Entrepreneurs and Industrialists of Turkmenistan, various spheres of mutual cooperation with Iran in the production and entrepreneurship sectors as well as commercial and industrial activity through identification of union capacity and economic industrial societies have been redefined and expanded.

According to media, Iran and Turkmenistan have decided to increase the total value of their economic exchanges from the existing \$3.7 billion to \$60 billion in a ten-year period.

Iran plans to turn Sarakhs into a special economic zone, which amounts to a historic opportunity for absorbing massive investments as well as the promotion of cooperation between the two countries.

Iran Registers Monthly Positive Trade Balance

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Spokesman of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced that Iran could manage to register a positive trade balance in the preceding Iranian calendar month of Aban (ended on November 22).

According to the spokesman of the IRICA, the foreign trade in the said month stood at \$6.3 billion, of which the share of exports was more than \$3.21 billion and that of imports was above 3.092 billion.

Accordingly, a positive trade balance of \$118 million was registered, Rouhollah Latifi said.

In this month, the country's exports in terms of weight were above 10.24 million tons and imports surpassed



2.54 million tons. The exports volume in terms of weight is four times the weight of the country's exports in the same month last year.

As he added, the total exports of Iran's exports in the first eight months of this year (March 21-November 22) were 75.821 million tons at the value of \$21.44 billion.

Iraq, China, the UAE, Turkey, and Afghanistan, according to Latifi, have been the major destinations for Iranian goods in the said eight months.

The named countries imported 57.29 million tons of Iranian goods worth \$16.5 billion in this time span, the Iranian official added.

Continuous Exports of Mining Knowledge-Based Companies

TEHRAN (MNA) - According to the latest statistics, 300 knowledge-based companies have continuous exports, most of which are in the field of mining industries.

According to the Deputy Head of the Office of International Business Development, Masoud Hafezi, even Iranian IT companies are continuing exports of services and products despite the pandemic.

Products and derivatives of companies active in mining, chemical and polymer industries, pharmaceuticals, electronics, and advanced machinery industries have the biggest share in export statistics of Iran, he added.

Russia, Turkey, India, China, Iraq, and other regional companies are the main customers of the Iranian knowledge-based companies.

As Hafezi added, 23 export brokers have been established in 18 foreign countries with the aim of developing the exports of knowledge-based companies to such destinations.

There are 3 export brokers in Turkey and Azerbaijan, 2 in Russia, 2 export brokers in China, 2 export brokers in Indonesia, and others are in Afghanistan, Kenya, Malaysia, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Oman, India, Kurdistan Region, Uzbekistan, Belarus, and the UK, he added.

Over 4,700 Works to Attend Kish Mowj Int'l Film Fest

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Secretary of Kish Mowj International Film Festival said that over 4,775 works from Iran and 122 other countries; namely, US, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Japan, Canada, France, China, India, Russia, UAE, Portugal, Greece, Brazil, UK, France, Africa, Lebanon and Belgium registered for the event.

According to official website of the event, it is held in two sections of Travel and Tourism and Sea.

Ebrahim Hesari said that some 468 films, including 334 drama and 134 documentaries, have been registered in national category.

He noted that secretariat have so far received 4,066 foreign works and 241 screenplays.

The 4th Kish Mowj International Film Festival will be held on February 16-19, 2021 in Kish Island.

Iran Export Value of Steel Products Tops \$1.5b

TEHRAN (MNA) - The export value of steel products of the country exceeded \$1.5 billion in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (from March 21 to Oct. 22).

The statistics of Iran's foreign trade showed that 4,375,851 tons of steel products, valued at \$1.590 billion, were exported from the country from March 21 to Oct. 22, so that billet and bloom accounted for 76.8 percent of total steel exports share.

Based on the statistics of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the country's export value of steel products registered a 37 percent decline as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

Accordingly, Islamic Republic of Iran exported 10.5 million tons of steel products and ingot in the last Iranian calendar year (ended March 20, 2020).

In the same direction, the country imported 633,665 tons of steel products in the first seven months of the current year, showing a 51 percent hike as compared to the same period of last year.

Meanwhile, 3,191,000 tons of steel ingot were exported in seven months of current year.

The Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA) stated that 2,451,000 tons of billet and bloom as well as 740,000 tons of slab were exported from the country from March 21 to Oct. 22.



Turkey's Daily Coronavirus Death Toll Hits Record

ISTANBUL (Reuters) - Turkey's daily COVID-19 death toll hit a record high for a sixth consecutive day on Saturday, with 182 fatalities in the last 24 hours, data from the Health Ministry showed.

Turkey also recorded a new high of 30,103 coronavirus infections in the space of 24 hours, including asymptomatic ones. For four months, Turkey only reported symptomatic cases, but since Wednesday it has reported all cases.



Coronavirus Deaths Hit New Daily Record in Greece

ATHENS (Reuters) - Greece reported 121 coronavirus-related deaths on Saturday, a daily record, with hospitals in the north of the country under pressure as intensive care beds fill up with COVID-19 patients.

Health authorities reported 1,747 COVID-19 cases on Saturday, bringing the total since the first case was detected in February to 103,034. The death toll stands at 2,223.

"This year's Christmas will be very different," Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who visited front line workers in northern Greece on Saturday, told a local radio station.



Defiant Protesters Hit Streets in South Iraq



NASIRIYAH (AFP) - Anti-government protesters defied lockdowns and the threat of violence to demonstrate on Saturday in several Iraqi cities, with new clashes with security forces claiming the life of one protester.

Tensions were high in several Iraqi cities, a day after clashes between the dwindling members of the October 2019 anti-government protest movement and supporters of populist Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr.

Sadr had called on his followers to hit the streets in a show of force on Friday, prompting tens of thousands to turn out in the capital Baghdad and other cities.

In the southern hotspot of Nasiriyah, anti-government activists accused the Sadrist of shooting at them and torching their tents in their main gathering place of Habboubi Square late Friday.

Clashes continued into the night, with medics reporting a total of seven dead by Saturday morning, five of them from bullet wounds, and at least 60 wounded.

Nasiriyah was a major hub for the protest movement that erupted last year against a government seen by demonstrators as corrupt.

Violence also broke out on Saturday night in the southern city of Kut, where a police source told AFP on condition of anonymity that a protester was killed in skirmishes with security forces.

Authorities in Kut had imposed new restrictions on movement at dawn on Saturday and fired tear gas at anti-government demonstrators in an effort to clear out their camp.

The fresh violence has coincided with the one-year anniversary of one of the bloodiest incidents of the 2019 anti-government uprising. On November 28 last year, more than three dozen people died in protest-related violence at Nasiriyah's Zeitun (Olive) Bridge.

The deaths sparked outrage across Iraq and prompted the resignation of then-prime minister Adel Abdel Mahdi.

His successor, Mustafa al-Kadhemi, has sought to reach out to protesters and set June 2021 as a date for early elections -- a major demand of the youth-dominated movement.

But in Nasiriyah on Saturday, demonstrators were just as enraged at him as they were at his predecessor a year ago.

Despite a curfew imposed in the city since Friday night, outraged protesters gathered at Habboubi Square starting early on Saturday, their numbers swelling throughout the day.

Under an early winter drizzle, the young men erected metal frames and rolled out orange and blue tarps to hang atop them, an AFP correspondent said.

A few carried a poster bearing pictures of both Kadhemi and Abdel Mahdi and the caption: "Two sides of the same coin." There were no police in sight around Habboubi Square, but a security source told AFP that units had been deployed to the city's edges to seal off access to Nasiriyah to anyone except its residents.

Ethiopian Military Operation In Tigray Is Complete

ADDIS ABABA (Reuters) - Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said on Saturday that military operations in the northern region of Tigray have been completed, shortly after he announced federal troops had seized full control of the regional capital Mekelle.

"I am pleased to share that we have completed and ceased the military operations in the Tigray region," he said in a tweet. Less than an hour earlier, he said in a statement, "The federal government is now fully in control of the city of Mekelle".

There was no immediate comment from the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) forces, who have been fighting Ethiopian troops for the past three weeks in a conflict that has sent shockwaves through the Horn of Africa.

Abiy said police were searching for the TPLF leaders. It was not clear if any of them had surrendered.

"Federal police will now continue their task of apprehending TPLF criminals and bring them to the court of law," said the prime minister, who has called the government offensive a law and order operation.



U.S. Navy Denies Carrier Group Moved Into Persian Gulf After Any Threats

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - A U.S. aircraft carrier group has moved back into the Persian Gulf region, but a navy spokeswoman said Saturday its return was not triggered by any "threats" after the killing in Iran of a top nuclear scientist.

Tensions in the region are extraordinarily high after the assassination Friday of Mohsen Fakhrazadeh, an act still unclaimed but which Iran has blamed on close U.S. ally Israel.

But naval commander Rebecca Rebarich, a spokeswoman for the U.S. 5th Fleet, told AFP the return Wednesday of the carrier group led by the nuclear-powered USS Nimitz was unconnected to any "specific threats."

"There were no specific threats that triggered the return of the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group," she said in a statement.

"The return of Nimitz is centered on maintaining CENTCOM's ability to remain postured and prepared to help preserve regional stability and security," Rebarich said, referring to the U.S. Central Command.

The Pentagon said earlier that the carrier group would be providing combat support and air cover as the military withdraws thousands of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan by mid-January, under orders from President Donald Trump.

About 2,000 troops will be pulled from Afghanistan and 500 from Iraq, leaving roughly 2,500 in each country.

The flotilla led by the Nimitz -- one of the world's largest warships -- had recently joined Australia, India and Japan in scheduled exercises in the Arabian Sea.

The 5th Fleet's Twitter account showed pictures of the Nimitz's air wing conducting flight operations there Saturday.

Carrier groups typically include a cruiser, a destroyer squadron and an air wing.

Nimitz-class carriers are more than 1,000 feet (300 meters) long, have a crew of more than 6,000, and carry up to 90 helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft.

Montenegro, Serbia Expel Each Other's Ambassadors

PODGORICA (Dispatches) - Montenegro and Serbia on Saturday expelled each other's ambassadors, both countries' foreign ministries said, in a move likely further to strain already tense relations between two former Yugoslav republics.

Podgorica declared Serbian ambassador Vladimir Bozovic persona non grata for "interfering in Montenegro's internal affairs", a foreign ministry statement said citing remarks he had made about history.

Serbia then said Montenegrin envoy Tarzan Milosevic had been given 72 hours to leave.

Montenegro proclaimed independence from Serbia in 2006, but tensions around national identity are still haunting the tiny Balkans nation.

Bozovic on Friday labelled a 1918 assembly -- which decided Montenegro should lost independence and join Serbia and become part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes -- a "liberation".

It was a "free expression of people's will to unite with fraternal Serbia", he told a meeting of an association representing Montenegrin Serbs.

"Bozovic in the most direct way belittled the state

which gave him a diplomatic hospitality," the foreign ministry in Podgorica said.

In 2018, Montenegrin lawmakers adopted a resolution symbolically annulling the decisions of the 1918 assembly.

Relations between the two neighbours further strained since three opposition coalitions -- dominated by the pro-Serb nationalistic camp -- won a majority in an August election.

After the election, supporters of the pro-Serb coalition gathered for days in the thousands to celebrate, waving Serbian flags and chanting nationalistic songs.

The vote came in a year that started with large protests over a law that could give Podgorica the ownership of monasteries run by the Belgrade-based Serbian Orthodox Church.

President Milo Djukanovic has used the strong reaction to the Church issue to fan fears about threats to Montenegro's independence, accusing church leaders of trying to "Serbianise" Montenegro.

Ethnic Serbs make up 29 percent of Montenegro's population of 620,000, official figures show.



Trump Loses Another Election Court Challenge

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. state of Pennsylvania's supreme court dismissed another legal challenge to the election by supporters of President Donald Trump on Saturday, further reducing his already near-impossible odds of overturning the results.

A Republican lawsuit had sought to invalidate mail-in ballots in the battleground state that President-elect Joe Biden won by about 81,000 votes -- or to throw out all votes and allow the state's legislature to decide the winner.

The court dismissed both claims in a unanimous decision, calling the second one an "extraordinary proposition that the court disenfranchise all 6.9 million Pennsylvanians who voted in the general election."

The lawsuit argued that a Pennsylvania law from 2019 allowing universal mail-in voting was unconstitutional. The judges said that their November 21 challenge to the law was filed too late, coming more than a year after it was enacted and with the election results "becoming seemingly apparent."

Pennsylvania officially certified Biden's victory there on November 24. The lawsuit had also sought to stop certification.

Saturday's decision follows a long line of similar ones, including a ruling the day before in which a federal appeals court flatly dismissed Trump's claim that the election was unfair and refused to freeze Biden's win in Pennsylvania.

Trump has refused to give up on his claims of fraud in the November 3 election despite his repeated court defeats, tweeting bizarre conspiracy theories and vowing to continue his legal fight.

On Thursday, he said for the first time that he would leave the White House if Biden is officially confirmed the winner by the Electoral College on December 14.

But on Friday he tweeted that "Biden can only enter the White House as president if he can prove that his ridiculous '80,000,000 votes' were not fraudulently or illegally obtained."

Biden, who is to be sworn in on January 20, won 306 votes in the Electoral College to Trump's 232.

The president-elect has said that Americans "won't stand" for attempts to derail the vote outcome.





Shanon
(adviser)

Parsian

(\$3000)
Farmanieh Apt
300sq.m, 4bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Fereshteh Villa (\$5000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
yard, & pkg
Fully Furn

(\$2700)
Mahmoodieh Apt
280sq.m, 4bdrs
S/p, S, J, yard
roof garden, F.F

Jordan (\$14000)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, pkg, F.F

Sa'adat abad (\$1200)
3bdrs, S/p, F.F

(\$3000)
Darrous bldg
3storey, 7bdrs
yard, enough pkgs
recently renovated

Zaferanieh Apt (\$1500)
130sq.m, 2bdrs, gym, & S/p

Shanon_tari@yahoo.com
Tel : 88510081
Fax : 88506474

Tajrish Office (\$2000)
50sq.m, pkg, Tel, & balcony



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Brazil Unemployment Rate Hits Record High 14.6%

BRASILIA (Reuters) - The number of registered Brazilians out of work and the national unemployment rate rose to the highest on record, official figures showed on Friday, as the easing of COVID-19 lockdown measures encouraged people to look for work again.

The unemployment rate in the three months through September rose to 14.6% from 14.4% in the three

months to August, while the number of official unemployed rose to 14.1 million from 13.8 million, statistics agency IBGE said.

Although the unemployment rate was lower than the 14.9% economists had expected, it is the highest since IBGE's series began in 2012. At the end of last year it was 11.0%.



China's Factory Growth Likely Edged up in November

BEIJING (Reuters) - China's factory activity likely expanded at a slightly faster pace in November, a Reuters poll showed on Friday, as the world's second-largest economy steadily recovers from the coronavirus crisis.

The official manufacturing Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI) is expected to rise slightly to 51.5 in November from October's 51.4, according to the median forecast of 22 economists polled by Reuters. A reading above 50 indicates an expansion in activity on a monthly basis.

China's vast industrial sector is steadily returning to the levels seen before the pandemic paralysed huge swathes of the economy early this year. Premier Li Keqiang said on Tuesday he expects economic activity to return to a reasonable range next year.

Profits at industrial firms grew in October for a sixth consecutive month and at their quickest pace since early 2017, data showed.

"Overall, we believe China's economic recovery remains largely on track and maintain our real GDP growth forecast of 5.7% y-o-y for Q4, up from 4.9% in Q3. We firmly believe Beijing will maintain its policy stance," analysts at Nomura said in a note on Friday.

The Chinese economy is expected to expand around 2% for the full year - the weakest in over three decades but still much stronger than other major economies which are still battling to contain virus infections.

The official PMI, which largely focuses on big and state-owned firms, and its sister survey on the services sector, will both be released on Nov. 30.

The private Caixin manufacturing PMI will be published on Dec. 1. Analysts expect that headline reading will dip to 53.5 from a near decade high of 53.6 in October.

The Caixin services PMI survey will be out on Dec. 3.

Russia's Sberbank Targets Half of Revenue From Non-Banking by 2030

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Sberbank expects its non-banking business to reach 5% of its revenues in 2023 and as much as half of its total in a decade, as it focuses on e-commerce and other online ventures, two sources told Reuters.

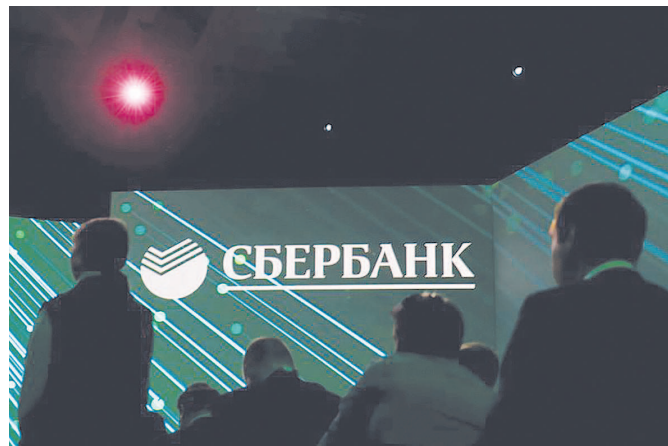
Russia's largest lender has invested some \$2 billion on acquisitions and IT as it attempts to join Apple and Google on the big tech stage.

Sberbank plans to tell investors on Nov. 30 that non-banking, or ecosystem as it calls the business, will account for 5% of its total revenue in 2023 and grow to nearly a half of its total by 2030, two sources close to its supervisory board said.

The bank's return-on-equity (RoE), one of key measures of profitability, is forecast at 17% in 2023, one of the two sources said. A third source, also close to Sberbank's supervisory board, confirmed this forecast.

The sources did not say why the RoE target is smaller than the third quarter's 22.8%.

Sberbank, in which the Russian state owns a stake of 50% plus one share, declined to comment.



Non-banking, which includes Sberbank's joint venture with internet company Mail.Ru, the Rambler media group and Okko online cinema along with some other assets, currently accounts for around 1% of its revenue, with the rest from its core financial business.

Sberbank's ambitions were dealt a blow this year when its partnership with Russia's leading internet firm Yandex, its first major e-commerce push and part of its ecosystem strategy, collapsed over strategy disagreements.

Sberbank was also in talks to buy a large minority stake in online retailer Ozon, Russia's second biggest, but the deal also fell apart amid disagreements, sources told Reuters earlier this year.

Ozon has instead raised nearly \$1 billion this month in what turned out to be the largest initial public (IPO) offering by a Russian company since 2017.

Saudi Arabia Has Suspended Turkish Meat Imports

ISTANBUL (Reuters) - Saudi Arabia formally suspended imports of meat, eggs and other products from Turkey earlier this month, the Turkish exporters' union said, after a months-long informal boycott of Turkish goods over political tensions between the two regional rivals.

Turkish exporters have reported increasing obstacles to trade in Saudi Arabia, as businessmen in the Persian Gulf Arab state have led calls for bans on Turkish imports and as ties between the two countries deteriorated.

Already strained by competing ambitions for regional influence, those relations plunged into crisis two years ago when Saudi agents killed prominent Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

Ankara says it has been told by Riyadh that there is no formal boycott, but the exporters' union said it had been informed by Turkey's trade ministry that imports of some Turkish goods had been suspended earlier this month.



exports to Saudi Arabia fell 16% in the first 10 months of this year to \$2.23 billion.

Turkey's Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan said this week that Riyadh insisted there was no official boycott of Turkish goods - something Ankara could formally challenge through the World Trade Organisation.

"... we expect concrete steps to solve problems in our trade and economic relations," Pekcan was quoted as saying by Sabah newspaper. "Our counterparts told us there was no formal decision, that there were some exceptional issues."

"Imports from our country of red meat and products, white meat and products, water products, eggs and honey and their products, as well as milk and... alternatives to breast milk, have been suspended as of November 15," the union told its members in an email obtained by Reuters.

No one could be contacted at the Saudi embassy in Ankara on Friday. Turkey's trade ministry was not available for immediate comment.

Turkey's Exporters Assembly says

Hungary Confirms Agreements on Economic Cooperation With Russia

BUDAPEST (TASS) - Budapest confirmed compliance with the agreements on economic cooperation with Moscow at the Friday meeting of the Russian-Hungarian

intergovernmental commission on economic cooperation, Russian Health Minister Mikhail Murashko, the commission's co-chair, told TASS.

"It is important that the Hungarian side confirmed agreements on cooperation in machine building and energy, including the supplies of Russian gas," he said. "The Hungarian side makes certain steps towards deeper cooperation in that field (gas supplies - TASS)."

Earlier in the day, Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijarto said that in 2021 the country expects to import 6.2 billion meters of gas from Russia. Hungary plans to put into operation the 15-kilometer section of the pipeline, which would ensure gas transit to Serbia through Hungary.

"It was also important that the Hungarian business' interests in Russia are being raised nowadays. For example, pharmaceutical production and agriculture," the minister said.

Budapest eyes cooperation with Russia in space exploration, Murashko stressed.

"The process is being discussed at the talks," the minister said.

Apart from that, medical issues dominated the commission's session, as the implementation of deliveries of the Russian coronavirus vaccine to Hungary were touched upon.

"There were lots of health professionals in our group, so we see that the Russian-Hungarian cooperation pays much attention to that (healthcare -TASS)," Murashko said.

Indian Economy Contracts By 7.5% in Q2

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contracted 7.5% in the second quarter of 2020-21, following the record 23.9% decline recorded in the first quarter, as per estimates released by the National Statistical Office on Friday. The country has now entered a technical recession with two successive quarters of negative growth.

However, the economy's performance between July and September when lockdown restrictions were eased is better than most rating agencies and analysts anticipated. While most had estimated a contraction of around 10%, the Reserve Bank of India had projected a 8.6% decline in the second quarter.

Agriculture, which was the only sector to record growth between April and June this year, grew at the same pace of 3.4% in the second quarter, while manufacturing gross value-added (GVA) staged a sharp recovery to record 0.6% growth between July and September after collapsing 39.3% in the first quarter.

Electricity, gas, water supply and other utility services also recorded 4.4% growth in the second quarter, recovering from a 7% contraction in Q1. But it remained a bleak quarter for several sectors, including mining, services such as retail trade and hotels, construction and financial services.

"We should be cautiously optimistic as the economic impact is primarily due to the pandemic and the sustainability of the recovery depends critically on the spread of the pandemic. The government remains ready to come up with calibrated responses," said Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) Krishnamurthy Subramanian, stressing that there could be neither too much exuberance nor excessive pessimism at this point.

Citing the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, Mr. Subramanian said the 'V-shaped recovery' should continue but it is difficult to be sure about positive growth returning in the remaining two quarters of this year. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had earlier suggested that the economy could record near zero growth in 2020-21.

"The economic indicators and the industrial output numbers indicate that the recovery is happening very well. But because the effect is primarily from the pandemic, we should keep that in mind especially with the winter months ahead," Mr. Subramanian told The Hindu.

Fitch Downgrades Sri Lanka On Rising Default Risk



LONDON (Reuters) - Fitch downgraded Sri Lanka's sovereign credit rating to "CCC" on Friday, warning the country's debt levels were set to soar past 100% of GDP and that it was increasingly at risk of default.

Sri Lanka relies on tourism and garment exports for foreign exchange reserves. It's been hit hard by the pandemic, which has undercut consumer demand and curtailed almost all global travel this year.

The CCC rating means Fitch considers default to be "a real possibility", according to its ratings framework, as it added to Sri Lanka's string of downgrades this year.

"We think there are now increasing risks to Sri Lanka's ability to meet its external debt repayments," the firm's analysts said in a note.

In a statement, Sri Lanka's finance ministry called the downgrade "baseless" and "based on uncorroborated facts" saying the government had acted to contain the economic impact of the pandemic faster than many other emerging countries.

"We do not accept this downgrade as it fails to recognise the robust policy framework of the new government for addressing the legacy issues," the statement said.

Sri Lanka has around \$4 billion of debt repayments due annually until 2025. Its foreign exchange reserves stand at just under \$6 billion leaving it little room to spare.

Earlier this month, Finance Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa presented an ambitious budget that aimed to more than halve the fiscal deficit over the medium term. But Fitch said it expected the country's fiscal position to worsen, not improve, over the next few years.

It expects the government's ratio of debt to gross domestic product to increase to about 100% in 2020 from 86.8% in 2019 and to rise to around 116% in 2024. Sri Lanka's own targets see a reduction in debt-to-GDP to 75.5% in 2025, from an estimated 95.1% in 2020.

Rival ratings agency Moody's downgraded Sri Lanka to an equivalent level in September, noting the country's debt repayments in the next few years.

MP Proposes Iran's Withdrawal From NPT

TEHRAN (MNA) – Majlis lawmaker Javad Karimi Ghoddousi said Iran has to pull out from the NPT in case Europeans do not put removal of anti-Iranian sanctions on their agenda.

He said Iran should give the Europeans six months to remove the sanction and if they could not meet the demand, Iran would leave the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

His remarks came after Iranian lawmakers reviewed on Sunday an urgent counteractive plan that includes the halt of the implementation of the Additional Protocol to the nuclear NPT.



OIC Chooses Islamabad for 48th CFM Session in 2021

TEHRAN (Pakistan Embassy) - Positively responding to Pakistan's offer, the 47th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of OIC in Niger has decided to host the 48th CFM Session in Islamabad in 2021.

As the prospective CFM Chair, Pakistan has also become a member of the 6-member OIC Executive Committee for the next three years.

Pakistan is a founding member of the OIC. It has always played an important role in promoting the role of OIC as a collective voice of Muslim Ummah.

The OIC is the second largest inter-governmental Organization after the United Nations, with 57 members and 5 observer states spanning over four continents.

Meanwhile in a Resolution adopted unanimously by the 47th Session of the OIC in Niamey today, the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) reaffirmed its strong support for the Kashmir cause. The OIC categorically rejected illegal and unilateral actions taken by India since 5 August 2019. The Resolution demands that India "cancel the issuance of domicile certificates to non-Kashmiris" as well as other unilateral and illegal actions, including "Jammu & Kashmir Reorganization Order 2020", "Jammu & Kashmir Grant of Domicile Certificate Rules 2020", "Jammu and Kashmir Language Bill 2020" and amendments to the landownership laws.

Also rejecting policies being pursued by the RSS-BJP regime, the 57 countries of the OIC asked India to refrain from taking any steps to alter the existing demographic structure of the disputed territory.

In a comprehensive and strongly worded Resolution, some experts as follow, the OIC:

- Rejected the illegal and unilateral actions by India on August 5, 2019, to change the internationally recognized disputed status of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), and demanded that India rescind its illegal steps;
- Demanded India to cancel the issuance of domicile certificates to non-Kashmiris and revoke all unilateral and illegal actions in IIOJK since 5 August 2019, while refraining from taking any step to alter the existing demographic structure of the disputed territory;
- Condemned in the strongest possible terms human rights violations perpetrated by Indian occupation forces in IIOJK and other such instances of Indian terrorism that have been the source of unspeakable suffering for the innocent Kashmiri people;
- Deplored the state-sponsored terrorism and crimes against humanity by Indian occupation forces against people of IIOJK;
- Condemned extra-judicial killings during fake 'encounters' and 'search-and-cordon' operations and demolition of homes and private properties as a form of collective punishment;
- Denounced the renewed use of pellet guns by Indian occupation forces against innocent civilians;
- Condemned the harassment of Kashmiri women by Indian occupation forces;
- Deplored that India has callously exploited the current COVID-19 crisis to intensify its military crackdown and further advance its unlawful occupation in IIOJK;
- Welcomed the visit of OIC Secretary General's Special Envoy for Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) from 2-6 March 2020;



• Reaffirmed the sentiments expressed in the unanimously adopted Communiqués of the OIC Contact Group on Jammu & Kashmir in its Ministerial meetings held on 25 September 2019 and 22 June 2020;

• Urged India to adhere to its international human rights obligations and allow the OIC Special Representative on Jammu and Kashmir and the OIC Fact-finding Mission to visit IIOJK;

• Strongly urged India to implement recommendations of the two Reports of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on Jammu & Kashmir;

• Urged international community to review their engagements with India, the occupying power, as it is violating and disregarding the international law, the international humanitarian law, and international resolutions;

• Emphasized that the question of Kashmir is of utmost importance for the Muslim Ummah;

• Recognized that Jammu and Kashmir is the core dispute between Pakistan and India, and its resolution indispensable for realization of the dream of peace in South Asia;

• Acknowledged that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are the principal party to the dispute, and should be included in any peace process for resolution of the Jammu & Kashmir dispute;

• Affirmed that any political process/elections held under foreign occupation cannot be a substitute to the exercise of the right of self-determination;

• Underscored that Jammu & Kashmir is an unresolved question of granting the right to self-determination to the people of Jammu and Kashmir that has been on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council for over seven decades now;

• Reaffirmed that the fundamental right enshrined in the UNSC resolutions that the final disposition of the State of Jammu & Kashmir will be made in accordance with the will of the people, expressed through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite, conducted under the auspices of the United Nations;

• Decided to further consider the Jammu and Kashmir dispute at the 48th Session of the CFM in Islamabad.

British Military Sent On Secret Mission to Protect Saudi Oilfields



LONDON (OilPrice) - The United Kingdom has had troops deployed in Saudi Arabia to protect its oilfields from attacks since February this year. The News reported this week, a local newspaper in Portsmouth in the UK. A small team from the 16th Regiment Royal Artillery, which is based near Portsmouth, were sent to Saudi Arabia to man Giraffe radars, which can track aircraft and missiles up to 75 miles away.

After the report, the UK Ministry of Defense confirmed that the mission was to protect oilfields in Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, from attacks, in the wake of the September 2019 attacks on critical Saudi oil infrastructure that affected half of Saudi Arabia's oil production, or around 5 percent of global oil supply, for weeks.

The Saudi oilfields that UK troops help to protect are "critical economic infrastructure," the UK Ministry of Defense told The Independent.

"Following the attacks on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's oil production facilities on 14 September 2019, we have worked with the Saudi Ministry of Defense and wider international partners to consider how to strengthen the defense of its critical economic infrastructure from aerial threats," a spokesperson for the Ministry of Defense told The Independent. Opposition parties in the UK criticized the government for not only providing assistance to Saudi Arabia but for also failing to adequately inform the public and Parliament of the mission.

The report about UK troops helping to protect Saudi oilfields from attacks emerged just after the Houthis rebels in Yemen on Monday said they had fired a missile against a target in the Saudi city of Jeddah and had hit it. The target was a distribution center property of Saudi Arabia's state oil company Aramco.

Saudi Arabia confirmed on Monday, via its Saudi Press Agency, that there was an explosion at the petroleum products distribution terminal in Jeddah.

On Wednesday, OPEC criticized the attack on the Jeddah facility, with OPEC Secretary-General Mohammad Barkindo saying, "Acts of sabotage such as this are detrimental to energy supply security for both producers and consumers and can lead to much uncertainty and volatility."

Indonesia, World Bank Strike Deal on Emissions Reduction

JAKARTA (Dispatches) - The Environment and Forestry Ministry and the World Bank signed a deal on Friday on the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), which provides an additional opportunity for the government to receive payments in exchange for reducing carbon emissions.

Under the agreement, Indonesia will be eligible to receive up to US\$ 110 million for reducing carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation until 2025.

The results-based payment scheme seeks to advance the government's goal of reducing carbon emissions in East Kalimantan by 22 million tons.

"This agreement is proof of the Indonesian

government's hard work in reducing deforestation and protecting forests. Our efforts will not stop here," said the ministry's secretary general, Bambang Hendroyono, on Saturday.

The agreement, he said, would also spur collaboration between the state, civil society groups, local communities and business players.

"Although the emissions reduction efforts on the ground will be focused in one province, the results will help us all achieve our goals of reducing deforestation and degradation, mitigating climate change and putting Indonesia on the path of green development," Bambang said in a statement.

Tehran Cautions...

FROM PAGE 1

Najafi further urged the international community to strengthen efforts towards upholding the Palestinians' inalienable rights to return to their homeland and establish an independent state in the occupied territories, with East Jerusalem al-Quds as its capital.

Elsewhere in his comments, Najafi referred to Friday's assassination of Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrazadeh, saying, "Yesterday, an Iranian scientist was assassinated by Israel's mercenary terrorists. It may be related to the betrayal of (Muslims). We strongly condemn this cowardly terrorist act and remind that the era of hit and run is over."

The Iranian diplomat further stressed that relying on foreigners will not bring security for the countries in the region and will rather cause despair for them.

"We call on everyone to engage in dialogue as the only constructive and fruitful way to resolve differences. Together, we will mark a better future for our region. As one of the founders of the OIC, the Islamic Republic of Iran which believes in the principles of the organization, has put friendship and brotherhood between Islamic countries at the forefront of its foreign policy, and has always initiated and defended peace and security in the Persian Gulf, Yemen, Syria and Iraq and Lebanon and other regional issues," Najafi underlined. Additionally, he condemned U.S. unilateralism, including economic terrorism against developing countries, amid the coronavirus outbreak. "These measures may bring about dire consequences for international peace and security as well as development worldwide," he noted.

"The world is now watching whether the new American leaders will abandon the destructive, illegal and bullying methods of the outgoing regime and opt for multilateralism, cooperation and respect for the law or not ...! Regardless of any change in the US government's approach, the Islamic countries must be collectively determined to preserve their unity in order to resolve problems."

Majlis...

FROM PAGE 1

The motion also requires the Iranian government to stop any regulatory access beyond the Additional Protocol within two months of its enactment in line with Articles 36 and 37 of a multilateral nuclear deal -- officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) -- signed between Iran and major world powers in 2015.

Based on the motion, if the European parties to the JCPOA start observing their obligations within three months following approval of this law, the Iranian administration should submit a proposal to the parliament on Iran's reciprocal measures for restoring full implementation of its JCPOA obligations.

21st Century,...

FROM PAGE 1

According to what is said as definition of state terrorism, major evidences of state terrorism can easily be seen in the U.S. and its newbie state, Zionist regime. To enumerate the terrorist acts of these two states, it may need hundreds of books to be compiled. In the 21st Century, the application of the terms "terror" and "terrorism" have been used more than the 20th Century, and it is because of emergence of violent encounters between political parties and different groups in one country or sabotaging in a foreign country by assistance of an individual, a group or a foreign country.

The expression of "state terrorism" is a newly used one. Some countries accuse other governments of state terrorism. Different understandings from this term and its contradiction with individual or group terrorism adds on to its significance. Terror in Persian language has been defined as a political murder with a gun. This word has been borrowed from the French in Persian and it means panic in French. Terrorist which has been driven from "terror" means the one who intends to create panic and fear. This term in today's common Persian language is used for a person who commits a political murder.

In the history of French Revolution, this term had a special meaning and it had two connotations: First, it meant taking tough measures and methods against the revolutionaries. Secondly, it was the name of some periods of the history of the French Revolution and has been used as its first connotation was common.

Today this word and in the political terminology means any kind of act which is used for advancing certain goals through resorting to creation of panic and fear. According to some writers, terrorism means the belief to the necessity of killing, threat and creating panic among the people to achieve the political goals or toppling the government and to take the control of the government or handing it over to other groups which have been in the consideration. This belief is usually inspired by the main tool of Fascism, Machiavellianism and the like schools.

In Islam, the act of terror has been totally rejected. Even in the wars with enemies, those who had no arms in their hands were not attacked. We have repeatedly seen in the films and texts that one whose sword is broken in the fight is given another sword by his rival to continue fight in a fair manner which is considered a human behavior but today the U.S. Administration, according to Mrs. Clinton and Donald Trump, organizes Daeshi currents who behead innocent people in the cities and villages. They target the vehicle carrying Martyr Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and his comrades to assassinate them by military drone and officially proclaims this operation proudly and they do not consider any shame for such a common disgrace.

To sum up the definitions given about the terrorism, it is to be said that terrorism is a term which means using all illegal and violent tools for exerting pressure against a government or a nation in order to achieve a certain goal.

Illegal tools and equipment usually lead to panic and fear, and the certain goals also include political, economic, social, cultural, etc. So with this explanation, the world is moving in the direction of becoming a jungle rather than a civilization.

Health Minister Says...

FROM PAGE 1

Some 12,950 new cases of infection with the COVID-19 were found over the past 24 hours, some 1,795 of whom have been hospitalized, she added.

Sadat Lari noted that 658,292 patients out of a total of 948,749 infected people have recovered or been discharged from the hospitals.

Some 5,859 other COVID-19 patients are in critical condition and being treated in intensive care units, the spokeswoman said.

She added that 6,081,952 tests have so far been carried out in Iran.

According to the deputy minister of health for treatment affairs, with implementing new restrictions across Iran the number of infections is falling down.

Speaking on how new restrictions lead to COVID-19 containment, Qasem Janbabaie said that definitely, any step such as a reduction in gathering in the society will reduce the number of the infected people.

Janbabaie noted that whenever the health protocols were implemented, the disease eased off, but by ignoring them it has surged rapidly.

Fortunately, with the government measures and newly implemented restrictions across the country the virus is containable, he stated.

He highlighted that during these two weeks of lockdown, the number of infections, hospitalizations, and death toll is reducing, though it is time-consuming.



Albon Accepts Blame For Big Crash in Practice

MANAMA (Dispatches) - Alex Albon accepted the blame on Friday after his heavy and expensive crash during practice for the Bahrain Grand Prix threatened to derail his future with Red Bull. The London-born Thai driver, who has struggled this year to match the pace of Red Bull team-mate Max Verstappen, said he knew he should have backed off when he ran wide at the final corner before careering off into the barriers. "It was just one of those things," he said as he tried to make light of his crash, which wrecked most of his car.

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India Fined 20% of Match Fee For Slow Over Rate in Sydney

SYDNEY (Reuters) - Indian players will lose 20% of their match fees for taking more than the allotted time for bowling their overs in the first one-day international against hosts Australia in Sydney, the International Cricket Council said on Saturday. Virat Kohli's men were found one over short of their target in the stipulated time and were penalised by match referee David Boon at the conclusion of the match, which Australia won by 66 runs at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

MONDAY NOVEMBER 30, 2020

Liverpool Left Frustrated as Man City Click Into Gear

LONDON (Dispatches) - Jurgen Klopp again fumed at a "dangerous" schedule as Liverpool had two goals disallowed and conceded two penalties in a 1-1 draw at Brighton, while Man City clicked back into gear with a 5-0 thrashing of Burnley. Liverpool edged back to the top of the Premier League table, a point ahead of Tottenham, but were left frustrated by Pascal Gross's stoppage-time penalty which salvaged a point for Brighton. Klopp had voiced his displeasure all week at facing a lunchtime kick-off just three days after a Champions League defeat to Atalanta. Already hit by a huge list of injuries, the Reds suffered another setback when James Milner had to be replaced with a hamstring problem in the second-half. "Congratulations," Klopp said sarcastically to a television reporter for BT Sport. "You work for them yeah? Hamstring, surprise. "I've not had a go at the broadcaster, I just say how it is. After Wednesday, Saturday 12.30 is really dangerous for the players." Klopp named Neco Williams and Nathaniel Phillips in a makeshift back four and Brighton took advantage when Williams wiped out Aaron Connolly for Brighton's first spot-kick, but Neal Maupay sent it wide. Mohamed Salah was then denied an opener by VAR for offside but the Egyptian teed up Diogo Jota to keep his flying start to life at Liverpool going with a fine finish on the hour mark.

Marinos Made to Wait as Shanghai Defeat Japanese Side

HONG KONG (Reuters) - Yokohama F Marinos were made to wait to confirm their place in the knockout rounds of the Asian Champions League on Saturday after the Japanese side fell to a 2-1 defeat at the hands of Shanghai SIPG in Doha.

Victory would have confirmed progress to the last 16 for Ange Postecoglou's side from group H, but goals from Cai Huikang and Ricardo Lopes meant the Chinese Super League side picked up the three points. Shanghai are now level on nine points with Yokohama, with both teams five points ahead of Jeonbuk Motors with two rounds of matches remaining. SIPG's win means Australian champions Sydney FC are eliminated. SIPG captain Cai gave his side the lead after 14 minutes with a close-range header only for Ado Onaiwu to level seven minutes later with a shot that squirmed under Shanghai goalkeeper Chen Wai. But Lopes claimed the winner 10 minutes into the second half when he received a return pass from substitute Oscar before sending his shot beyond Obi Powell Obinna. Earlier in the day, two-time champions Guangzhou Evergrande moved to within one win of the next round as Fabio Cannavaro's side handed Vissel Kobe a 2-0 defeat in group G three days after losing to the Japanese side. Anderson Talisca's penalty gave Guangzhou the lead before Elkeson fired his free kick into the top corner of Hiroki Iikura's goal to earn the Chinese side victory over already-qualified Kobe. "Everybody fought a lot and at last we managed to get the victory, so we're happy for the team," said Guangzhou's Mei Fang. A win against South Korea's Suwon Bluewings on Tuesday will take the 2013 and 2015 champions into the next round alongside their Japanese counterparts. Group G features three teams after Johor Darul Ta'zim were not allowed to travel for the competition by the Malaysian government due to restrictions to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. They are the only club not in Doha for the resumption of play after the format was switched to a centralised set-up.

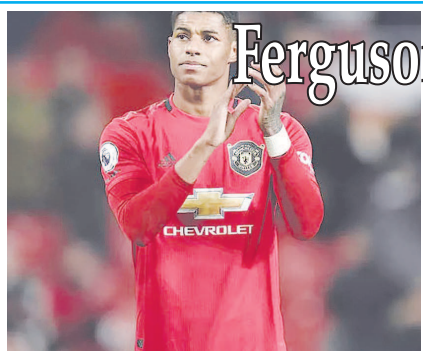
Sadio Mane had a second for the visitors ruled out for offside before another VAR review went against Liverpool when Andy Robertson was adjudged to have kicked Danny Welbeck trying to clear. This time Gross took responsibility from the spot and sent Alisson Becker the wrong way. City shrugged off their problems in front of goal by hitting five past Burnley for the fourth consecutive clash between the two at the Etihad. Pep Guardiola's men had scored just seven goals in their previous seven league games, but Riyad Mahrez's early double opened the floodgates.



Benjamin Mendy made it 3-0 before half-time and Ferran Torres got his first Premier League goal before Mahrez completed the scoring and his hat-trick. Victory propelled City to within six points of Liverpool at the top of the table with a minute's applause. Sergio Aguero was not involved for City, but Guardiola confirmed that was due to a small injury problem rather than his close family connection to Diego Maradona, who died aged 60 on Wednesday. Aguero was previously married to and had a child with Maradona's daughter Giannina. Everton boss Carlo Ancelotti was reduced to tears before his side's 1-0 loss to Leeds as respects were paid to Maradona before all Premier League games this weekend with a minute's applause. An enthralling 90 minutes followed at Goodison Park with chances aplenty for both sides but just one goal, scored by Raphinha 11 minutes from time. James Rodriguez and Richarlison had strikes ruled out for offside before the break, while Dominic Calvert-Lewin dragged a big chance wide for Everton early in the second-half. Leeds, who had the majority of the chances, finally made the breakthrough when Raphinha arrowed a low left-footed shot into the bottom corner for his first goal since joining the club in August. Leeds move up to 11th, while a fourth defeat in five games leaves Everton still in sixth. West Brom claimed their first win back in the top-flight as Connor Gallagher's strike earned a 1-0 win over Sheffield United. Victory took Slaven Bilic's men out of the bottom three, while the Blades remain rooted to the foot of the table with just one point from 10 games.

Players Must Be Able to Train Ahead of Australian Open

LONDON (Reuters) - ATP Finals champion Daniil Medvedev says players health will be at risk if quarantine restrictions prevent them from playing or practising in the run-up to the Australian Open. Organisers are in talks with the Victoria state government over the protocols to be put in place for those arriving in Australia for the first Grand Slam of the year. State officials said on Wednesday the Melbourne Park tournament would go ahead, though it would likely take place a week or two after the scheduled date and that players would have to undergo quarantine. "I'm going to go to Australia when we can to avoid any circumstances that would change your mind about competing there," world number four Medvedev told CNN. "If, for instance, you weren't able to compete or to train during quarantine just ahead of the tournament, I don't think the tournament is going to happen." Organisers of this year's U.S. and French Opens established bio-secure 'bubbles' for players, who were not allowed to leave their hotel rooms except to train and play. Medvedev said it would be "dangerous" for players to be confined to a hotel room for two weeks after arriving in Australia and then going straight into a Grand Slam. "(I'm) not complaining that it's boring or something like this," the Russian added. "It's just that going out from the room after 14 days of not doing anything and (then) playing five sets right away, I think would be really dangerous for the health of any sportsman."



Ferguson Teams Up With Rashford After Making Poverty Pledge

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson has teamed up with Marcus Rashford to tackle child food poverty. United striker Rashford was awarded an MBE following his recent campaign which saw the government change their minds on providing free school meals for children during holidays. Now the 23-year-old has said Ferguson is set to pledge up to £2 million (\$2.6 million) towards the FareShare charity for which Rashford is an ambassador. An appeal in the Times is aiming to raise funds and Rashford revealed Ferguson,

alongside billionaire Michael Moritz, will match donations up to the aforementioned sum and described the news as "incredible". Ferguson, 78, grew up in Glasgow in tough conditions and believes Rashford has done a great job in highlighting the plight facing families across Britain. "You have to be shocked at the number of people who are in need of food," he said in an interview with the Times. "Marcus has opened the eyes of everyone in Britain. The work he's done has been fantastic and we're all so proud of him because of that. "What Marcus has done is he's led the way - people will say, 'That boy he's only 23 years of age'. People who are in their later ages... should be saying, 'I can do something'." Rashford never played under Ferguson, making his United debut as an 18-year-old three years after the legendary boss retired in 2013.

NBA Books 49-Game Pre-Season Schedule From Dec. 11-19

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The defending champion Los Angeles Lakers will open the NBA pre-season schedule against the Los Angeles Clippers as part of a 49-game exhibition slate announced Friday. The league booked tuneup games from December 11-19 ahead of the planned December 22 start of the 2020-21 campaign to be played at team arenas. Each club will have at least two pre-season contests, one at home and one on the road, and no more than four. The Lakers will play the maximum, with home games against the Clippers on December 11 and 13 and road games at Phoenix on December 16 and 18. The Toronto Raptors, set to play home games in Tampa, Florida, due to Covid-19 restrictions involving U.S.-Canada travel, will entertain Miami at Tampa in a December 18 pre-season contest. The upcoming season schedule, featuring 72 games for each club, has not yet been released. It will be revealed in two segments, the first including games from December 22-March 4 and the next from March 11-May 16 to be released late in the first-half portion of the season.



Blatter, Platini To Be Investigated For Fraud

LAUSANNE (AFP) - Former FIFA president Sepp Blatter and ex-UEFA chief Michel Platini are now being probed for "fraud" and "breach of trust" in Switzerland, a source with access to the investigation said on Friday. The pair were originally part of a legal procedure opened in 2015 over a 2011 payment of 2 million Swiss francs (\$2.2 million), with the same source confirming reports by French news outlets Le Monde and Mediapart. The investigation, which was set up in 2015, is looking into the payment Platini received from FIFA in 2011 for an advisory job completed in 2002, on suspicion of "complicity in unfair management, embezzlement and forgery". The Swiss Public Ministry of the Confederation (MPC) in Bern, which is alleged of collusion with FIFA, has the ability to use further legal manoeuvres to call for the sum to be paid. "We feel that the MPC is holding this five-year-old procedure in an artificial and delaying way to widen the charges," Platini's entourage told AFP. In June, when he was added by prosecutor Thomas Hildbrand to the investigation, Platini said the Swiss Attorney General's office had "confirmed in writing in May 2018" that his case was closed.

