

Iran Oil Minister Said He Expected An OPEC Meeting to Be Difficult Because of Differences of Opinion Over Whether to Extend Existing Oil Cuts From January, When OPEC+ Is Due to Start Increasing Output

IRAN NEWS

Intelligence Minister Said Intelligence Forces Have Started Identifying the Terrorist Elements Behind the Assassination of Iranian Scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh and Have Gained Many Clues

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2 DOMESTIC

Enemies to Pay Price For Assassinating Iranian Scholar



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

Iran Exports to Syria Hit \$73m in 7 Months



> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

Bolsonaro Suffers Losses, Center-Right Makes Gains In Brazil Local Polls



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

Hamilton Wins Crash-Marred Bahrain Grand Prix



> SEE PAGE 8

Some 371 More Iranians Die From COVID-19

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Some 371 people in Iran have died as a result of the coronavirus disease over the past 24 hours, Iranian Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said on Monday.

Sadat Lari added that 48,246 citizens have passed away from coronavirus (COVID-19) in the country so far.

She pointed out that 668,151 people out of a total of 962,070 people infected with the deadly virus have recovered and been discharged from hospitals. The official noted that 13,321 new infected cases have been detected in Iran, some 2,277 of whom have been hospitalized, over the past 24 hours.

Some 5,852 other COVID-19 patients are in critical condition and being treated in intensive care units, the spokeswoman said. She added that 6,125,348 tests have so far been carried out in Iran.

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

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

West's Call for Self-Restraint Means Green Light for More Terrors



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Ebrahim Raisi says Western countries are showing green light for the continuation of terror when they call for self-restraint.

"Westerners who call for restraint in the face of terror are actually showing green light to terrorists," he said in a local judicial event on Monday.

The remarks come as European countries have called on Iran to show 'self-restraint' in response to the assassination of Iranian top scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh on Friday.

Raisi also urged related military, judicial, and security officials to form a special task force to identify and prosecute those behind the assassination.

Naming Fakhrizadeh as the 'hero' of 'nullifying sanctions and threats' in defense and nuclear fields, Raisi said "Experience shows that to counter sanctions and terror, one should only become stronger."

The logic of 'producing power' has become the mindset of Iranian youth in different fields, he said, adding that one should not neglect to adopt deterrent measures against the enemy as "it only understands the language of power."

Sanction and terror are two sides of the same coin and it is a mistake to pin hope on the lifting of sanctions through negotiation, he added.

Speaking at a meeting of the Judiciary's High Council on Monday, Raisi ordered the country's prosecutor general to set up a special task force in cooperation with the General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, the Armed Force's Judicial Organization, and the security and intelligence organizations in order to prosecute the people who ordered and perpetrated the assassination attack on Fakhrizadeh.

The top judge also urged the Iranian security and intelligence forces to immediately detect and disband the "infiltration network" across the country and take action against the insiders sending signals to the enemies.

Paying tribute to Fakhrizadeh as the hero of "nullifying the sanctions and threats" in the nuclear and defense industries, Raisi emphasized the need for strong "preventive measures" because "the enemy knows only the logic of force."

"Sanctions and assassination are two sides of the same coin. The Westerners that appeal for (Iran to exercise) self-restraint vis-a-vis assassination are in fact giving terrorists the green light," he added.

The Judiciary chief went on to say that it would be a mistake to hope for a removal of sanctions through negotiations.

Meanwhile yesterday in a ceremony, Fakhrizadeh was laid to rest three days after his assassination outside Tehran, with the country's defense minister pledging to continue his work "with more speed and more power."

He was buried at Imamzadeh Saleh mosque in Tajrish in northern Tehran's Shemiran district on Monday after a detailed funeral ceremony was held in the morning.

The cortege began at the Ministry of Defense in east Tehran, with top state and military officials on hand to pay their respect to a man who played a leading role in bolstering Iran's defense power and advancing its nuclear energy program.

An honor guard carried the casket containing his remains which reportedly received three shots during an ambush in a boulevard in Absard where assailants blew up an explosives-laden Nissan truck before targeting him and his security detail in a hail of bullets.

S. Korea Urged to Release Iranian Frozen Assets

TEHRAN (MNA) - In a video conference with the chairman of the South Korean parliament's Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee, Iranian lawmaker Mojtaba Zonnour urged the country to release the Iranian frozen assets as soon as possible.

"South Korean officials must act as soon as possible to release Iran's blocked resources and convert them into dollars and euros to return the Islamic Republic's property," the chairman of the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Mojtaba Zonnour said in the video conference with Song Young-gil.

He added that the Iranian Parliament is accordingly studying imposing sanctions on imports of South Korean products but the body believes that the issue can be resolved via negotiations.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is rich in mineral resources and can meet the needs of South Korea. Also, Iran's market of 90-million-market can be lucrative for the South Korean economy," he said.

See Page 7

No Assassins Present at Scene of Iranian Scientist's Assassination

TEHRAN (IFP) - Fresh reports suggest no assassins were present where eminent Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh was slain.

The IRGC-affiliated Fars News Agency reports that it has found out about more details of the terrorist act.

Based on this report, the bullet-proof car carrying Fakhrizadeh and his wife accompanied by three bodyguard vehicles sets off on a journey from a town in northern Mazandaran province to the town of Absard in Damavand region to the east of the capital, Tehran.

A few kilometres left to the site of the incident, the leading bodyguard car leaves the motorcade to go and check the destination for safety.

At the same time, the sound of a few bullets hitting the car draws the attention of Fakhrizadeh and makes the car stop. He gets out of the car, believing the sound had been caused by the car hitting objects on the road or by the engine malfunctioning.

Right then, several rounds were shot at Fakhrizadeh by a remote-controlled automatic machine gun from a Nissan pickup parked 150 metres from his car. Two bullets hit Fakhrizadeh on his side and one bullet in the back, causing his spinal cord to be severed.

See Page 7

JCPOA Joint Commission To Meet on December 16

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - A meeting of the Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) will take place in Vienna on December 16.

The Joint Commission will be chaired on behalf of EU High Representative Josep Borrell by the Secretary-General of the European External Action Service Helga Maria Schmid and attended by the representatives of E3+2 countries (France, Germany, UK, China and Russia) and Iran, according to the official website of the European Union.

Participants will discuss ongoing work to preserve the JCPOA and how to ensure the full and effective implementation of the agreement by all sides, including in the preparation of exchanges at the Ministerial Level.

The JCPOA was signed in 2015 between Iran and six other states - namely the US, Germany, France, Britain, Russia and China - and was ratified in the form of Resolution 2231.

However, the U.S. under President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled out of the JCPOA in May 2018 and reinstated the sanctions that had been lifted by the deal.

As the remaining European parties failed to fulfill their end of the bargain and compensate for Washington's absence, Iran moved in May 2019 to scale back its JCPOA commitments.

Iraq, Iran, Russia, Syria to Exchange Security Information

TEHRAN (MNA) - Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Russian Federation and Syria will exchange security information with each other.

Spokesperson for Iraq's Joint Chief of Staff Major General Tahseen al-Khafaji made the remarks on Sunday and emphasized the effective role and successful achievements of Quartet Committee for the exchange of information and security cooperation between Iraq, Iran, Russia and Syria.

The Quartet Committee for Exchange of Information and Security Cooperation, with members from Iraq, Iran, Russia and Syria based in Iraqi Ministry of Defense under the command of a senior official of the Ministry, is very important in exchanging information on terrorist movements and eliminating them, he added.

Iraqi, Iranian, Russian and Syrian officers are members of the Quartet Committee for Information Exchange and Security Cooperation and this Committee has had successful operations in arresting terrorists and thwarting terrorist operations prior to its implementation, Major General Tahseen al-Khafaji stated.

See Page 7

Daesh Claims Rocket Attack on Oil Refinery in Iraq

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - The Daesh terrorist group has claimed a rocket attack that hit a small oil refinery in northern Iraq on Sunday.

A spokesman for the state-run Northern Refineries Co, which runs a number of Iraqi refineries, told Iraq's state news agency that two rockets had hit the Siniya refinery in the northern province of Salahuddin on Sunday, causing a fire that it said had been extinguished. Daesh claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement posted on its official channel, saying two Katyusha rockets were fired at the Siniya refinery.

According to officials, the operations were suspended at the refinery as a safety measure to prevent further damage.

"We completely shut down production units to avoid extensive damage that could result," a chief engineer at the refinery, who asked not to be named, told Reuters.

There were no reports of casualties.

The oil ministry said in a statement that firefighters managed to put out the blaze at a fuel tank. It also cited Deputy Oil Minister Hamid Younis as saying that operations are expected to be resumed in "the next few hours after assessing the damage".

The Siniya refinery has refining capacity of 30,000 barrels per day.

Daesh emerged in Iraq in 2014 amid the chaos and ruin that had resulted from the United States' invasion of the Arab country.

A bloated U.S.-led coalition launched an extensive military operation in Iraq supposedly to target the terror outfit in the same year. However, the coalition proved surprisingly slow in confronting the terrorists.

See Page 7

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Tehran's Iconic Structures Go Red to Mark World AIDS Day

TEHRAN (MNA) – Three iconic structures of capital Tehran were lit up red Sunday night, on the threshold of World AIDS Day (December 1).

Azadi Tower, Tabi'at (Nature) Bridge, and Milad Tower went red to show support and solidarity with HIV patients around the world.

The Azadi tower, located at Azadi Square, is the landmark of modern Tehran. Tabiat (Nature) Bridge is Iran's largest pedestrian bridge, which was opened in late 2014.

South Korea Urged to Unblock Iran Assets

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Chairman of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Mojtaba Zonnour during meeting with South Korean Ambassador to Tehran Ryu Jeonghyun urged Seoul to unblock Iran's frozen assets in South Korean banks.

Zonnour, representative of Qom constituency in Majlis, in the meeting emphasized the significance of diplomacy as an effective tool for bolstering friendly ties between Iran and South Korea, adding that parliaments of both countries have key roles in their foreign policies and for this reason Iran's Majlis is determined to bolster the bilateral cooperation with South Korea.

He noted that the approach of Iran's Majlis is based on boosting parliamentary interactions with other countries especially with East Asians. He expressed hope for eradication of Coronavirus and continuation of interactions between Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Commission with its counterpart in South Korea through webinar.

He then pointed to the U.S. unilateral pullout of the JCPOA and its imposing illegal and cruel sanctions on Iran, stipulating that the White House policies have been all against international norms and values, and as all see, American people by voting for Donald Trump's rival Joe Biden in the presidential election practically expressed their opposition towards his illogical policies.

Zonnour also pointed to the assassination of Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh by the elements of filthy Zionist regime, saying that world community and especially South Korea should condemn this act and stand against such actions which violate international laws.

On the decline in Iran-South Korea economic exchanges, he said there are good economic potentials in both countries, adding that regarding Iran's capacity in oil, gas, condensates and other mining sectors both countries can expand their bilateral cooperation more than ever.



He then pointed to Iran's frozen assets in South Korean banks, saying that Iranian officials have taken action to unblock it and it is expected South Korean government take practical action for unfreezing Iran's oil revenues in South Korea.

Zonnour also urged South Korea not to follow the policies of the U.S. and to show serious will in unfreezing Iran's money.

Meanwhile South Korean Ambassador Ryu, for his part, pointed to the cultural commonalities and good friendly cooperation background between both states, adding that expansion of friendly ties with Iran is of great importance for his country.

He also condemned assassination of Iranian scientist and expressed his condolences to Iranian government and nation over this sad incident.

He also pointed to the decline in economic relations between Iran and South Korea due to the U.S. unilateral sanctions and emphasized that both countries enjoy high capacities for boosting the level of their economic cooperation so South Korean government and parliament welcome expansion of friendly ties with Iran especially economic exchanges.

Ryu also expressed hope that Iran's assets would be unblocked by South Korean banks, adding that South Korean government is after resolving this problem by doing its best for unfreezing Iran assets. He concluded the embassy seeks bolstering parliamentary exchanges between both states.

Enemies Sought to Assassinate Fakhrizadeh for 20 Years

TEHRAN (MNA) – Secretary of Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) said that enemies had sought to assassinate scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh for the past 20 years.



Speaking on the sidelines of funeral ceremony of Iranian nuclear and defense scientist martyr Mohsen Fakhrizadeh on Monday, Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani added that intelligence services had received information that Martyr Fakhrizadeh was being targeted by a terrorist act and where they were to carry out their operations.

It was for 20 years that enemies of the country were after assassinating martyr 'Fakhrizadeh' but they failed to realize their malicious objectives, he said, adding, "It is a matter of regret to say that necessary seriousness was not taken into consideration during these twenty years and finally, terrorists managed to realize their heinous objective and assassinated the prominent Iranian scientist brutally."

Necessary improvements had been made for his protection team, but this time, enemy used a completely new, professional and specialized style, he said, adding, "Unfortunately, they (terrorists) managed to realize their malicious objectives and assassinated him after 20 years."

Elsewhere in his remarks, secretary of Supreme National Security Council pointed to the salient achievements and giant works taken by Martyr Fakhrizadeh both in nuclear and defense systems as well as moves taken in the fight against the novel coronavirus, COVID-19 and added, "Enemies of the country should know that they cannot stop Iran from progressing technologically and scientifically in a way that all their conspiracies waged against the country would be foiled."

Enemies to Pay Price For Assassinating Iranian Scholar



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Aerospace Force underlined Iran's definite retaliation for the assassination of nuclear and defense scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

"Our enemies committed suicide for fear of death, and they should know that they will certainly pay the price," Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh said on the sidelines of funeral of Fakhrizadeh, a senior Defense Ministry scientist who was assassinated near Tehran on November 27.

The Iranian nation will not give up efforts to take revenge for the late scientist, the general added.

Hajizadeh also said that the martyrdom of Fakhrizadeh would strengthen the resolve of the late scientist's colleagues and friends to press on.

He said the Iranian nation's movement and progress won't be stopped by terror attacks.

"Terrorists and enemies of Islam want to stop the movement and progress of the Iranian nation," he added. "The enemies must know that we will definitely retaliate this crime," he reiterated.

Addressing the enemies, Hajizadeh highlighted that the Iranian nation wants revenge for Fakhrizadeh's assassination.

"The path of this martyr and other martyrs of terror continues, and these kinds of martyrdom will increase the desire and motivation of the friends and colleagues of this martyr to continue his path," he said.

Iran Leaves No Crime Unanswered

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran's Defense Minister warned perpetrators of the assassination of Martyr Fakhri Zadeh that no vicious crime, assassination, or stupid move will go unanswered.

The funeral ceremony of the Martyr Mohsen Fakhri Zadeh held with the presence of Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami as well other state officials.

Today it's time to bid farewell to someone who lived his whole life in the path of right, said Hatami in this ceremony stressing that the vicious assassination of the Iranian scientist made him a role model for Iranian youth and students.

"In order to continue the path of Fakhri Zadeh, in the Sunday cabinet meeting, we decided to double the budget of the Research and Innovation Organization of the Ministry of Defense in the next Iranian year", Hatami announced.

Now, Fakhri Zadeh is a universal figure at the international



level, and it is a beginning to the failures of the enemies of the Islamic Republic, he noted.

Today, it is 40 years that enemies claim that the military option is on the table, but, they did not have the courage or the opportunity to use it, he said and added, "Eventually they had to put their so-called option under the table with shame."

Iran's Defense Minister also warned that no crime, assassination, or stupid move will go unanswered.

"In line with the instructions of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, we won't stop pursuing the case of the criminals and perpetuates of the terrorist attack", he underlined.

"I sincerely thank all nations and governments who voiced their objection over the assassination" he also said, adding, "And the governments who didn't condemn such terrorists' move, must bear in mind that compromising with arrogant terrorists makes them more arrogant."

U.S. Unilateralism Is Against International Laws

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran-Poland Parliamentary Friendship Group Mahdi Farshadan in meeting with Poland's Ambassador to Tehran Maciej Falkowski blasted the U.S. unilateralism against other countries and called it a against the international laws.

Farshadan first pointed to the constructive role of parliaments in easing and expansion of relations between countries, adding that Iran's Majlis welcomes reinforcing friendly ties with Poland's parliament.

He then pointed to the amicable relations between people of Iran and Poland in the past, noting that due to the past positive records in bilateral cooperation, the necessary grounds for developing the relation are ready which should be used in favor of both nations.

He then condemned U.S. cruel sanctions against Iranian nation, emphasizing that the U.S. unilateralism and exercising pressure and sanctions against countries are against the international laws.

Farshadan went on to say that Iranian nation in the past has shown that they will not bow to the U.S. pressure and bullying and they will resist for the sake of their independence and freedom.

He said he expects independent countries to continue their relations and exchanges regardless of the third party's effects.

Falkowski, for his part, pointed to his country's interests in boosting cooperation with Iran, saying that Iran and Poland's friendly relation dates back long and Poland has defined many projects for bolstering bilateral cooperation with Iran, deploring that due to the Coronavirus pandemic these projects have not been operationalized.

He then pointed to the actions of Poland Embassy in Tehran for bolstering friendly ties and exchanges between both states, adding that despite the pandemic, Poland Embassy has not stopped its work for reinforcing cooperation with Iran especially in trade, economic, scientific and cultural fields.



China Condemns Assassination of Iranian Scientist

TEHRAN (IP) - The Chinese Ambassador in Tehran as well as other senior world politicians condemned the assassination of the prominent Iranian scientist Fakhrizadeh on Friday.

The Chinese ambassador in Tehran condemned the assassination of Martyr Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

During a meeting with Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the Iranian Parliament Speaker, Chinese Ambassador to Tehran Chang Hua emphasized the strategic relations between Tehran and Beijing.

During the meeting, the two sides also stressed the need to strengthen the longstanding, civilizational, and historical relations between the two countries.

Iran, Yemen to Boost Educational Ties

YEMEN (IP) - Iran's ambassador to Yemen and the Yemeni minister of higher education met to discuss cooperation in the field of higher education and ways to strengthen it.

Hassan Irloo met with the Minister of Higher Education of the National Salvation Government (NSG) on Sunday to discuss the possibility of resuming and promoting cooperation between the two countries in the field of higher education and scientific research and arranging scholarships announced by the Islamic Republic of Iran through the Yemeni ministry in undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral courses.

The Yemeni minister also said that the country's higher education sector has suffered extensive damage since the Saudi coalition's aggression in 2015 and that 11 public universities and 49 private universities with 150,000 students are suffering.

The Yemeni minister also appreciated the positions of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, the government, and the people of Iran in supporting the Yemeni people, and welcomed Iran's investment in the field of higher education in Yemen, and announced the readiness of the Yemeni national salvation government to provide appropriate conditions.

With the support of the United States, the United Arab Emirates, and several other countries, Saudi Arabia has launched a military invasion of Yemen since March 2015 and has laid land, sea, and air siege to the country.

Iran Urges Int'l Condemnation of State-Sponsored Terrorism

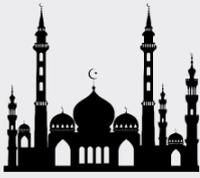
TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran's first vice-president denounced the assassination of top commander Lt. General Qassem Soleimani and eminent scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh as brazen examples of state-sponsored terrorism, calling on the international community to condemn and prevent such inhumane attacks.

Eshaq Jahangiri on Monday delivered an address to the 19th meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) Council of Heads of Government, held via videoconferencing and hosted by India.

In his speech, Jahangiri said Iran has been a victim of state-sponsored terrorism despite its fruitful cooperation with other countries in the fight against terrorism and in combating Daesh terrorists that pose a major threat to the world.

The blatant examples of utilizing state-sponsored terrorism against Iran were the January assassination of Lt. General Qassem Soleimani by the US and the recent assassination attack on defense scientist and manager Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, he added.

The vice-president called on governments and regional and international organizations not to remain silent on state-sponsored terrorism and condemn it to prevent a recurrence of such inhumane measures.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:53
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:11
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:28
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:57

123. Not your desires, nor those of the People of the Book (can prevail): whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly. Nor will he find, besides Allah, any protector or helper.
124. If any do deeds of righteousness, - be they male or female - and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them.

Surah 4. Women (123 - 124)

Iran Exports to Syria Hit \$73m in 7 Months

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Director General of the Arab-African States Department at Iran Trade Promotion Organization Farzad Piltan says the latest statistics released by Iran Customs Administration show that Iran's exports to Syria have been around \$73m in the first seven months of the current year while its imports from this Arab states have been around \$10b in the same period.

Piltan said after the start of the political, security conflicts and violence in Syria, the trade volume between Iran and Syria nosedived and the volume fell to \$105m in 2018. He added that Iran and Syria's trade volume was around \$550m in 2010 as Iran's exports to Syria were around \$520m while Syria's exports to Iran stood at \$30m.

He went on to say that despite the negative trend in the bilateral trade, their bilateral trade began growing once again and it bounced back to \$170m last year as Iran's exports were \$160m and Syria's share was \$10m.

He noted that auto-parts, medicines, iron and steel bar, pipe and profile, gas turbine parts, powder milk for babies, pistachio, sanitary valves, sodium carbonate and yeasts have been the major exported items of Iran to Syria this year while Iran's imports from Syria have been olive oil, fabric, fruit kernels and plants.

Piltan noted that in the field of exports of technical and engineering services to Syria, Iranian companies have exported services worth of \$2.2b between 2008 and 2018.

Launching auto production line, building power sub-stations, water treatment plants, construction of bridges, construction of power plants, cement plants, designing and installing transformers, construction of flour plant and implementing water equipment have been of the major technical and engineering services which



have been exported to Syria by Iranian companies, he noted.

Piltan also pointed to some economic indexes of Syria and opportunities and challenges in front of Iran's exports to Syria, adding that Syria is a country with population about 18m people that 90 percent of them are Muslims. He reiterated that agriculture accounts for 20 percent of Syrian economy and its GDP, and services account for 20 percent of its economy.

He said that last year's statistics were affected by the civil conflicts and the country's GDP stood at \$50b, and its GDP growth rate was minus 36 percent with an inflation rate of 25 percent and an unemployment rate of about 50 percent.

Piltan stated that Lebanon, Jordan, China, Turkey, Iraq and Tunisia have been the major trade partner of Syria in terms of exports to this country while Russia, Turkey and China were the major export destinations of Syria in 2019.

He said that Syria's exports were valued at \$309m and its imports have been around \$4.3b in the same period.

He said coffee, tea, fruits and dried fruits, soap, detergents, dairy products, honey, cement and garment have been of the major exporting items of Syria.

Piltan reiterated that although the trend of trade cooperation between Iran and Syria has grown downtrend after the civil unrests, the damages on the infrastructures of Syria during the conflicts have caused a new opportunity for resumption of activities of Iranian technical and engineering companies for exports of their products to Syria.

Tehran, Baku Agree To Launch a Joint Industrial Park



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran- Azerbaijan Joint Chamber of Commerce says Iran and Republic of Azerbaijan have reached an agreement for launching a joint wharf and industrial park which will be operationalized after the Coronavirus pandemic is contained.

Speaking to ILNA on the trade relations between Iran and Azerbaijan, Hossein Pirmoazen said the Republic of Azerbaijan perhaps has been the only country that Iran could have kept its economic relations during the Coronavirus pandemic, as the joint border customs points never closed even for single day.

He reiterated that Bileh Savar and Astara Customs offices did not close and on the contrary, they faced the rise in the export capacity.

Pirmoazen said that the economic relations between both countries were kept active and only traveling between both states was forbidden but currently customs offices are active round-the-clock and exports are done mutually.

He further said that Azerbaijan is a gateway and transit route for Iran's exports to Eurasian and CIS countries. He admitted that Georgia's ban on arrival of Iranian goods is for this reason and is because of the cold Azerbaijan-Georgia relation.

Pirmoazen said that fortunately in the past eight months, Bileh Savar Customs has enjoyed 8 percent growth in exports comparing to the same period last year.

He said trade relation between Iran and Azerbaijan is favorable and both sides have had good talks and there is currently no problem in trade exchange in these two border crossing customs offices.

Pirmoazen also announced readiness of the chamber for reconstruction of Karabakh, admitting that currently the roads are closed in Karabakh and no talks have been held.

He said Iran can help in any field for reconstruction of Karabakh, adding that both countries have agreed to launch a joint wharf and industrial park which will be operationalized after containing the pandemic.

Azerbaijan by having 380,000 meters of joint border with Iran is one of the countries Iran has good economic, social and cultural ties with.

Exports From Mining Sector Exceeds \$3b in 7 months

TEHRAN (MNA) - The value of Iran's exports from mining industry stood at \$3.049 billion in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-October 21), according to the data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

Exports from this sector accounted for over 16 percent of the country's non-oil exports during the seven-month period.

As previously announced by the former acting minister of industry, mining and trade, reaching the minerals export of \$10.5 billion is planned for the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021).

Making the remarks during a meeting with the board members of Iran Mine House in early June, Hossein Modarres Khiabani had said the minerals and mining projects constitute the main part of the 200 major industrial, mining, and trade projects, which are planned to be inaugurated across the country by the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (begins on March 20, 2021).

According to Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister



Saeed Zarandi, the said projects are going to be implemented under a new program called "Persistent Production-Effective Employment-Sustainable Exports".

As reported, some 1.69 quadrillion rials (about \$40.23 billion) has been invested in the mentioned projects that are going to create job opportunities for 41,000 people.

In terms of the number of projects, Kerman Province with 26 projects and in terms of the volume of investment, Khuzestan Province with nearly 360 trillion rials (about \$8.57 billion) have the largest share of the said projects in the country, Zarandi said.

He noted that the said projects, which are characterized by factors like completing the industry's value chain, reducing imports, being export-oriented, using technology, and creating jobs, have been selected as national projects.

Currently, there are 12,500 projects with physical progress of over 60 percent across the country, of which 6,000 are related to leading and prioritized industries, according to the official.

Jihadi Work of MSC Is Praiseworthy

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN - The CEO of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) Eng. Hamid Reza Azimian, accompanied by a member of the board of directors Mr. Abbas Akbari and head of the public relations of the company Mr. Iraj Torabi, met the Friday Leader of the town of Mobarakeh Hojjatoleslam Seyed Mehdi Mousavi and during the meeting felicitated the Basij Week and briefed the Friday Prayer Leader of major achievements and actions of the company in the year of surge in production.

In the meeting, Hojjatoleslam Mousavi said that actions of MSC is actually source of pride and he thanked the jihadi endeavors of management and staff of Mobarakeh Steel Company. He reiterated he believes the big work is underway in MSC which strongly supports national economic and industry front and it is the source of encouragement for the people.

He then thanked MSC for its efforts regarding the public health, saying that MSC shines like a gem in the region and the company's leadership in the field of public health and sanitary is praiseworthy in the current critical condition of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Hojjatoleslam Mousavi further said that activity in the cultural field is of the priorities of the society and fortunately MSC has shown its concern and expressing hope that the company would continue support of religious and cultural activities in the future.

Meanwhile Mr. Azimian, for his part, pointed to the supports of the company



to the hospitals involved in treating Coronavirus-infected patients, saying that in line with its observing social responsibilities and humanitarian activities, the company accepted to provide the hospitals, approved by Isfahan Medical Science University and other neighboring provinces, with free supply of oxygen.

He added that the company has taken measure in equipping the hospitals with their needed apparatuses.

Azimian reiterated that the company by observing all health and sanitary protocols has contained the COVID-19 among its staff and by the way it has boosted its production and activities.

At the end of the meeting, the Friday Prayer Leader of Mobarakeh presented Mr. Azimian with a plaque of appreciation.

Petchem Production Capacity Increases by 10m Tons

TEHRAN (MNA) - Production capacity of petrochemicals since the beginning of the current year (started March 21, 2020) has increased by 10 million tons.

By implementing a number of six petrochemical projects since the beginning of the current year, the country's petrochemical production capacity has increased by nearly 10 million tons despite sanctions.

Therefore, the petrochemical industry has been paid serious attention in its various down-, mid-, and upstream sectors in recent years.

Based on the planning made in this regard, objectives of which will be materialized by the next year (to start March 20, 2021), the country's petrochemical production capacity will hit 100 million tons annually.

Once objectives predetermined in petrochemical industry are realized by 2021, petrochemical's production capacity will hit 100 million tons, valued at \$37 billion.

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh termed 'surge in production' of petrochemical industry in line with implementation of 'resistance economy'.

Comprehensive Trade System Operational

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian ICT minister announced that a Comprehensive Trade System has become operational.

Minister of Communications and Information Technology (ICT) Mohammad-Javad Jahromi said the system is meant to prevent smuggling, improve the transparency of trade statistics, and facilitate services for traders.

Iran's comprehensive trade system is a mechanism for the facilitation of doing business and will ease the complexities of international trade for traders.

The system was unveiled in September 2018.

It includes a Comprehensive Trade System, a Goods Identification System, an Integrated System for Warehousing Goods, a Validation System, and Credit Rating System (special of merchants and businesspersons) as well as Trade Credit Infrastructure.

\$775m of Commodities Traded Last Month on IME

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Within the Iranian calendar month of Aban (October 22-November 20), the Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) sold 1,918,000 tons of various commodities worth nearly 775 million dollars on its spot market.

According to a report by the IME's international affairs and PR there were 703,529 tons of commodities traded on its mineral and industrial trading floor with a trading value of nearly 346 million dollars.

On this floor, the exchange sold 693,972 tons of steel, 5,140 tons of various types of copper, 9 tons of precious metals concentrates, 480 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 3,410 tons of aluminum, 860 tons of zing ingots and 16 kg of gold bars.

Next floor was the oil and petrochemical trading more than 1,212,000 tons of commodities worth more than 428 million dollars on both domestic and export markets. Commodities sold here were 293,420 tons of various grades of bitumen, 210,861 tons of polymeric products, 125,441 tons of chemicals, 4,200 tons of slack wax and 426,260 tons of vacuum bottom.

Among other commodities offered and sold on the same floor with Aban were 6,300 tons of insulation, 7,196 tons of base oil, 21,890 tons of sulfur, 600 tons of argon and 117,000 tons of lube cut.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed trade of 3,100 kg of saffron on its agricultural trading floor.

Last but not last was the IME's side market with 1,736 tons of various commodities sold on it.

Kushner and Team Heading To Saudi Arabia, Qatar

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - White House senior adviser Jared Kushner and his team are headed to Saudi Arabia and Qatar this week for talks in a region simmering with tension after the killing of an Iranian nuclear scientist.

A senior administration official said on Sunday that Kushner is to meet Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the Saudi city of Neom, and the emir of Qatar in that country in the coming days. Kushner will be joined by Middle East envoys Avi Berkowitz and Brian Hook and Adam Boehler, chief executive of the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation.



King Abdullah, Palestinian Leader Abbas Meet

AMMAN (Reuters) - Jordan's King Abdullah on Sunday met with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and both leaders set high hopes that U.S. President-elect Joe Biden will revive peace talks over a two-state solution to the decades-old Arab-Israeli conflict, officials said.

In a palace statement after meeting with Abbas in the Red Sea port of Aqaba, the monarch, who in recent months said Israeli policies and Trump's Middle East peace plan would lead to conflict, said he fully backed Palestinian statehood. "His Majesty stressed Jordan stood with all its resources alongside Palestinians in achieving their legitimate rights to set up an independent state," the monarch was quoted as saying in the statement.



Bolsonaro Suffers Losses, Center-Right Makes Gains in Brazil Local Polls



BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Far-right President Jair Bolsonaro's candidates suffered further defeats Sunday and the traditional center-right emerged stronger in municipal runoff elections seen as a gauge of where things stand in Brazilian politics ahead of presidential polls in 2022.

Brazil's biggest cities, Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, both elected experienced centre-right mayors -- incumbent Bruno Covas and returning veteran Eduardo Paes, respectively -- as the candidates endorsed by Bolsonaro were roundly defeated, according to full official results. The Brazilian left meanwhile continued to struggle to bounce back from the damaging impeachment of president Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and the jailing of her predecessor, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, on corruption charges -- the events that paved the way for Bolsonaro's "conservative wave."

The runoff elections "confirmed what we'd already seen in the first-round vote (on November 15): a defeat for Bolsonaro's camp," said political scientist Leonardo Avritzer of the Federal University of Minas Gerais. "The left meanwhile continues to have enormous difficulties."

For the first time in its history, Lula's and Rousseff's Workers' Party (PT) failed to win a single mayoral race in Brazil's 26 state capitals.

Traditional parties to the center and right meanwhile consolidated the comeback they made in the first round, including Sao Paulo Mayor Covas's Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) and Rio mayor-elect Paes's Democrats (DEM).

Bolsonaro, the politician known as the "Tropical Trump," will for his part have to work to bolster his position before his expected reelection bid, analysts said.

"Bolsonaro showed little political capacity as a leader," said political scientist Flavio Biroli of the University of Brasilia.

"The center-right and right came out as winners, but that is not the same as the Bolsonaro right," she told AFP.

Covas and Paes both took aim at Bolsonaro in their victory speeches. Covas, a 40-year-old cancer survivor tasked with handling one of the world's biggest coronavirus outbreaks, called his win a victory for "science and moderation."

That was seen as a veiled jab at Bolsonaro's polarizing style and controversial handling of Covid-19, which the president has downplayed as a "little flu" even as it has killed more than 172,000 people in Brazil, the second-highest death toll worldwide, after the United States.

Covas had to fend off what looked at times to be a tough challenge from leftist activist turned politician Guilherme Boulos, hailed by progressives as the new face of the Brazilian left.

However, the result was not close in the end: Covas won 59 percent of the vote in Latin America's biggest city, to 41 percent for Boulos.

UN Envoy Urges Progress In Syrian Political Process

BEIRUT (AFP) - A UN envoy Sunday pushed for progress on the eve of the latest round of talks in Geneva towards revising Syria's constitution and winding down the country's nine-year-old civil war.

"We want to see progress," Geir Pedersen, the UN special envoy for Syria, told reporters during a virtual news conference.

A so-called constitutional committee made up of 45 people -- with 15 delegates each representing the Damascus regime, the opposition and civil society -- is to meet for the fourth time on Monday after months of little headway.

"I'm looking forward to extensive and hopefully good discussions next week that will be able to bring us a little bit further down the road towards then starting the discussions in January on constitutional principles" at a fifth meeting, Pedersen said.

He said he had been on a flurry of diplomatic visits in recent weeks, including trips to Damascus allies Tehran and Moscow as well as rebel backer Ankara.

It is "important that we have clear international support for the work that we are doing, and I'm pleased to say that that has been forthcoming," he said.

The constitutional committee was created in September last year and first convened a month later, but disagreement over the agenda and the coronavirus pandemic hindered further meetings until a third round in August that ended without concrete progress. The fourth session was supposed to take place in October, but was postponed over lack of consensus on the agenda.

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Belarus Protesters Take to the Streets With New Tactic

MINSK (Dispatches) - Opposition protesters in Belarus took to the streets of capital Minsk Sunday in the latest of three months of demonstrations against the re-election of strongman president Alexander Lukashenko.

Since an August election, Belarus has been gripped by massive protests that erupted after Lukashenko, 66, secured a sixth term as president of the ex-Soviet republic.

The opposition believes the election was rigged and political novice Svetlana Tikhanovskaya -- who ran against Lukashenko in the place of her jailed husband -- was the true winner of the polls.

In recent weeks, authorities imposed an intense crackdown in which hundreds were detained and protesters were prevented from gathering in central Minsk. That prompted Lukashenko's opponents to change tactic, calling on supporters to create small gatherings in every district of the capital.

According to local media, some twenty rallies were recorded on Sunday across the city. "Large columns of people have assembled in all districts of Minsk, without exception. The Lukashenko police are desperately rushing from district to district," said opposition Telegram channel Nexta Live that has helped coordinate the ongoing demonstrations.

As in previous weeks, several metro stations in the city centre were shut and mobile connection was limited. Riot police were deployed in large numbers, with the Tut.by news website reporting the use of stun grenades and tear gas.

Human rights group Viasna said that at least 20 people have been taken into police custody so far.

"Everyone takes to the streets in their district and sees dozens, hundreds and thousands of supporters," Tikhanovskaya, 38, said in a video address posted on her Telegram channel on Saturday.

She added that Belarusians are a "proud, brave and peaceful people that have learned the price of freedom and will never agree to live without it".

Tikhanovskaya fled to EU member Lithuania shortly after the August vote and has received support from several Western leaders, who refuse to recognise the election results.

The European Union has slapped sanctions on Lukashenko and a number of his allies over election rigging and a violent crackdown on demonstrators.

Northeast Nigeria Massacre Claimed at Least 110 Lives

MAIDUGURI (AFP) - A weekend attack on farm workers in northeast Nigeria blamed on the Boko Haram jihadist group left at least 110 dead, the UN humanitarian coordinator in the country said Sunday.

"At least 110 civilians were ruthlessly killed and many others were wounded in this attack," Edward Kallon said in a statement, after initial tolls indicated 43 and then at least 70 dead from Saturday's massacre by suspected Boko Haram fighters.

"The incident is the most violent direct attack against innocent civilians this year," Kallon said, blaming "non-state armed groups" without naming Boko Haram.

"I call for the perpetrators of this heinous and senseless act to be brought to justice," he added.

The bloodletting centred on the village of Koshobe near the Borno state capital Maiduguri, with assailants targeting farm workers on rice fields, with a pro-government anti-jihadist militia saying the assailants



43 bodies recovered on Saturday, saying the toll could rise after search operations resumed.

The victims included dozens of labourers from Sokoto state in northwestern Nigeria, roughly 1,000 kilometres (600 miles) away, who had travelled to the northeast to find work, it said.

Six were wounded in the attack and eight remained missing as of Saturday.

Kallon, citing "reports that several women may have been kidnapped", called for their immediate release.

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari condemned the attack on Saturday, saying: "The entire country has been wounded by these senseless killings."

tied up the labourers and slit their throats.

Kallon said the assailants -- "armed men on motorcycles" -- also targeted other communities in the area.

Borno Governor Babagana Umara Zulum attended the burial Sunday in the nearby village of Zabarmari of

Trump Not to Change His Mind on Election Fraud Claims

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - In the first TV interview since losing his re-election bid, President Donald Trump indicated Sunday that he will never concede to Joe Biden and abandon his conspiracy theory about mass ballot fraud.

"It's not like you're gonna change my mind. My mind will not change in six months," Trump told Fox News interviewer Maria Bartiromo.

"This election was rigged. This election was a total fraud," he claimed, again without backing this up. "We won the election easily."

The 45-minute interview, Trump's first on television since the November 3 election, was mostly a monologue of evidence-free claims concerning election fraud, virtually unchallenged by Bartiromo. Despite Trump's unprecedented attack on the validity of the US election system, his legal team has yet to provide any evidence that stands up in court.

Case after case has been rejected by judges around the country. The latest rebuff came from the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, which on Saturday turned down a lawsuit filed by Trump supporters seeking to contest Biden's win in the state. "We're trying to put the evidence in and the judges won't allow us to do it," Trump said. "We are trying. We have so much evidence."

Thai Protesters Target Royal Guards Unit in Latest Rally

BANGKOK (AFP) - Hundreds of protesters marched on a barracks of Thailand's royal guards unit on Sunday hoisting inflatable rubber ducks high above their heads, a whimsical show of force by a pro-democracy movement calling for curbs to the power of the monarchy.

The yellow toy has been harnessed as a symbol by the protesters, whose leaders have emphasised peaceful tactics despite recent use of water cannon and tear gas by security forces.

But their demands to reform the kingdom's unassailable monarchy -- once a taboo topic due to a draconian royal defamation law -- have sent shockwaves through Thailand's political and ruling class.

Sunday's protest -- the latest in a series of near-daily turnouts across Bangkok -- was meant to target the 11th Infantry Regiment.

Along with the 1st Infantry Regiment, the two units were placed under King Maha Vajiralongkorn's direct control last year -- a move experts saw as a way for the monarch to assert more authority.

"These two regiments have been involved in cracking down on people in the past," said prominent protest leader Parit "Penguin" Chiwarak. "They have also played key roles in past coups."

The black-clad protesters wore hair clips with yellow rubber ducks, while those on the frontlines donned gas masks and helmets -- prepared for any potential skirmishes with authorities. The entrances, gates and walls of the barracks were covered with coils of barbed wire, while police in riot gear stood guard outside.

"The things used against us are bought using our taxes, so they are using our money to hurt us," Farnag, a 30-year-old graduate student, told AFP, declining to provide her full name.

"As taxpayers, the army should be serving us, not the monarchy," she said. "Their duty should be to protect the people."

The military has long positioned itself as a defender of Thailand's enormously wealthy royal family, who boast assets conservatively estimated to be some \$30-\$60 billion. In the name of protecting the king, the army has staged more than a dozen coups since the end of absolute monarchy in 1932. The most recent was in 2014.



Shanon
(adviser)

Elahieh Apt (\$2000)
250sq.m, 4bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
fireplace
Fully Furn

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

Parsian

Aghdasieh Apt (\$2200)
220sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F

bldg (\$8000)
Farmanieh
4storey, 15bdrs
S/pool, Sauna
Jacuzzi, pkgs
green yard
Semi Furn

Zaferanieh
220sq.m, 3bdrs
S/pool, Sauna
Jacuzzi, pkg
L.balcony
F.F

Jordan Apt (\$1600)
180sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, F.F

Jordan Office
300sq.m, 5bdrs
(\$30 per sq.m)

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Russia's Nord Stream 2 to Resume Pipe-laying in Germany

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia's Nord Stream 2 said on Saturday it planned to start laying pipes in Germany's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) this year, confirming its intention to resume work on the stalled Moscow-backed gas pipeline to Europe.

It said its plan envisaged laying a 2.6 kilometre (1.62 miles) section of each line of the pipeline, adding that it would name the pipe-laying vessel at a later date.



OPEC+ Energy Ministers Ponder Delay to Extra Oil Supply

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Energy ministers from the OPEC+ alliance of oil producers are considering whether or not to extend historic cuts to crude output for a further period, in view of global uncertainties about demand, as COVID-19 cases surge worldwide.

Policymakers from the 23 OPEC+ grouping - led by the two biggest producers Saudi Arabia and Russia - have been consulting ahead of a crucial full meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries this week to decide whether to put an extra two million barrels of oil per day back onto global markets from next month. Trading experts said that a further extension of the current level of cuts - around 7.7m barrels per day - was likely in view of continuing uncertainty about the global economic outlook.

Mike Muller, head of Asian business for global crude trader Vitol, told a forum organized by the consultancy Gulf Intelligence: "The market consensus is that they will hold off on the full increase. The question is for how long - three or six months?"

Prince Abdulaziz Bin Salman, the energy minister of Saudi Arabia and chairman of the OPEC+ ministerial committee, has indicated his willingness to consider "tweaks" to the current schedule in view of economic uncertainties and fragile oil demand growth.

The OPEC+ policymakers' calculations have been complicated by the recent strong rise in the price of crude. Brent, the global benchmark, enjoyed its third consecutive week of rising prices last week, standing at \$48.27 per barrel.

Rising oil prices would suggest greater demand in the global market, and therefore less reason for OPEC+ to abandon the timetable for resumption of supply it agreed last April at the height of the crisis that saw some prices fall into negative territory.

On the other hand, some OPEC+ countries are keen to increase export levels as their economies suffer from the effect of pandemic lockdowns.

Nigeria has argued that the OPEC+ rules should take into account the economic situation in individual member countries, a view to which Saudi Arabia is believed to be opposed because it would open the way for other countries to claim "exceptional circumstances", undermining OPEC+ unity and credibility.

Iraq, another producer which has had trouble meeting OPEC+ limits this year, gave OPEC+ a boost on Saturday as its oil minister, Ihsan Jabbar, was reported in local media as saying the country would fall in line with the current limits and not seek an exemption, for fear of the damage that might cause to oil prices.

Turkish Economy Likely Saw Strong Bounce-Back in Q3

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) -

Turkey's economy likely had a strong bounce back in the July-September quarter as it was boosted by both normalization processes and loan growth supported by loose financial conditions, according to surveys and experts.

The pandemic, which led to a year-on-year contraction of 9.9% in the second quarter when restrictions imposed to curb the coronavirus hit hardest, eased in the third quarter as Ankara reopened the economy and lifted most measures as of June.

Turkey will receive good news about its economic recovery as the reading of the third-quarter gross domestic product (GDP), to be released Monday, is expected to show a growth of up to 5%, according to surveys.

"Similar to other economies, the GDP growth in Q3 bounced back strongly after various restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic were removed," Piotr Matys, emerging markets FX strategist at Rabobank, told Daily Sabah.

Even though multiple polls had earlier predicted a contraction in the third quarter, expectations turned positive after data indicated a more forceful performance.

The median estimate of 14 economists in a Reuter's poll forecast growth of 4.8%. Estimates ranged between an increase of 6.8% and a contraction of 1.5%. An October poll of 48 economists had predicted a contraction of 2.6%.

Earlier surveys projecting a contraction can be attributed to substantial uncertainty caused by the outbreak, Matys said. "It was extremely difficult to predict the scale of recession which mainly depended on restrictions and how long they lasted."



Argentina Damps Hopes of Quick Deal With IMF

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Argentina's economy minister played down the prospects of an early deal with the IMF to repay a controversial \$44bn loan, as the country's year-old leftist government tries to build a domestic consensus on how to end its economic crisis.

After successfully restructuring \$65bn of foreign debt with private creditors in August, the government's attention has turned to talks with the IMF, which began this month. Markets hope this will lead to a new programme that could help to reverse a crisis of confidence that has stoked fears of an imminent devaluation of the peso.

"We are fine. We have the instruments to maintain [exchange rate stability]," insisted Martín Guzmán, economy minister, in an interview with the Financial Times. He argued that there was no need for Argentina to seek further help from China, after the central bank renewed a currency swap deal with the Asian country for \$19bn in August for another three years, to bolster alarmingly low foreign exchange reserves.

"The most important aspect is to get [the new program] right. We want to move at a solid pace but require common understanding and legitimacy. We are not going to rush this," added the 38-year-old economist.

A deal by March or April "would certainly be acceptable", he said. "That doesn't mean it won't come before that, but there are no guarantees."

The negotiations with the IMF come as Argentina seeks a way out of a three-year long recession. That downturn began after a currency crisis in 2018 that prompted the fund to come to the rescue with a record-breaking \$57bn program - making Argentina the institution's biggest debtor by far. The recession was made worse by the coronavirus crisis, which prompted the government of President Alberto Fernández to implement one of the longest and strictest lockdowns in the world.

Mr Guzmán spoke from his offices opposite the presidential palace in Buenos Aires over the din of tens of thousands of rowdy Argentines who had gathered to pay their respects to Diego Maradona, the legendary footballer who died on Wednesday. The economy minister played down calls from independent economists for Argentina to seek further cheap financing from the fund.

"We have to be very careful when borrowing in foreign currency," he said, warning that exports had been weak over the past seven years, a key factor in the sustainability of Argentina's debt.

Weak Demand Would Derail Britain's Economic Comeback

LONDON (FT) - This has been an exceptional year. Last week's spending review showed how extraordinary it was for the UK. As the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, remarked, the Office for Budget Responsibility "forecast the economy will contract this year by 11.3 per cent, the largest fall in output for more than 300 years". What a government says and does in such times tells us much about its character and capacity, as well as about the choices facing the country.



On its character, the revealing decision was cutting the aid budget by 0.2 per cent of gross domestic product. At just over 1 per cent of this year's net public borrowing and 0.4 per cent of spending, the money being saved is irrelevant. The decision violated a manifesto commitment. Above all, according to the World Bank, "the Covid-19 pandemic is estimated to push an additional 88m to 115m people into extreme poverty this year". This then is a revealing case of ostentatious meanness.

As revealing are the costs of Brexit. The OBR says productivity will be 4 per cent lower in the long run than if the UK had stayed in the EU. The Bank of England argues that short-term disruption will cut GDP by about 1 per cent in the first quarter of 2021. A no-deal Brexit could, says the OBR, cut GDP by a further 2 per cent in

2021. In the long run, it estimates, GDP may be 2 per cent lower than under a trade deal. Pity businesses that must make plans amid such uncertainty over Brexit and a pandemic.

Scatter plot showing how many countries across the world have endured soaring fiscal deficits and large recessions in 2020, the year of the pandemic

What about capacity? The pandemic is a global disaster. But where does the UK stand relative to its peers in the G7 group of leading economies (plus Spain)? According to consensus forecasts, it will have the biggest fiscal deficit this year, at 18.4 per cent of GDP, the second-largest fall in GDP, at 11 per cent (behind Spain) and the third-highest mortality rate, just behind Spain and Italy. Much has gone very wrong.

Finally, what about the choices ahead? On this the OBR is sobering, offering an upside scenario in which output returns to the pre-crisis level of GDP late next year, a central scenario, in which the economy recovers to pre-virus levels in late 2022, and a downside scenario in which the economy only returns to pre-virus level in 2024. In the upside scenario, output eventually returns to its pre-virus trajectory, but output is left permanently below the pre-Covid trajectory in the other two scenarios, by 3 and 6 percentage points respectively. All three scenarios assume a smooth transition to a free trade agreement with the EU in January. Otherwise, outcomes would be still worse.

It is likely then that the UK will suffer a second permanent hit to output and incomes in fewer than 15 years. But the scale of the hit is not a given. It depends on how well the virus is managed and, above all, on the success of the vaccine program. It also depends on other policies (including the outcome on Brexit) that determine the scale of the longer-term scarring.

Guterres Appeals to UN Member States to Contribute to UNRWA

TEHRAN (UNIC) - United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his message on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, 29 November 2020, appealed to all Member States to urgently contribute to enable United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to meet the critical humanitarian and development needs of Palestine refugees during the pandemic.

The full text of his message reads:

As the United Nations marks its 75th anniversary, the question of Palestine remains distressingly unresolved.

The COVID-19 pandemic has decimated the Palestinian economy and undermined the already fragile humanitarian, economic and political situation in Gaza, further entrenched by crippling restrictions on movement and access.

Meanwhile, prospects for a viable two-State solution are growing more distant. A host of factors continue to cause great misery, including: the expansion of illegal settlements, a significant spike in the demolition of Palestinian homes and structures, violence and continued militant activity.

Israeli and Palestinian leaders have a responsibility to explore every opening to restore hope and achieve a two-State solution.

I remain committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis to resolve the conflict and end the occupation in line with relevant UN resolutions,



international law and bilateral agreements in pursuit of the vision of two States - Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and sovereign Palestine - living side by side in peace and security, within secure and recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with Jerusalem as the

capital of both States.

I hope that recent developments will encourage Palestinian and Israeli leaders to re-engage in meaningful negotiations, with the support of the international community, and will create opportunities for regional cooperation.

We must also do all we can to ease the suffering of the Palestinian people.

I am extremely concerned by the financial situation facing UNRWA.

The agency plays an essential role as the main provider of direct and often life-saving assistance to many of the 5.7 million Palestine refugees.

I appeal to all Member States to urgently contribute to enable UNRWA to meet the critical humanitarian and development needs of Palestine refugees during the pandemic.

On this International Day of Solidarity, I also extend my heartfelt condolences on the tragic passing of Dr. Saeb Erakat, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Secretary-General and Chief Negotiator for Palestinians in the Middle East Peace Process.

Let us together resolve to renew our commitment to the Palestinian people in their quest to achieve their inalienable rights and build a future of peace, dignity, justice and security.

“Acasa, My Home” in World’s Best of Cinéma Vérité

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Romanian filmmaker Radu Ciorniciuc’s acclaimed documentary “Acasa, My Home” will be reviewed in the World’s Best section of the 14th edition of the Cinéma Vérité festival.

The World’s Best of the major Iranian documentary festival will feature a selection of documentaries acclaimed at 2020

international events across the world.

“Acasa, My Home” is about the Enache family, nine kids and their parents, who has been living for two decades in a shack in the wilderness of the Bucharest Delta: an abandoned water reservoir, one of the largest urban natural preserves in the world, with lakes and hundreds of species of animals and rare plants.



China Economy Revving Up As Western World Prepares For Crises

BEIJING (Forbes) - China’s economy is revving up as the entirety of the Western World — from Australia to the United States — is either bracing for a ‘dark winter’ or dealing with small business closures by the thousands.

Earlier this month, Dr. Anthony Fauci said SARS 2 death rates could easily surpass 400,000 by March.

According to Yelp, an online review forum for businesses, some 60% of the 163,735 businesses that are on Yelp have closed since March. Nearly 97,900 of them said they were going out of business, according to a Yelp report in September.

Other data points about the pandemic’s impact on American businesses are more sanguine.

A study by researchers at the University of Illinois, Harvard Business School and the University of Chicago suggests that only 2% of small businesses are gone, though that was conducted in May.

Disney DIS -1.3% said it would lay off 32,000 employees at its resorts in the U.S. But no word about laying them off at Hong Kong Disneyland or Shanghai Disney.

The U.S. stock market may have been humming along on the hopes that the pandemic was winding down, and Congress would dump trillions of stimulus into the economy. But now the ‘dark winter’ narrative is starting to play out. Barring a bazooka stimulus in the U.S. and Europe that is designed to keep small businesses alive and laid off workers financially sound, it is hard not to view China as the winner in the pandemic.

As most of the Western World has taken to rumors of lockdowns, deaths, and even greater panic attacks to come, China — whose citizens are already under the control of its government — is able to itself to Wall Street as the place to be.

About two weeks ago, Ray Dalio said that if the U.S. and Europe are going to be cowering for the next six months until there’s a cure or 60% of their populations are vaccinated with a new drug, then capital is just going to flow where there’s growth and some semblance of predictability. And that’s China.

“It’s called state capitalism, but they’ll produce more billionaires than the U.S.,” Dalio said. “I think capitalism and the development of the capital markets could, in a few years, be more embraced in China than they are in the U.S.”

In other words, top down management of the economy by unelected officials steering money towards favorite sectors — in China’s case, semiconductors, all forms of green tech, and pharmaceuticals — and protectionism.

Industrial profit growth surged to 28.2% annualized in October from 10.1% in September, with the year-to-date growth turning positive at 0.7% in October, up from -2.4% YTD in September and -3.3% in all of 2019. The surge is thanks to manufacturing growth and a boost from investment.

The higher YTD profit growth in October versus 2019 was broadly based across different businesses, with profit growth at state-owned, private and foreign enterprises contracting less to -7.5% annualized at the SOEs, 1.1% for private China companies and 3.5% for the



big multinationals that rely on China for cheap labor, low taxes, and weak environmental regulations. Those numbers are an improvement from the -14.3% (SOE), -0.5% (PVT) and 2.6% (MNC) in September. The biggest gains are autos (up 6.6% from -15.9% in September), ferrous metals (-12.9% from -37.6%), and computer & communication equipment manufacturing (12.6% from 3.1%).

“China’s economic recovery remains largely on track,” says Ting Lu, chief China economist for Nomura in Hong Kong. Nomura is sticking with their GDP growth forecast of 5.7% in China for this quarter, up from 4.9% in the third.

Shanghai, which has gone almost completely unscathed by the SARS 2 pandemic so far, is reportedly testing millions of people and closing schools, the AP reported last week. The South China Morning Post and Shanghai Daily have no reports of any lockdown restrictions taking place as of Friday. Currently, 62 people in a city of 24 million are hospitalized with the SARS 2 coronavirus, according to the Chinese government.

Whether those numbers are true or not, Nomura thinks their economy is realistically sailing forward on an even keel and will be doing so in the months ahead.

“We firmly believe Beijing will maintain its policy stance,” Lu said about monetary policy and — like Dalio highlighted — its state directed capital as outlined in its most recent Five Year Plan.

The X-Trackers China CSI-300 ETF, best known by its ticker “ASHR”, is up 1.4% on Friday, beating the S&P 500, which is up 0.4%.

EU Budget Rules Need Adjustment But No Debt Cancellation



MILAN (Reuters) - European Union budget rules need to be more consistent with expected higher levels of sovereign debt, the bloc’s economics commissioner said, but dismissed calls to cancel debt amassed during the coronavirus crisis.

The idea of debt cancellation has been raised by Italy’s co-ruling 5-Star Movement, backing a proposal by EU Parliament President David Sassoli.

“In Europe debts cannot be cancelled”, Paolo Gentiloni said.

The European Commission, which is in charge of enforcing EU fiscal rules, this year suspended requirements to keep government deficits below 3% of GDP and to cut public debt below 60% of GDP as the economy entered a record recession.

Gentiloni said on Sunday that eurozone average debt to GDP ratio would be 103%-104% at the end of the pandemic next year.

“We need to take in account this new scenario,” the EU commissioner told Italian state broadcaster RAI, adding that discussions on how to adjust the budget would occur next year.

“The answer is not debt cancellation but creating conditions to gradually change and make our rules more consistent with the new reality,” Gentiloni said.

Swiss Responsible Business Vote Set to Fail After Missing Regional Majority

ZURICH (Reuters) - A vote setting up Swiss companies for higher scrutiny over human rights and environmental abuses looked set to fail on Sunday, according to early counts, despite backing from nearly half the population in a historically divisive vote.

In a referendum on Sunday, voters are choosing between proposals by the Responsible Business Initiative (RBI) to extend companies’ liability over human rights abuses and environmental harm caused abroad, and a milder government version.

The government proposal would force firms to step up checks on their overseas operations and supply chains, but stops short of extending liability to Swiss courts.

Demonstrating unusual support for a politically and economically progressive initiative in the traditionally staid country, just under 50% of voters accepted the RBI’s proposals, according to government interim voting results.

But regional results showed the initiative was no longer able to gain backing in a majority of cantons, a necessary condition for a public initiative to be enacted in Switzerland.

Broadcaster SRF earlier in the day projected that for the first time in more than six decades the initiative could fail on the basis of regional rejection while gaining a narrow public majority.

Final results remain outstanding in a number of left-leaning cantons.

The RBI initiative would have led to sharper scrutiny of the country’s commodities hub and the institutions that finance it, as well as major multinationals like food company Nestle



and pharmaceutical giants Novartis and Roche.

“Human rights is such a fundamental issue. People understand you can’t justify human rights violations by economic considerations,” Florian Wettstein, a professor for business ethics at the University of St. Gallen and co-organiser of the initiative, told Reuters.

In a polarizing campaign, the government and multinationals said the RBI proposal went too far, while activists, religious groups and various political factions said without it Switzerland risked falling behind other countries in tackling progressive social and economic issues.

Both supporters and opponents have criticised each other’s tactics in the emotionally charged campaign.

“It was the most aggressive campaign I’ve ever experienced in my 20 years in politics,” parliamentarian Christa Markwalder told SRF, saying she opposed the initiative but would have supported a stronger government counter-proposal.

Meanwhile, voters looked set to reject a proposal seeking to impose a ban on funding arms makers, the latest anti-military referendum in a nation that has not fought an external war for 200 years.

The vote holds implications for major Swiss banks and investors including the central bank, as well as industry.

Both the Swiss National Bank (SNB) and Swiss commercial banks have opposed the initiative, with the Swiss Banker Association saying it would weaken Switzerland as a business location and unnecessarily restrict the SNB, pension funds, banks and insurance companies.

Indian Farmers Reject Gov’t Appeal to Lift Blockade

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - Thousands of protesting Indian farmers refused to comply with a government appeal to stop blockading major highways into New Delhi on Sunday and vowed to intensify their action against Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s liberalising reforms.

Farmers from states around the capital have been demonstrating for three straight days against reforms that deregulate the sector and allow farmers to sell produce to buyers beyond government-regulated wholesale markets, where growers are assured of a minimum price. Small growers fear the changes will make them vulnerable to competition from big business, and that they could eventually lose price supports for staples such as wheat and rice.

In a statement on Sunday, an umbrella group representing different farmers’ unions slammed the government for saying it would engage in talks with the farmers if they moved their protest off the roads into a designated stadium site.

“The government, if serious about addressing the demands of farmers, should stop laying down any conditions and should come straight out with the solution it is offering,” the statement said. Modi sought to allay farmer concerns during his monthly radio address, saying “farmers will get new rights and opportunities” through these laws.

Union and opposition leaders, however, were unmoved by Modi’s comments, and criticised the government’s use of tear gas and water cannon to disperse protesters on Friday.

“Farmers are not fools who would not understand what is in their interest,” said Yogendra Yadav, president of Swaraj India - an opposition party.

With key roads blocked, prices of fresh produce at wholesale markets in Delhi have already begun to tick up, and the protests also disrupted commuter travel into the city.

The farmers’ unions called on farmers in other states to expand the protests from Tuesday, while urging farmers in neighbouring states and others to join demonstrations in Delhi.

S. Korea...

FROM PAGE 1

Criticizing the unilateral interference of U.S. officials and Trump himself in relations between the two countries, the Iranian MP said: “The will of the sides should not allow such interventions to affect the mutual relations because the interferences of the U.S. President and the extension of domestic law to other countries is an insult to the international community.”

He expressed concern about the coronavirus pandemic adding that “However, the virus of Trump and the Zionist Netanyahu is far more dangerous than Covid-19.”

Elsewhere in his remarks, he said: “Iran has never been militarily active in the nuclear field, so we believe that all countries in the region and the world should be cleared of nuclear weapons and there should be no discrimination between countries in this regard.”

Song Young-gil, for his turn, expressed condolences over the assassination of the Iranian scientist Dr. Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh and condemned the assassination of a scientist calling it “a big mistake”.

“I hope we will not see another terrorist act as international cooperation increases,” he added.

He also called for joint cooperation with Iran in the fight against the coronavirus.

“At present, Iranian forex resources are in South Korea, and we are trying to dispatch pharmaceutical, medical and basic goods to Iran to clear the debt,” he said.

No Assassins Present...

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, Fakhri-zadeh’s lead bodyguard jumps in front of him to protect him, and is hit by several bullets. Moments later, the parked pickup truck explodes.

Wounded Fakhri-zadeh is taken to a clinic and then medevacked to a hospital in Tehran, but, unfortunately, he succumbs to his wounds after a while.

It is noteworthy that based on the information received by Fars News Agency, the operation took around 3 minutes, and no human agents were present at the scene. The shots were fired by automatic weapons, and no one is hurt in the incident except Fakhri-zadeh’s bodyguard, who is wounded.

An investigation to identify the owner of the Nissan pickup shows he had left the country on October 29, 2020.

Fakhri-zadeh had been on the Israeli regime and terrorist group’s assassination list for nearly 3 decades. In recent years, several attempts on his life had been foiled.

Iraq, Iran, Russia, Syria...

FROM PAGE 1

The purpose of the Committee is to coordinate security between Iraq and work in the form of a participatory system to fight against terrorist groups and exchange of information about them.

The Quartet Committee on Information Exchange and Security Cooperation has been established since 2015 between Iraq, Iran, Russia and Syria with the aim of exchanging information to fight against terrorism with membership of the military affiliates of these countries and Iraqi representative in Baghdad.

Exchange of information, especially intelligence supply of Iraqi and Syrian forces, has been one of the most important and successful functions of the center in identifying and targeting important and sensitive positions of the terrorist groups including ISIL and Takfiris in Iraq and in some cases in Syria, he added.

Daesh...

FROM PAGE 1

Daesh soon swept up large swathes of the Iraqi territory, prompting Baghdad to solicit military advisory assistance from neighboring ally, Iran. The joint anti-terror push -- in which the PMU, also known as Hashd al-Sha’abi, played a crucial role -- defeated the Takfiri group in late 2017.

The group’s remnants, however, keep staging sporadic attacks throughout Iraq, mainly in the eastern Iraqi Diyala Province, Nineveh and al-Anbar provinces in the country’s west, and Salahuddin province that is wedged between them.

Earlier this month, the terrorists launched two fatal attacks against Iraqi forces.

Daesh’s strikes come as the United States has announced that it would withdraw another 500 troops from Iraq, reducing its deployment to 2,500 troops.

Observers warn that the terrorists, who are widely believed to be receiving support from the US, are staging the attacks simultaneously with Washington’s announcement to provide an excuse for American forces’ continued stay in Iraq.

Pliskova Appoints Bajin as New Coach

LONDON (Reuters) - Former world number one Karolina Pliskova has appointed Naomi Osaka's former coach Sascha Bajin as her new coach for the 2021 season.

Pliskova split with coach Daniel Vallverdu earlier this month after her 2020 season came to an end.

The 28-year-old posted a photo with Bajin and fitness coach Azuz Simcich on Twitter here on Friday with the caption "Team Pliskova 2021".

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Smith Shines as Australia Seal Series

SYDNEY (Reuters) - Steve Smith was at his imperious best as he scored a second successive 62-ball century to drive Australia to a 51-run victory over India at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday, sealing the one-day series 2-0 with a match to spare.

The clash, almost a carbon copy of Australia's 66-run win in Friday's match at the same ground, was soured for the home fans by an injury to David Warner which may rule him out of the test series around the new year.

Hamilton Wins Crash-Marred Bahrain Grand Prix

MANAMA (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton powered to his record-increasing 95th victory at the Bahrain Grand Prix on Sunday in a race overshadowed by a horrific crash for Romain Grosjean, from which the Frenchman escaped relatively unscathed.

The newly-crowned seven-time champion came home at controlled pace under a safety car at the finish, followed by Max Verstappen and his Red Bull team-mate Alex Albon, who profited from an engine failure which forced Racing Point's Sergio Perez into retirement with three laps left.

The race was delayed after Grosjean survived a frightening collision with a barrier on the opening lap. He was taken to hospital with suspected fractured ribs and burns to his hands and feet after his crash which was followed by another accident that saw Racing Point driver Lance Stroll rescued from his overturn car.

Lando Norris came home fourth ahead of his McLaren team-mate Carlos Sainz with Pierre Gasly taking sixth for Alpha Tauri and Renault's Daniel Ricciardo seventh.

Hamilton's Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas finished eighth, having suffered a puncture, ahead of Esteban Ocon in the second Renault and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc.

Hamilton's victory, his 11th of the season, lifted him 131 points clear of Bottas in the championship, which he has won already.

However, his initial reaction was one of relief for Grosjean. "It was such a shocking image to see and it shows the amazing job F1 and the FIA have done for him to walk away from something like that." On a warm, calm and near-perfect floodlit evening at the Bahrain International Circuit, where the air temperature sank from 26 degrees and the track from 29 at the start, the drama unfolded with stark violence.

Grosjean's miraculous escape from his high-speed fireball crash had delayed the action for nearly 90 minutes before Stroll's upside-down excursion, after contact with Daniil Kvyat's Alpha Tauri at the re-start ushered in a safety car intervention. The Russian was given a 10-second penalty.

"I'm ok, just hanging upside down," said Stroll with unintentional understatement, as he confirmed he had escaped injury following Grosjean's remarkable leap to safety from his blazing Haas on the opening lap.

After the prolonged initial safety car intervention, the first racing lap was finally completed on lap 10 with Hamilton surging clear again from his third Bahrain pole and career 98th. He had posted his thanks on social media after seeing Grosjean survive. "I'm so grateful Romain is safe, wow,"



he wrote. "The risk we take is no joke for those of you out there that forget that we put our life on the line for this sport and for what we love to do."

"This is a reminder to us all. Thankful to the FIA for the massive strides we've taken for Romain to walk away from that safely."

As Hamilton pulled away, the luckless Bottas, who picked up a puncture and pitted after Stroll's crash, began to fight back from 16th, having started on the front row. Verstappen was second, but grumbling about his Red Bull's handling. "My car is jumping around like a kangaroo, I swear," he told his team before picking up after following Hamilton in for a pit stop.

By lap 30, Hamilton led Verstappen by 5.3 seconds and appeared to be in control as he sought to become the first man to take a lights-to-flag victory in the event's 11-year history.

On lap 34, Red Bull gambled by calling in Verstappen for his second stop, but a five-second switch to hards undid their under-cut plan. A lap later, Hamilton did the same in 1.8 seconds to return in the lead.

Perez had risen to second, but he gave that place back to Verstappen when he came in after 37 laps while Bottas pitted for a third time and fell back to 11th.

With 10 laps to go, Verstappen took a third stop for fresh mediums and a bid to grab fastest lap. He soon achieved that in 1:32.014 while Hamilton cruised 25 seconds clear in the lead.

Perez, third, was also cruising, but the Mexican's race was over when, with three laps remaining, he pulled up with smoke billowing after an engine failure. A safety car was deployed for the second time - leaving Hamilton to lead a slow-mo queue to the flag.

Messi Salutes Maradona as Barca Trounce Osasuna

BARCELONA (Reuters) - Lionel Messi paid a personal tribute to the late Diego Maradona after scoring on Sunday as Barcelona returned to winning ways in La Liga with a resounding 4-0 home win over Osasuna.

Messi adorned a brilliant team display with a thumping strike into the top corner in the second half, after Martin Braithwaite had broken the deadlock and Antoine Griezmann and Philippe Coutinho had scored either side of halftime.

The Argentine then lifted his shirt to reveal a red and black replica kit of his hometown club Newell's Old Boys bearing the number 10 which Maradona wore during his brief spell at the Rosario side in 1993.

The Catalans had paid homage before kickoff to Maradona, who played for the club in an eventful yet disappointing spell from 1982 to 1984, hanging a framed signed shirt of his above the presidential box while the players held a minute's silence in front of an old Barca shirt bearing the number 10.

Barca defender Clement Lenglet limped off with an ankle problem, leaving his side with no fit first-team centre backs due to injuries to Samuel Umtiti, Ronald Araujo and Gerard Pique.

The win followed Barca's 1-0 defeat at Atletico Madrid last week and lifted them to seventh in the standings on 14 points after nine matches, nine behind leaders Real Sociedad and second-placed Atletico.

Argentine Prosecutors Investigate Death of Maradona

BUENOS AIRES (Reuters) - Argentine justice officials are investigating the death of soccer star Diego Maradona and ordered the search of properties of his personal doctor on Sunday, a local prosecutor's office said.

Maradona died at age 60 of a heart attack on Wednesday. The search order was requested by prosecutors in the affluent Buenos Aires suburb San Isidro and signed by a local judge, according to a statement issued by the prosecutor's office.

"Yesterday (Saturday) the investigation and substantiation of evidence continued with the taking of statements from people including direct relatives of the deceased," it said.

"By virtue of the evidence that was collected, it was considered necessary to request searches at the home and office of doctor Leopoldo Luque," the prosecutor's office said in the statement. The prosecutor's office provided no information on what prompted the investigation.

Maradona's lawyer, Matias Moria, on Thursday said he would ask for a full investigation of the circumstances of the soccer legend's death, criticizing what he said was a slow response by emergency service.

"The ambulance took more than half an hour to arrive, which was a criminal idiocy," Matias said on Thursday in a Twitter post.

Udinese's Argentina Players Shock Lazio

ROME (Dispatches) - Lazio slumped to a 3-1 home defeat to Udinese on Sunday, days before their Champions League trip to Borussia Dortmund, in a victory paved by the visitors' Argentina players on a day Serie A paid tribute to Diego Maradona.

Lazio's players took to the pitch with special edition 'AD10S' jerseys in honour of former Argentina and Napoli great Maradona who died last week aged 60.

But the hosts soon trailed after Argentine Roberto Pereyra set up Turkish midfielder Tolgay Arslan for Udinese's first goal against Lazio in the Stadio Olimpico in six years, after quarter of an hour.

Players Are Losing the Joy of Playing



LONDON (Reuters) - Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said his players could not revel in their 5-0 victory over Burnley on Saturday as hectic match scheduling had sucked some of the joy out of the sport.

The novel coronavirus pandemic forced last season to finish late and this campaign to be condensed into a shorter period, with a chorus of club managers lamenting the relentless schedule that they believe has contributed to more player injuries.

City, who bounced back from last week's defeat by Tottenham Hotspur and moved up to eighth with the win against Burnley, travel to Porto for a Champions League game on Tuesday before facing Fulham in the Premier League on Saturday.

"The problem is the players lose the joy of playing football," Guardiola told reporters. "Before it was nice playing once or twice a week with spectators. Now it's three days and then another one. We will travel to Porto to win, then prepare against Fulham."

City had netted just 10 times in their opening eight games before Saturday's victory and Guardiola said his forwards must deliver if they are to retain their spot in the team.

"The goals help us, of course. Gabriel Jesus has to score goals. Raheem Sterling when he plays has to score. They have to score more goals. That is why they are here. It depends on the players, their performance on the pitch," Guardiola said.

Tyson Hungry for More After Comeback Fight Ends in Draw

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Mike Tyson's return to boxing at age 54 ended in a draw with 51-year-old Roy Jones Jr. on Saturday in an eight-round exhibition battle of former heavyweight champions.

Fifteen years after retiring with a 2005 loss to journeyman Kevin McBride, Tyson made his comeback at Staples Center in Los Angeles without spectators in a pay-per-view matchup that mixed curiosity and nostalgia.

California State Athletic Commission officials required two-minute rounds instead of the usual three-minute rounds, mandated larger than normal 12-ounce gloves, said neither fighter could seek a knockout and declared there could be no official winner in safety moves for the over-50 fighters.

"Sometimes that two minutes felt like three minutes," Tyson said. "I'm glad I got this under my belt and I'm looking forward to doing it again."

An "unofficial" panel of former World Boxing Council champions at ringside scored the bout a draw, an outcome that Tyson applauded despite appearing to dominate.

"I'm good with that," Tyson said, admitting he thought he had won the fight. "Yeah, but I'm good with a draw. The crowd was happy with that."

Jones, who looked tired and grabbed Tyson much of the fight, was unhappy at a draw.

"I ain't never happy with a draw. I don't do draw," Jones said, admitting that Tyson hurt him throughout the bout, particularly with body blows.



Tokyo 2020 Organizers Estimate Games Postponement Cost \$1.9b

TOKYO (Reuters) - This year's postponement of the Tokyo Olympics because of the novel coronavirus cost about 200 billion yen (\$1.9 billion), organisers have estimated, the Yomiuri newspaper reported on Sunday, citing people involved with the event.

The International Olympic Committee and the Japanese government were forced to put off the Games for a year in March as the coronavirus spread rapidly around the world.

The Games cost 1.35 trillion yen (\$13 billion) before the postponement, the newspaper reported.

The organizing committee will decide on a breakdown of the burden of the delay in December, after discussions between the committee, the Tokyo metropolitan government and the central government, the newspaper said.

A spokesman for the organizers, asked about the report, told Reuters by text message only that the committee is examining the extra costs associated with the delay.

The postponement costs include payment to staff as well as the introduction of new systems for refunding tickets but do not include measures against the spread of the coronavirus, the newspaper said.

The organizers had originally estimated that the delay would cost nearly 300 billion yen but they were able to reduce that figure by simplifying some events, the report said.

