

The Public Relations of IRGC's Ground Force Hamzeh Seyyed Al-Shohada (AS) Headquarters Announced That Three Terrorist Elements Were Arrested in the Northwest of the Country

# IRAN NEWS

Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian Said Yesterday That Iran and Qatar Have Recently Reached Full Agreement to Expand Economic Cooperation in All Fields of Mutual Interests

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## Rouhani Opposed To Emergency Bill On Sanctions

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani says his administration is opposed to an action plan against sanctions that is under discussion at the Parliament, saying the emergency bill, if passed into law, will be detrimental to the diplomatic process aimed at reviving the 2015 nuclear deal.

Rouhani made the remarks during a cabinet meeting in Tehran on Wednesday, the same day his administration submitted the annual budget bill to the Parliament for approval.

The president said his administration "does not agree" with the bill, dubbed the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions, whose outlines were overwhelmingly approved by the legislators on Tuesday.

The administration, he said, "considers it harmful to the trend of diplomatic activities" meant to keep the 2015 nuclear deal alive, over two years after the US abandoned the UN-endorsed agreement. Rouhani also rejected media speculation that linked his absence from the Parliament's budget-related session on Wednesday to the legislature's vote on the bill a day earlier, which seeks to speed up Iran's nuclear activities.

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## Saudi Arabia Angered By Zarif's Remarks

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Saudi minister of state for foreign affairs has hit out at Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif of Iran after the latter implicated Riyadh — along with Israel and the U.S. — in an anti-Iran psychological operation that led up to the assassination of senior nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh.

Adel al-Jubeir, in a post published on his Twitter page on Tuesday, claimed that the chief diplomat was "desperate" to blame the Riyadh regime in anything negative that happened in Iran.

"Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif is desperate to blame the Kingdom for anything negative that happens in Iran. Will he blame us for the next earthquake or flood?" Jubeir wrote.

The Saudi minister's rant came after Zarif said in an Instagram post on Monday night that US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's recent tour of the region, his tripartite meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as well as Netanyahu's recent remarks were signs of yet another conspiracy against the Islamic Republic, which unfortunately came to light with Fakhri-zadeh's assassination.

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## Gov't Submits Budget Bill to Majlis



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Vice President for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs submitted the President Rouhani administration's proposed budget bill for the next Iranian fiscal year (which will begin in March 2020) to the parliament on Wednesday.

Hossein-Ali Amiri as the Vice-President for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs submitted Iran's national budget bill to Parliament on Wednesday.

The bill was used to be submitted by President Rouhani himself but this year he did not attend today's Parliament session due to, as he described, the anti-coronavirus protocols.

The copies of the proposed bill provided to the MPs will be examined and the MPs will give their suggestions and views to the specialized commission that will be set up for studying the bill within a month.

VP for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs submitted Iran's national budget bill to Parliament on Wednesday.

The parliament will then review the budget bill in an open session.

According to the internal regulations of the Iranian parliament, the administration should present the annual budget bill by December 5 each year.

Once the parliamentarians endorse the government's proposed budget bill, it will go to the Guardian Council, the constitutional supervisory body, for ratification before becoming law.

The head of the Iranian Parliament's Planning and Budget Commission said that in the examination and adoption processes of the next Iranian year budget (starting on March 21), the transparency of the sources, spending areas, as well as helping the lower class must be considered.

Hamidreza Hajibabai said the parliament has taken into account structural reforms for the next year's budget. Hajibabai emphasized that the budget plan must move on the path of social justice and that the next year's budget must lead to boosting production and accelerate the cycle of production in the country.

The head of the Parliament's Planning and Budget Commission said in the next year's budget of 2021, reliance on oil must be decreased and more importantly, the government's dependence to oil and vice versa must become transparent.

Meanwhile Majlis Speaker described petrodollars as an unreliable source of income while the administration is going to submit its proposed budget bill for the next Iranian fiscal year (which will begin in March 2021).

Addressing a parliamentary session on Wednesday, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said what must be taken into account in formulating the national budget is non-reliance on oil incomes, which has been repeatedly stressed by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

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## COVID-19 Situation Improving in Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Health, Treatment and Medical Education Saeed Namaki on Wednesday said that the situation of COVID-19 has been improved because of observing restrictions in the country.

Namaki underlined that the situation in the country, particularly in the cities where the restrictions were carried out in November, is becoming better. Fortunately, due to quarantine, mortality statistics are declining and the effects of new restrictions will become evident in the coming weeks, he underscored.

Ambulatory clinics in the country should be increased to at least 5,000 to pave the way for the people to have better access to the diagnostic, health and testing centers, the official underlined. Earlier spokeswoman for Iran's Ministry of Health announced that 989,572 people in the country have been infected with the coronavirus, and 678,054 of the total infected people recovered.

"According to definitive laboratory findings from yesterday to December 02, 2020, newly diagnosed patients with COVID-19 reached 13,621 cases out of whom 2,246 patients were hospitalized," the Spokeswoman for Iran's Ministry of Health Sima Sadat Lari stated.

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## UNSC Unlikely to Act on Iran Scientist Assassination

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Just hours after the assassination of a top Iranian nuclear scientist, Tehran demanded the United Nations Security Council condemn the killing and take action against those responsible, but diplomats say the call is likely to go unheeded.

At a minimum, the 15-member body could discuss Friday's killing of nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh behind closed doors if a member requests such a meeting or it could agree on - by consensus - a statement on the issue.

But South Africa's U.N. ambassador, Jerry Matjila, council president for December, said on Tuesday that no member had so far requested to discuss the killing or Iran in general. Diplomats also said there had been no discussion of a statement.

The Security Council is charged with maintaining international peace and security and has the ability to authorize military action and impose sanctions. But such measures require at least nine votes in favor and no vetoes by the United States, France, Britain, Russia or China.

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## Biden Sets New Demands For Iran Nuclear Deal

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President-elect Joe Biden will insist Iran agrees to new demands if it wants the U.S. to return to a nuclear deal and lift sanctions, The New York Times said Wednesday.

The Times said the Biden administration would seek to extend the duration of "restrictions on Iran's production of fissile material that could be used to make a (nuclear) bomb" in a new round of negotiations.

Iran would also have to address its "malign" regional activities through proxies in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen in the talks that would have to include its Arab neighbors like Saudi Arabia, the report said.

President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the deal in 2018 and has reimposed crippling sanctions on Iran as part of a "maximum pressure" campaign against the US's arch enemy.

Biden, who defeated Trump at the ballot box last month, said during campaigning that he intends to offer Iran a "credible path back to diplomacy".

In the Times interview published on Wednesday, the incoming US president stood by those views, saying: "It's going to be hard, but yeah."

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## India Keen on U.S. Allowing Resumption of Oil Supplies From Iran, Venezuela

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India, the world's third-largest energy consumer, wants the new U.S. administration to allow resumption of oil supplies from Iran and Venezuela so as to give the country more options to meet its requirements, Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Wednesday.

"As a buyer, I would like to have more buying places. I should have more destinations to go for purchasing (of oil)," Pradhan said in response to a question about his expectations for the resumption of oil imports from Iran and Venezuela under a Joseph Biden presidency.

Iran was India's second-biggest supplier of crude oil after Saudi Arabia till 2010-11, but Western sanctions over its suspected nuclear program led to reduced volumes. India stopped importing crude oil from Iran following the re-imposition of economic sanctions in May 2019, by the US.

Venezuela was India's fourth-biggest oil supplier but import dwindled after Washington imposed sanctions on Venezuela's state oil company PDVSA in January 2019, to put pressure on socialist President Nicolas Maduro. At a webinar on 'The Road To Atmanirbhar Bharat' organised by Swarajya Magazine, Pradhan was asked if as a major consuming nation, India would like the Biden administration to relax sanctions on Iran and Venezuela.

On Indo-U.S. relations, he said nothing will change with the change of guard in the U.S. for India. "There is a strong bonding between the two nations. Both depend on each other. Our relations are sound, our relations are grounded." "Nothing will change. Elections are a regular practice in America," he said adding India offers the US a huge market. The relations between the two nations will continue to deepen irrespective of the country being governed by Democrats or Republicans, he said.

"I don't see any dampening in the relationship (with Biden coming). It is growing every day," he said. India is 85 per cent dependent on imports to meet its oil needs. Two-third of its imports come from the Middle-East with Iraq and Saudi Arabia being the largest suppliers.

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## Jannati Calls for Identifying Scientist Terror Perpetrators

TEHRAN (MNA) – Secretary of Iran’s Guardian Council called on the country’s intelligence and security institutions and the judiciary to identify and deal with the perpetrators and commanders of Fakhrizadeh’s assassination.

“The ignorant enemy thinks that by assassinating and martyring our scientists, the path of scientific progress in the country will be stopped,” said Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati referring to the assassination of the Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

“It should know that this path has been systematized in all its fields in Iran and has been moving for years by a large number of committed and professional youth,” he added. “Eliminating and assassinating people in this direction not only does not disrupt but also increases its speed,” he stressed.

He called on the country’s intelligence and security institutions and the judiciary to identify and deal with the perpetrators and commanders of this assassination in order to prevent similar incidents.

## Majlis Urged Not to Intervene In Executive Affairs

*IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK*

**TEHRAN - First Vice President emphasized that a letter prepared in the cabinet would be sent to the head of the Guardian Council about the parliament’s plan regarding nullifying sanctions and nuclear issues.**

Eshaq Jahangiri answering Iran Press on the sidelines of the cabinet meeting on Wednesday, said that the nuclear issue has been on the agenda of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for more than two decades and that the Leader’s decision under the constitution was that Supreme National Security Council to manage the nuclear case.

“The nuclear issue is one of the most fundamental issues of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Many countries are involved in this issue. Even we, as the government, were informed about the reports in the Security Council. Otherwise, the government would have had no role in the decision making in order to be unified management,” Iranian First Vice President emphasized.

Jahangiri stated that the Supreme National Security Council’s approvals would enter into force after being approved by the Leader, so it is not expedient in the government’s opinion that the parliament has intervened in this matter. Especially after 2018, when the Americans withdrew from the JCPOA and imposed heavy economic pressures and maximum pressure.

The first vice president said that the Islamic Republic, with the strategy outlined by the Leader of the Revolution and, of course, the strategy of intelligent maximum



resistance against the strategy of maximum pressure, made the maximum pressure of the enemy ineffective. We should not change the nuclear management at this time because it puts a lot of pressure on the country.

On the other hand, the president, the foreign minister, and the Atomic Energy Organization head have mandates as the executive branch. Jahangiri noted

“The legislation is the right of the parliament, and implementation of the laws is the right of the government. Parliament should not interfere in executive affairs. As the separation of powers is stipulated in the constitution, the president, as elected by the people, has the mandate to act in accordance with the various principles of the constitution. The Foreign Minister has the mandate and, of course, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization. It should not deal emotionally with the nuclear issue,” Iranian First Vice President said.

In response to a question, Jahangiri noted that the plan of the parliament would be discussed if it is finalized.

## Defense Field, Big Market for Knowledge-Based Companies

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran’s Vice president for Science and Technology said that the defense field is a big market for knowledge-based companies and startups.

Sorena Sattari said that many companies are active in various defense fields and a major part of the products exhibited for the first time is the result of their efforts.

The defense field is the “core of knowledge” for companies and these technologies can be used in non-military areas too, Sattari highlighted.

The vice president for science and technology expressed his satisfaction over the expo, saying such capable companies have been formed and they are up-to-date enough to compete with foreign rivals.

Sattari made the remarks on the sideline of the exhibition of capabilities and technical and specialized achievements of the strategic Navy of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was inaugurated on Tuesday.

## Tehran, Baku to Cooperate in Horticulture

*IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK*

TEHRAN - Minister of Jihad-Agriculture Mr. Kazem Khavazi stated in a joint meeting with the Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Azerbaijan that the President of Iran emphasizes the expansion of economic relations between Iran and Azerbaijan. “And we believe that there are many potential economic, and cultural fields of cooperation between Iran and Azerbaijan.”

Khavazi also added that: These collaborations can include the development of greenhouse crops, the introduction of various cultivars, especially rice and cotton, which are considered by both ministries, also the transfer of embryos and genetic materials, especially cattle and buffalo embryos, breeding measures in the field of cereals, breeding of light and heavy livestock and raising silkworms.

The Minister of Jihad-Agriculture emphasized that it is also very important for the Iranian government to deal with extraterritorial cultivation. “And this issue can be one aspect of the cooperation document between the two countries.”

In this meeting, Inam Karimov, the Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Azerbaijan stated: The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan, in addition of having common borders, Iran and Azerbaijan are connected to each other through exporting and importing of agricultural products, such as fruits, and vegetables, among others.

Karimov, after referring to Iran’s experience in silkworm breeding, acknowledged that: In the past, we also got silk cocoons and cream from Iran. The minister of the republic of Azerbaijan also mentioned: Rice cultivation is also one of Azerbaijan’s priorities and we are interested in using Iran’s experience in this field too.

## Tehran Mayor Becomes Deputy Head of Metropolis Organization

TEHRAN (IP) - The mayor of Tehran was elected as the vice president of the International Metropolis Organization during the election ceremony.

The General Assembly of the world’s metropolises was held on Monday virtually in the presence of the mayor of Tehran and other mayors of the world’s metropolises from five continents.

In this meeting, “Pirooz Hanachi”, the mayor of Tehran, was elected as the vice president of the International Metropolis Organization.

The mayor of Tehran was also elected chairman of the Urban Reconstruction and Architecture working group for the next three years.

Also, “Mohammad Reza Kalaei”, the mayor of Mashhad, was elected as the regional deputy of this organization.



## No Bill Yet on Restricting Afghan Illegal Entry to Iran

TEHRAN (IP) - Responding to IranPress question on whether there is a bill being considered in the parliament with the aim of imposing a 25-year sentence on any Afghan national who enters Iran illegally, Vice President of Iran for Parliamentary Affairs said the issue may be a lawsuit, or it may be pursued in the form of a lawsuit.

“With this title and content that mentioned, it is the duty of the judiciary to send it to the government after it is prepared; and till now as I am in your presence, such a bill has not reached the government, so there is no such bill from the government’s point of view,” Hossein-Ali Amiri explained.

“The MPs can also submit a judicial bill, and the bill prepared by the MPs come to our office, and we announce them to the relevant departments of the government and if related to the judiciary, we also announce the bill to them,” he pointed.

“Afterwards, we consider the opinions and sum it up,” Amiri stated.

“So far, the Islamic Consultative Assembly has not officially announced such a bill for us to comment on,” he added. So it may be in the idea stage, but it is not yet official, the vice president for parliamentary affairs concluded.

## UNHCR Hails Iran Move to Give Nationality to 75000 Children

TEHRAN (MNA) – UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency, has welcomed Iran’s decision to give nationality to children born to Iranian mothers and non-Iranian fathers.

The UNHCR welcomed the new law by the Iranian government, after the first children, out of some 10,000 children whose citizenship applications have so far been accepted, received their Iranian identity document – known as a ‘Shenasnameh’, last month.

According to the Government of Iran, nearly 75,000 children at risk of becoming statelessness are eligible for Iranian citizenship under a new nationality

law, which was amended in 2019 to allow children under 18 years to apply for identity documents.

The UN body said on Tuesday that during the COVID-19 pandemic in Iran, UNHCR has continued providing free remote legal advice and assistance to parents of children whose mothers are Iranian nationals and whose fathers are foreign nationals, to help them through the nationality application process.

UNHCR added that the Government of Iran is taking steps towards the prevention and reduction of statelessness in the country, describing it as “significant progress in this regard”.

## Tehran, Moscow Eyeing Enhanced Cultural Cooperation



MOSCOW (IRNA) - Iranian and Russian officials in a meeting in Moscow exchanged views on ways to develop cultural cooperation in light of traditional amity dating back to the 16th to 20th centuries.

The meeting was held between Iran’s Cultural Attache in Moscow Qahreman Soleimani, Director of the Russian-Austrian Forum Maria Matveeva and President of Ibn Sina Islamic Culture Research Foundation in Moscow Hamid Hadavi, according to the Wednesday report of information center of Iran’s Islamic Culture and Relations Organization.

The talks were held in the context of a plan presented Russian Presidential aide Andrei Fursenko. The two sides reviewed different aspects of the plan in a meeting held in Moscow.

At the meeting, Iran’s cultural attache hoped that the talks would have positive outcomes for cultural relations.

Hadavi talked about the achievements of his foundation and said Ibn Sina Foundation has regular cooperation with Russian scientific and cultural centers.

The Russian officials present in the meeting exchanged views about the issue and expressed willingness to hold conferences on cultural issues.

Frameworks of Fursenko’s plan include the process of cooperation between Iran and Russia in the last few centuries and the prospect for bilateral relations.

The plan is to be finalized after holding scientific conference in the near future.

Last year, the first round of cultural talks between Iranian and Russian scientific and cultural personalities were held in line with following the mentioned framework.

## Tehran Extends Hand of Friendship to Regional Countries



TEHRAN (MNA) – Stating that Iran’s strategy is one of cooperation, peace and friendship, the country’s Ambassador to Muscat said that Iran has extended a hand of friendship to the countries of the region.

Ali Najafi Khoshroudi made the remarks in his meeting with Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, the Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs of Oman.

During the meeting, he conveyed the congratulatory message of the Iranian Minister of Defense on the occasion of Oman Armed Forces Day.

Referring to the capacities and experiences of cooperation in the field of defense, the Iranian ambassador stressed the importance of continuous consultations between the two countries in the relevant fields.

Iran has extended a hand of friendship to the countries of the region, he said, adding that Iran’s strategy is one of cooperation, peace and friendship.

Referring to the historical and privileged relations between Iran and Oman, Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, for his part, expressed hope that the relations between the two countries would develop in various fields.

He also stressed that cooperation between the two countries is in the interest of the whole region.

## Iran Ready to Present Scientific Achievement to Friend States

TEHRAN (MNA) – Acting Minister of Science, Research and Technology for Intl. Affairs said that Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to present scientific achievements to friend countries including Iraq.

Speaking in a virtual meeting of Iran-Iraq Joint Scientific Committee, Hossein Salar Amoli pointed to the scientific status of Iranian universities in the region and world and added, “Good and satisfactory scientific ranking of Iranian universities means that strengthening scientific relations between the two countries can bring about better achievements for Iraq in terms of benefiting from the global experiences of science and knowledge network.”

He further noted that Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to present its latest scientific achievements available to friend and neighboring countries including Iraq.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Salar Amoli pointed to the main mission of the ministry and added that Ministry of Science, Research and Technology is a policymaker, facilitator of scientific relations, so that exchange of policies for scientific interactions using this way will help deepen and strengthen bilateral relations.

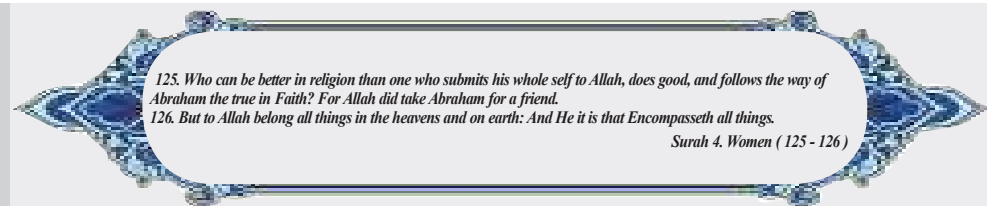
At the end of this meeting, the two sides exchanged their views on determining the annual evaluation criteria of Iranian universities in Iraq with the coordination of the Iranian side, laying the groundwork for the establishment of a joint university and academic center in Iraq, developing cooperation in the field of exchange of student, university lecturer and faculty members, exchange of governmental and academic scholarships as well as setting up Science and Technology Park.





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:53
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:10
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:28
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:57



# Home Appliances Output Rises by 28%

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

**TEHRAN - Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Alireza Razm Hosseini says the production of home appliances has grown by 28 percent as 9 million sets of home appliances were produced last year and according to the plans, it will rise to 12 million sets next year.**

Speaking on a TV program, Razm Hosseini said that after resolving forex problems, the country will face affluence of production and commodities while the price of steel has declined from 14,000 toman to 10,000 toman and the price of the car has also faced 30 percent decrease.

He added that the number of home appliances productions grew by 28 percent last year by production of over 9m sets and it is expected the number to hit 12m sets next year.

Razm Hosseini also admitted that the growth of liquidity has great negative impact on other markets like forex, housing and cars and all should work to eliminate middlemanship, adding that in the past eight months the car production has increased by 25 percent, expressing hope by reinforcing the production, middlemanship would be gradually eliminated from the market.

On the process of registration and ordering imports, he said the process has been accelerated by removing some bureaucratic steps and electronizing the system for registration. He added that the ministry has launched a comprehensive trade system which registration for imports is done through this system which is connected to Iran Central Bank. He admitted that this system has been earlier launched in the developed countries and it can help the transparency and it can be a good data base and help minimizing the corruption.

Razm Hosseini added that all supervising bodies which are involved in regulating the market are working hard for controlling the prices, noting that all should accept this matter that the country is in an economic war and it will have its own impact on the market.



He reiterated that he disagrees with the system of suppressing the market by commanding the prices, saying that the demand and supply should determine the prices. But the government should monitor the market to control overpricing, he noted.

On the mining sector, he said over 11,000 undecided mines exist in the country which have been abandoned and they have not been exploited. He said those who have received licenses for exploration and have not started operations yet have a three-month deadline to start otherwise the mines will be handed over to other persons through holding tenders.

The minister also said that some 10,000 production units in the industrial parks have been closed due to different reasons and the ministry has plans to revive some 2,000 of them by the year end.

Razm Hosseini reiterated that the output in the vehicle sector will increase by 50 percent by June, 2021.

On the significance and performance of Iran Mercantile Exchange, he said IME is a place for transparency and it is not merely a place for discovery of price. He admitted that the price of steel in the domestic market is higher than the international price and unfortunately middlemanship and mafias in this sector are active and the ministry seeks eliminating middlemanship.

## Iran, Pakistan to Hold Webinar on Boosting Trade

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN – A webinar will be held on December 9 on boosting trade relations between Iranian and Pakistani economic activists.



According to the report, Tehran Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with Lahore Chamber of Commerce is to hold a webinar on Tuesday, December 9, for bilateral talks for improving trade between Iran and Pakistan.

The webinar will be on the fields of tourism, transportation, energy, food stuff, agriculture, medicines, health, leather, garment and textiles and activists of those fields can exchange views for bolstering trade between both states.

## Acclaimed Iranian Director Wins Award at “Global” Film Festival



**IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK**

TEHRAN – Acclaimed Iranian director Pouran Derakhshandeh won the International Award for Excellence in Cinema at the 13<sup>th</sup> Global Film Festival which was held in Noida, India, on November 26-28.

According to reports, Derakhshandeh won the award for her sincere contribution towards promotion of cinema.

The veteran Iranian director has won several accolades in major international film festivals. She is prepping for shooting of her new film “Hiss! Boys Do Not Cry” which is a sequel to her successful movie “Hiss! Girls Do Not Scream.”

The 13<sup>th</sup> the Global Film Festival ended on Friday as the festival is considered as one of the famous and prestigious festivals in the world.

## Iran-Austria Joint Economic Committee’s Meeting to Convene

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN- Iran’s ambassador to Vienna said that the next meeting of the Iran-Austria Joint Economic Committee is planned to be held in near future.



Making the remarks in an online meeting of Iran-Austria Joint Chamber of Commerce, attended also by Austria’s ambassador to Tehran, Abbas Baqerpour Ardakani said the ninth meeting of the two countries’ Joint Economic Committee was held in Vienna, and the tenth meeting is planned to be held soon.

The envoy said Iran is among the four countries that have a joint economic committee with Austria.

In an online meeting between the Head of Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Hamid Zadboum and the Austrian Deputy Economy Minister for Economic Affairs, Innovation and International Policy Florian Frauscher, in early September, the officials had discussed holding the next meeting of the two countries’ joint economic committee.

They also discussed the roadmap for economic cooperation between the two sides.

In the meeting, Zadboum referred to the positive progress of the cooperation agreements and memorandums signed within the economic roadmap of the two countries, and said: “Despite the sanctions and their effects on Iran’s trade, there are still favorable conditions for the development of economic relations between the two countries.”

The TPO head also stressed the need to make some changes in the two sides’ joint working groups for the 2020-2021 period and stated: “We welcome any proposals or opinions from the Austrian side and we hope that a document will be signed for the new period by the end of this year.”

Frauscher for her part underlined the satisfactory performance of the two countries’ economic working groups and stressed the need for constant evaluation of these working groups in parallel by both Iran and Austria.

At the end of the virtual meeting, the two sides expressed hope for the elimination of the problems caused by the coronavirus pandemic, and the U.S. sanctions, and announced their readiness to hold the next physical meeting of the two countries’ Joint Economic Committee in the first half of the next year.

## Iran Electricity Consumption Rises by 3.22% y/y

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran’s Energy Ministry says power consumption across the country hit nearly 38.5 gigawatts per hour (GWh) on November 30, an increase of 3.22 percent compared to the similar day last year.

In a Tuesday report, the official IRNA news agency cited figures by Iran’s Grid Management Company (IGMC), saying electricity usage by all customers, household and industries included, reached 35, 873 GWh and 38,498 GWh at noon and evening local time on Monday, respectively.

The report said corresponding figures for November 30, 2019 were 33,935 GWh and 37,296 GWh.

IGMC figures showed that industrial units had accounted for nearly 12 percent or 4,917 GWh of total consumption reported evening local time on Monday.

Customers in the capital Tehran used 7,025 MW of electricity during the same hour, said the report, adding that total production of electricity from renewable



sources, including from solar and wind farms, had reached 2,432 GWh.

Iran is a heavy consumer and producer of electricity with a series of sprawling thermal power plants supplying a bulk of the energy to the country’s households and industries.

Current nominal production capacity stands at above 85,000 GWh although actual output is just more than half that figure.

Consumption reaches peaks of more than 55,000 GWh during hot summer months when households increasingly rely on electricity for air conditioning.

The Energy Ministry normally boasts of a high degree of reliability of its power grid, saying the number of blackouts that normally takes place in summer months are among the lowest reported around the world.

However, the government has massive upgrade plans for power plants while it keeps encouraging efficiency by offering free of charge electricity to households with low consumption.

## Iran Copper Exports Hit \$457m in 7 Months

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN – The value of Iran’s copper and downstream products has touched over \$457.5m in the first seven months of the current year which shows 42 percent decline comparing to the same period last year.

According to the latest data released, the volume of exports of copper and downstream products has been around 100,164 tons in seven months which shows 63 percent fall comparing to the same period last year.

The total export of mineral products in seven months has been around 21.17m tons worth of \$3.04b.

The data also shows a 23 percent decline in the value of copper imports. According to the report, the amount of imports of copper and downstream products has been around 732,000 tons which shows 26 percent decline comparing to the same period last year. The value of copper imports has also stood at \$8m which indicates 33 percent decline in terms of value. Studies show that Iran has 4.2 percent of world copper reserves and now by increase of 528m tons of its reserves ranks seventh in the world.

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

## Chabahar Port Equipment Capable of Loading 15,000 Tons of Goods a Day

ZAHEDAN (IRNA) - Director of Ports and Maritime Organization of Sistan and Baluchistan said on Wednesday that the equipment in southeastern strategic Iranian port of Chabahar, is capable of loading 15,000 tons of goods per day.

Behrouz Aghaei told IRNA that the fact shows a considerable increase in export and import of basic goods through Chabahar Port and Chabahar, the first Iranian port that is able to attract foreign operators.

He referred to the modern equipment of the ocean port for unloading grains and added the unloading process of the ship is started as soon as it harbored.

Having joint borders with two neighboring countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Iran’s Chabahar can be a route to join Indian Ocean and Africa to Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Iranian President Hassan Rouhani had said earlier.

After the completion of the first phase of Shahid Beheshti Port in Chabahar, it can play important role in marketing, can attract investors and facilitate the arrival of different ships and vessels, Aqaei announced.

As a national development project, it will also prepare the ground for fostering trade exchanges with neighboring states, including India, Oman and Afghanistan, Aqaei underlined.

Indian operator in Shahid Beheshti Port with ten-year-long agreement is committed to provide 85-million-dollar worth of strategic equipment, Aqaei said, adding that the ownership of the equipment will be presented to Iran at the end of the agreement.

Chabahar Port, located in southeastern Iran on the Gulf of Oman, serves as Iran’s only oceanic port, and consists of two separate ports named Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti, each of which has five berths.

## Exports to Iraq Via Mehran Crossing Top \$280m

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran’s exports to Iraq via Mehran border crossing in the western Ilam province reached 534,000 tons worth \$284 million during the eight calendar months to November 20.



Rouhollah Gholami, director-general of Ilam Customs Administration made the announcement on Wednesday, adding that the trades between Iran and Iraq through Mehran border crossing is on track with all coronavirus-related health protocols in place.

He noted that currently, 500 trucks carrying Iran’s export goods cross the Mehran border to Iraq daily.

Construction materials, steel products, glass and tiles were the main products exported via Mehran during the eight-month period.

According to Gholami, Iran’s exports to Iraq via Mehran checkpoint stood at \$1.18 billion during the last fiscal year (March 2019-20).



## NATO Defense Ministers Discuss Agenda 2030

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The “NATO 2030: United for a new era” report was discussed at the NATO defense ministers meeting on Tuesday, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.

Speaking at a news conference in Brussels after the first day of the two-day session, the NATO chief said he appointed a group of experts to work on NATO’s “continued adaptation.”

NATO 2030 is an initiative to make sure the 30-member alliance remains “ready today to face tomorrow’s challenges,” according to a description on the NATO website. Stoltenberg said the group, co-chaired by Thomas de Maiziere and A. Wess Mitchell, finalized the report and briefed the ministers on the findings.



## Palestinian Groups Urge Officials to Cut Israel Talks

GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - Palestinian groups in Gaza urged the Palestinian Authority (PA) on Tuesday to reverse a decision to resume talks with Israel and instead accomplish Palestinian intra-reconciliation.

“The return of relations [with Israel] hindered the path of national reconciliation but didn’t fail it completely,” Khalil al-Hayya, a member of the political bureau of the Hamas group, said at a meeting with Palestinian groups in Gaza.

“The [Hamas] movement’s strategic decision affirms on the necessity of accomplishing the national unity based on partnership and joint Palestinian national work,” said al-Hayya.



## U.S. Accuses China of Flagrant North Korea Violations



WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States accused China on Tuesday of “flagrant violation” of its obligation to enforce international sanctions on North Korea and offered rewards of up to \$5 million for information about sanctions evasions.

Deputy Assistant Secretary for North Korea Alex Wong accused China of seeking to undo a United Nations sanctions regime aimed at persuading North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons. He warned of new U.S. sanctions against China-based individuals and entities in response.

Wong said China had continued to host at least 20,000 North Korean laborers in violation of U.N. bans, and that in the past year the United States had observed ships carrying prohibited coal or other sanctioned goods from North Korea to China on 555 separate occasions.

“On none of these occasions ... did the Chinese authorities act to stop these illicit imports,” Wong told Washington’s Center for Strategic and International Studies.

He said China currently hosted at least two dozen North Korean representatives connected to Pyongyang’s weapons programs or banks, and Chinese firms had continued to do business with U.N.-sanctioned entities with key roles in those programs.

Wong said China “increasingly allows” its companies to conduct trade with North Korea in a broad spectrum of U.N.- prohibited goods, including seafood, textiles, iron and steel, industrial machinery, vehicles, sand and gravel.

“In no other country do we see this breadth and depth of continuing illicit commercial activity with North Korea, the scale of which puts China in flagrant violation of its obligations,” he said.

“They are seeking to revive trade links and revenue transfers to the North, thereby ensuring Chinese reach into the North’s economy.”

China says it abides by U.N. sanctions on North Korea, although it has also, along with Russia, expressed hope that an easing of those conditions could help break the deadlock in nuclear talks between Washington and Pyongyang.

Wong said the State Department was launching a website through which people could provide information on North Korea sanctions evasion in return for up to \$5 million.

He also warned of new sanctions for such evasion, including on individuals and entities within China’s jurisdiction.

“We have imposed numerous such sanctions designations in the past, and I want to tell you, more are forthcoming.”

Washington has also accused China of helping North Korea launder money from cyber thefts carried out to raise funds for its weapons programs.

Outgoing U.S. President Donald Trump held unprecedented summits with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in an unsuccessful attempt to persuade him to give up his nuclear weapons.

## NATO Urged to Adapt to Global Threats, Not Just Russia

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - NATO must significantly broaden its scope to help deal with climate change, future pandemics and “terrorism” while focusing on new security threats from China, a new high-level report commissioned by the military alliance said on Tuesday.

Seen by some as a Cold War relic until Russia’s 2014 annexation of Crimea, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization found new purpose in its military modernisation but now needs to “play a larger part in an international order,” said the 67-page report presented to NATO foreign ministers.

“NATO must adapt to meet the needs of a more demanding strategic environment marked by the return of systemic rivalry, persistently aggressive Russia, the rise of China,” it said.

Commissioned amid doubts about the purpose and relevance of an alliance branded “braindead” last year by French President Emmanuel Macron, the report also cited the need for NATO to help against asymmetric attacks, develop a strategy for its southern flank, and be more prepared for technological changes.

“Where NATO faced one big threat in the Cold War ... today it faces two systemic rivals – the enduring threat of “terrorism”, [and] instability along NATO’s southern periphery,” the report by a group of experts said, referring to China and Russia.

Those reforms could be done, in part, by updating NATO’s master strategy document, its “Strategic Concept”, which dates from 2010 and sought to consider Russia as a partner.

The report, which will be presented to NATO leaders at a planned summit next year, also addressed strains between allies who have held up decision-making – such as Turkey and Hungary – although it does not mention them by name.

Other allies, such as France and the United States, say Turkey has undermined NATO priorities in Libya and Syria, while Ankara’s purchase of Russian weapons is a divisive issue.

“Political divergences within NATO are dangerous,” the report said.

The report, with recommendations that are not binding, said NATO must also find a way to stop individual countries from vetoing policy decisions.

Other recommendations include a “consultative body” to coordinate broader, Western policy towards China.

NATO leaders could also hold summits with European Union leaders, give the secretary-general more power over personnel and budgets, and have more regular meetings, possibly involving interior or finance portfolios.

“NATO needs a strong political dimension to match its military adaptation,” the report said.



## Barr Sees No Sign of Major U.S. Vote Fraud Despite Trump’s Claims

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. Attorney General William Barr said on Tuesday the Justice Department has found no evidence of widespread voter fraud in last month’s election, even as President Donald Trump kept up his flailing legal efforts to reverse his defeat.

The comments by Trump’s top law enforcement official came as the Republican president’s official and unofficial lawyers filed new long-shot legal motions to challenge his loss to Democratic President-elect Joe Biden.

Barr, who has been frequently accused by Democrats of politicizing law enforcement, told the Associated Press that prosecutors have not found evidence to back up Trump’s claims that the Nov. 3 election had been marred by widespread fraud.

“To date, we have not seen fraud on a scale that could have affected a different outcome in the election,” Barr told the news service.

The Trump campaign said the Justice Department did not investigate thoroughly enough.



## India Plans Dam on Brahmaputra River Against China’s Plans

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India is considering a plan to build a 10-gigawatt (GW) hydropower project in a remote eastern state, an Indian official said on Tuesday, following reports that China could construct dams on a section of the Brahmaputra river.

The river, also known as the Yarlung Tsangpo in China, flows from Tibet into India’s Arunachal Pradesh state and down through Assam to Bangladesh. Indian authorities are concerned Chinese projects could trigger flash floods or create water scarcity. “The need of the hour is to have a big dam in Arunachal Pradesh to mitigate the adverse impact of the Chinese dam projects,” TS Mehra, a senior official in India’s federal water ministry, told the Reuters news agency.

“Our proposal is under consideration at the highest level in the government,” Mehra said, adding the Indian plan would create a large water storage capacity to offset the effect of Chinese dams on water flows.

Diplomatic relations between India and China are at a nadir, with troops locked in a border face-off in the western Himalayas for months. Some analysts warned that damming the Brahmaputra could potentially develop into another flashpoint, as Beijing’s dam-building activities moved closer to the Indian border.

“India is facing China’s terrestrial aggression in the Himalayas, maritime encroachments on its back yard and, as the latest news is a reminder, even water wars,” Brahma Chellaney, a specialist on India-China ties, said in a tweet.

On Monday, Chinese state media reported the country could build up to 60 GW of hydropower capacity on a section of the Brahmaputra, citing a senior executive.

Yan Zhiyong, chairman of state-owned Power Construction Corporation of China, speaking at an industry conference, said plans to dam the river were a “historic opportunity”.

“Formally, we are telling them (the Chinese) that any project you undertake, should not cause an adverse impact on India. They have given an assurance, but we don’t know how long their assurance will last,” Mehra said.

## New Zealand Declares Climate Emergency

WELLINGTON (Reuters) -

New Zealand promised its public sector would become carbon neutral by 2025 as it declared a climate emergency on Wednesday, a symbolic move that critics said needed to be backed with greater actions to reduce emissions.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the climate emergency declaration was based on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s findings that to avoid more than 1.5 degree Celsius rise in global warming, emissions would need to fall by around 45% from 2010 levels by 2023 and reach zero by around 2050.

“This declaration is an acknowledgement of the next generation. An acknowledgement of the burden that they will carry if we do not get this right and do not take action now,” Ardern told lawmakers in parliament.

After an hour-long debate, a majority of parliamentarians voted in favour of the declaration. The main opposition National Party voted against it saying it was nothing but “virtue signalling”.

New Zealand joins 32 other countries including Japan, Canada, France and Britain that have declared a climate emergency.

Ardern, who returned to power in October delivering the biggest election victory for her centre-left Labour Party in half a century, has called climate change the “nuclear free moment of our generation”.

In her first term she passed a Zero Carbon Bill, which sets the framework for net zero emissions by 2050 with an exemption for farming, and banned new offshore oil and gas exploration. Nearly half of New Zealand’s greenhouse gas emissions come from agriculture, mainly methane.

The government on Wednesday promised the public sector will achieve carbon neutrality by 2025. Government agencies would have to measure and report emissions and offset any they can’t cut by 2025.

The programme will be backed by a NZ\$200 million (\$141 million) fund to finance replacing coal boilers and help purchase electric or hybrid vehicles, it said.

Greenpeace welcomed the declaration, but challenged the government to follow through with policy and action.







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## French Car Market Set to Fall to Lowest Level Since 1975

PARIS (Reuters) - France's car market, which has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, is set to fall to its lowest level since 1975 this year, the CCFA French automobile federation said on Tuesday.

The CCFA maintained its forecast for a 25% to 30% drop in the French car market in 2020, though a spokesman said the fall would be at the lower end of the range, meaning closer to 26%.

"There are still some uncertainties around December, including around the demand for hire cars people might use to go to ski stations if they remain closed," CCFA spokesman Francois Roudier said. "But the catastrophic scenario of a 30% fall (this year) is no longer on the table."



## Euro-Zone-Factories Lagging Asia's Recovery From COVID-19 Crisis

LONDON (Reuters) - Euro zone factory growth cooled last month as renewed coronavirus lockdown measures hurt demand, leaving the bloc lagging many Asian peers who recovered further from the COVID-19 crisis, surveys showed on Tuesday.

Germany was the euro zone's powerhouse, while in Asia Chinese factory activity accelerated at the fastest pace in a decade, energizing regional growth and a sign the world's second-largest economy is rebounding to pre-pandemic levels.

The outlook for the global economy is improving despite a second wave of coronavirus as vaccines emerge and a China-led recovery takes hold, the OECD said on Tuesday. But a global resurgence in coronavirus infections has made the outlook highly uncertain, keeping governments and central banks under pressure to maintain or ramp up their massive stimulus programs.

European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde made clear at last month's policy meeting and in a speech that another round of monetary stimulus this month is all but certain.

The euro zone is on track for its first double-dip recession in nearly a decade, according to a recent Reuters poll of economists, and IHS Markit's final manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index fell to 53.8 in November from October's 54.8.

"Manufacturing is not that bad considering the pressure on the economy, but it's all about services which have lost a lot of momentum," said Peter Dixon at Commerzbank. While the region's manufacturing sector continued to expand, an earlier flash reading of the overall survey showed growth in the dominant service industry contracted last month as COVID-19 restrictions were imposed to quell a second wave of infections.

Factories across Europe reduced headcount again although German unemployment fell unexpectedly in November and optimism improved amid progress in developing COVID-19 vaccines.

British factories meanwhile recorded their fastest growth in almost three years last month as they stockpiled raw materials and rushed to complete work before new post-Brexit customs rules come into force on Jan. 1.

Britain and the EU have so far failed to agree on tariff-free trade and even with a deal many exporters fear lengthy delays at ports due to new customs requirements.

"Even if a trade deal is signed off at the last minute, sparing UK-EU trade from tariffs, manufacturing output likely will fall back in Q1, due to the shift in the timing of export demand," said Samuel Tombs at Pantheon Macroeconomics.

China's Caixin/Markit Manufacturing PMI rose to 54.9 from October's 53.6, marking the highest level since November 2010.

The gauge stayed well above the 50-level separating growth from contraction for the seventh consecutive month. It was also in line with an official survey that showed activity at Chinese factories expanded at the fastest pace in more than three years in November.

"There is little sign that large second waves of the virus in the U.S. and Europe have weighed on Asia's export-focused industry, suggesting that external demand will continue to hold up," Capital Economics said in a research note. "Overall, it looks likely that Asian industry will remain strong over the coming months, helping economic recoveries to stay on track."

Asia's outperformance comes as many countries in the region have had greater success in containing the virus than peers in Europe and the United States.

Japan's manufacturing PMI rose and South Korea's PMI scored its highest reading since February 2011, marking the second month of activity expansion. Factory activity also grew in Taiwan and Indonesia, a sign the pick-up in Chinese demand was underpinning the region's economy.

But India's manufacturing recovery faltered as coronavirus fears weighed on demand and output, prompting firms to cut jobs for the eighth month in a row. That underscored the patchy nature of Asia's outlook, with some analysts still cautious on the outlook with global and domestic demand vulnerable to infection trends.

## Germany's Partial Lockdown Slows Growth in Manufacturing

BERLIN (Reuters) - Germany's partial lockdown to contain a second wave of coronavirus infections slowed growth in the manufacturing sector in November but export-oriented companies remained optimistic thanks to strong demand from abroad, a survey showed on Tuesday.

IHS Markit's final Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for manufacturing, which accounts for about a fifth of the German economy, fell to 57.8 in October from the 2-1/2 year high of 58.2 reached in the previous month.

The November reading was slightly below a flash estimate of 57.9.

The survey showed the goods-producing sector was not completely immune to the renewed lockdown measures, as closures in hospitality had a knock-on effect on consumer goods production in particular, IHS Markit economist Phil Smith said.

But rising export sales helped to cushion the impact of weaker domestic demand, he added. Among the surveyed businesses, many pointed to rising new orders from clients across mainland Europe and Asia, particularly China.

Chancellor Angela Merkel and state premiers last week agreed to extend until Dec. 20 a partial lockdown which has forced bars, restaurants, hotels, gyms and entertainment venues to close since Nov. 2.

"The extension of the lockdown poses some downside risk to the sector's immediate outlook, though the survey shows that manufacturers are highly optimistic about their prospects for 2021," Smith said.

The PMI survey chimes with high-frequency data such as Germany's truck toll mileage which has also suggested that the industrial sector is so far relatively unscathed by the second wave of the pandemic.

Economic institutes nevertheless expect Germany's gross domestic product to shrink by up to 1% in the fourth quarter after a stronger-than-expected 8.5% rebound in the third and an unprecedented 9.8% plunge in the second quarter.

## Almost a Fifth of Spanish Firms in Danger of Insolvency

MADRID (Reuters) - Up to 18.7% of Spanish companies could be insolvent by the end of the year because of the economic impact from the COVID-19 pandemic, with one in 10 of them unviable "zombies", according to a worst-case scenario published by the Bank of Spain on Tuesday.

Even in the central bank's most optimistic scenario, the number of insolvent companies would still rise to 14.5% from 10.5% last year.

Spanish companies have been among the most active in Europe in applying for state-backed credit and liquidity lines, but as in other European countries the focus has now been switching to solvency.

Businesses in the hospitality sector are particularly hard hit, with possibly as many as a third considered insolvent, the central bank said. Small businesses and motor vehicle companies are also under extreme financial pressure, it said.

Unviable companies - those expected to have negative results in the long term and therefore unable to meet debt payments - account for just under 5% of total company debt, with a similar weight in total employment, the Bank of Spain said.

But their fragility "is expected to have an impact on their creditors, logically including the financial sector", the Bank of Spain's chief economist Oscar Arce said.

The government last month approved an extension, until March, of restrictions on forced bankruptcies of companies affected by the pandemic to avoid the so-called cliff effect from the withdrawal of some support measures.

In line with this use of publicly guaranteed loans, the Bank of Spain sees a general increase in liquidity, particularly in the hospitality sector, and also an increase in the leverage of companies, but a decrease in the financing cost.

## Japan to Keep Funding Tourism Campaign Under New Stimulus Package

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan plans to keep setting aside money to promote domestic tourism and dining out in its next stimulus package, according to a draft of the government's upcoming package seen by Reuters, even as rising COVID-19 infections have prompted concern about the campaigns.

The draft stimulus package also included a plan to set up a fund to encourage investment in green technology, a nod to Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's pledge that Japan will aim for net-zero emissions by 2050.

The outline underscores Suga's resolve to keep businesses open, even as Japan faces a resurgence in coronavirus infections that are quickly filling up hospital beds. It also points to the dilemma policymakers face in balancing the need to support the economy without spreading the virus.

The draft made no mention of the size of stimulus package or its source of funding, which will likely be finalized in the coming days. Some ruling party lawmakers have called for a third extra budget of up to 30 trillion yen (\$290 billion) to fund the new package, which Suga instructed his cabinet to compile.

The stimulus plan would follow a combined \$2.2 trillion in two previous packages rolled out this year to cushion the economic blow from the pandemic.

While the previous packages responded to the immediate hit from the pandemic, the upcoming stimulus is seen focusing more on efforts to cope with the 'new normal' in the post-COVID era.

The new package will include subsidies for municipal governments that compensate businesses meeting requests to close shops early to contain the pandemic, the draft showed.

The government will also aid research and development in programs that help achieve a carbon neutral society, according to the draft.

Japan has confirmed around 150,000 cases of virus infections with deaths at more than 2,100.

Japan's economy has been gradually recovering from its worst postwar slump caused by the coronavirus earlier this year. But it is likely to take years before the economy returns to pre-pandemic levels.

## China's November Factory Activity Growth Hits Decade High



BEIJING (Reuters) - Activity in China's factory sector accelerated at the fastest pace in a decade in November, a business survey showed on Tuesday, as the world's second-largest economy recovers to pre-pandemic levels.

The Caixin/Markit Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 54.9 from October's 53.6, with the gauge staying well above the 50-level that separates growth from contraction for the seventh consecutive month.

Analysts polled by Reuters had forecast the headline reading would slip to 53.5.

Since COVID-19 paralysed huge swathes of the economy early this year, China has seen a strong rebound in activity, helped by strict virus containment measures, infrastructure-driven stimulus, strong exports of medical supplies, and pent-up demand.

Surging infections and fresh lockdowns in some of its key trading partners could dent demand for Chinese exports, which have been surprisingly resilient so far.

The Caixin PMI reading was the highest since November 2010, and comes after an official gauge of factory activity, focusing more on larger and state-owned firms, rose at the fastest pace in over three years.

E-commerce shopping promotions in November showed strong consumer demand, bolstering confidence for small and medium-sized firms.

Economic indicators ranging from trade to producer prices all suggest a further pick up in the industrial sector.

"Manufacturing continued to recover and the economy increasingly returned to normality as fallout from the domestic COVID-19 epidemic faded," Wang Zhe, senior economist at Caixin Insight Group, wrote in a note accompanying the survey release.

Gauges of both total new orders and factory output marked 10-year highs. New export orders rose more modestly. The private sector survey also showed Chinese factories hired workers for the third month in a row and at a faster pace.

"Supply and demand improved at the same time. Employment recovered markedly and overseas demand kept expanding," said Wang.

Input and output prices both rose, with respondents to the survey citing a sharp rise in the cost of raw materials, especially metals, he said.

Analysts expect China's economy to grow about 2% in 2020, the weakest since 1976 but still far stronger than other major economies.

## Italy's Growth Jumps in Q3

MILAN (Dispatches) - Italy's economy, which plunged into recession by the coronavirus outbreak, returned to growth in the 3rd quarter as gross domestic product (GDP) jumped 15.9% on the previous quarter, the national statistics agency estimated Tuesday, December 1.

This is a slight downgrade on the initial estimate of 16.1% made by Istat in late October.

While the economy rebounded strongly from the spring, when many businesses were closed, economic output was still 5% smaller than during the 3rd quarter of 2019.

In the first 9 months of the year, GDP in the eurozone's 3rd largest economy fell by 8.3%.

"The full estimate of the quarterly economic accounts confirms that the Italian economy, after a sharp contraction in the 1st quarter caused by the effects of the health crisis, recorded a substantial recovery in the 3rd quarter," Istat said.

It said the recovery was spread across all sectors of the economy.

Italy was the first country in Europe to be hit by the coronavirus outbreak earlier this year, which sparked a nationwide shutdown.

As a result, Italy suffered its worst recession since World War II and GDP is expected to fall this year between 9% and 11.5%.

Cases of COVID-19 fell over the summer but a surge in recent months has taken the death toll to more than 55,000, and sparked new restrictions that risk again hitting growth. - Rappler.com





# Iran Ranked Among States With High Efficiency Turbine Technology

TEHRAN (MNA) – Islamic Republic of Iran was ranked among countries with high efficiency turbine technology.

The ability to manufacture turbines of high efficiency power plants (Class F) was created in the country by acquiring the technical knowledge of this type of

turbine. Thus, Islamic Republic of Iran was ranked among the countries holding this technology.

Last year, with the efforts made in this regard, efficiency of thermal power plants reached its highest level in the history of electricity industry, rising to about 38.56% for the first time.



# ADB Loans \$300m to Pakistan to Improve Economic Stability



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$300m loan to Pakistan to support macroeconomic stability through trade facilitation and export diversification.

The facility will help Pakistan recover its current account deficit in a “sustained manner”, reveals a statement by the ADB.

It will introduce tariff and tax-related policy reforms to improve Pakistan’s trade competitiveness and strengthen key institutions, including accreditation bodies, the Export-Import Bank of Pakistan, and the Pakistan Single Window, a digital system that allows those involved in trade and transport to lodge standardized information and documents to fulfil import, export and transit-related regulatory requirements.

The new financing forms the second phase of a trade and competitiveness program for Pakistan by the ADB.

During the first stage, the ADB helped the government bring in key reforms, including reducing or abolishing tariffs and ad hoc duties on a variety of raw materials and intermediate goods.

Several steps were also taken to introduce e-commerce, support institutions involved in facilitating trade and enhance the export certification process.

Since 2004, Pakistan has experienced a volatile pattern of export growth that reflects underperformance and a long-term decline in competitiveness of its export industry, says the ADB. This has only been made worse by Covid-19, which has served to reduce higher-income countries’ demand for manufactured goods and disrupted the supply of raw materials from the country.

“While Covid-19 hit Pakistan at a critical point in its macroeconomic recovery, the government’s ongoing efforts to ensure stability have started showing encouraging results this fiscal year,” says ADB principal public management specialist Hiranya Mukhopadhyay. “ADB’s programme will support these efforts and help Pakistan to improve its export competitiveness – now more

important than ever given the impacts of the pandemic.”

In September, the ADB approved another \$300m loan to help strengthen Pakistan’s finance sector by supporting measures to develop competitive capital markets and encourage private sector investment in the country.

Elsewhere, under its Rapid Financing Instrument, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved the disbursement of a US\$1.4bn loan to Pakistan in April to meet the balance of payment needs stemming from the outbreak of the pandemic.

# Iranian, Italian Anti-Narcotic Polices Discuss Boosting Cooperation



TEHRAN (MNA) – An Italian official noted that his country is keen on improving bilateral cooperation with Iran’s Anti-Narcotics Police in the fight against drug trafficking.

A meeting held between the Head of Iran’s Anti-Narcotics Police Colonel Majid Karimi and Salvatore Labarbera the new liaison officer of the Italian Anti-Narcotics Police in Iran on Wednesday.

In this meeting Colonel Karimi, pointed to the favorable and constructive relationship between Iran and Italy in the field of police cooperation, adding, “We hope to be able to succeed in the fight against drug trafficking.”

He further stressed the need to improve the level of bilateral cooperation and said, “Strengthening the level of cooperation between the two countries through the exchange of experiences and the use of existing capacities, will greatly help the fight against drug trafficking at the regional and international levels.”

Fabio Bernardi, the former liaison officer of the Italian Anti-Narcotics Police in Iran, who was also present in the meeting, for his part said “We are keen on increasing the level of bilateral cooperation with Iran’s Anti-Narcotics Police in order to combat drug trafficking at the international level.”

# Biden Plan to End U.S. Fossil Fuel Subsidies Faces Big Challenges

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - President-elect Joe Biden’s promise to end U.S. fossil fuel subsidies worth billions of dollars a year for drillers and miners could be hard to keep due to resistance from lawmakers in a narrowly divided Congress, including from within his own party.

The challenge reflects just one of the obstacles that Biden will need to overcome as he seeks to usher in sweeping measures to combat climate change and transform the nation’s economy to net-zero emissions within three decades.

Biden has said axing fossil fuel subsidies will generate money to help pay for his broader \$2 trillion climate plan.

While Biden can take executive action to reverse President Donald Trump’s rollbacks of rules meant to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reforming tax breaks that allow companies to produce oil, gas and coal more cheaply will require Congress to pass legislation.

Doing so could be hard, even though Biden spent 36 years in the Senate where he is known as a dealmaker.

“It’s dead on arrival in the Senate,” said Gilbert Metcalf, a former deputy assistant secretary for environment and energy at the Treasury Department under former President Barack Obama, referring to any standalone legislation ditching the tax breaks if Republicans maintain control of the chamber.

Even if two of Biden’s fellow Democrats win runoff votes in Georgia on Jan. 5, bringing the Senate to a 50-50 split with Vice President-elect Kamala Harris acting as tie breaker, chances of passing a tax package are slim, experts said.

That is because moderate Democrats from fossil fuel producing states, like Senators Martin Heinrich of New Mexico

and Joe Manchin of West Virginia, the top Democrat on the Senate Energy Committee, could stymie the effort.

“In states like New Mexico, where senators might be green enough to support a climate bill ... a measure that merely strips tax provisions looks like a non-starter,” said Kevin Book, an analyst at ClearView Energy Partners.

Neither Manchin’s office, nor Heinrich’s responded to requests for comment.

Obama also wanted to ditch tax breaks for fossil fuels to send a signal to the world that the United States was serious about speeding a transition away from fossil fuels to tackle climate change.

But even with a commanding Democratic majority in the Senate in Obama’s first six years in office, he was unable to kill the subsidies. The Biden transition team did not respond to a request for comment.

Doing away with tax breaks on producers of fuels that emit greenhouse gases would fit neatly with Biden’s pro-climate agenda, which marks a reversal from Trump’s efforts to roll back climate regulations while boosting fossil fuel output.

It would help establish the United States as a global leader on climate, potentially helping convince other big emitters to axe fossil fuel subsidies.

Leaders in the G20 resolved in 2009 to ditch the subsidies but have made little progress.

“It’s harder for us to get a country to do something if we’re not doing it ourselves,” said Metcalf.

Estimates of the value of fossil fuel subsidies, which mainly take the form of tax breaks, vary.

COVID-19...  
FROM PAGE 1

She added that in the past 24 hours, 362 COVID-19 patients had lost their lives, bringing the total death toll to 48,990.

5,828 COVID-19 patients are in critical condition.

So far, 6,212,694 COVID-19 diagnosis tests have been conducted across the country, the Health Ministry spokeswoman noted.

Currently, 64 cities are in the red zone, 278 are in the orange zone, and 106 are in the yellow zone.

Saudi Arabia...  
FROM PAGE 1

While no party has claimed responsibility for the assassination of Fakhrizadeh - viewed by Western powers as the architect of Iran’s abandoned nuclear weapons program - Iran has accused Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office has declined to comment.

The United States traditionally shields Israel from any action at the Security Council. Washington has declined to comment on the assassination of the scientist.

The U.N. investigator on extra-judicial executions, Agnes Callamard, said on Friday that many questions surrounded the killing of Fakhrizadeh, but noted the definition of an extraterritorial targeted killing outside of an armed conflict. Callamard posted on Twitter that such a killing was “a violation of international human rights law prohibiting the arbitrary deprivation of life and a violation of the U.N. Charter prohibiting the use of force extraterritorially in times of peace.”

UNSC Unlikel...  
FROM PAGE 1

“A counter-intelligence campaign and purposeful psychological warfare were launched in tandem with this terrorist act, in the delusive hope that the evil plans of Pompeo, Netanyahu and bin Salman to create tensions would materialize,” Zarif’s post read.

Fakhrizadeh, who headed the Iranian Defense Ministry’s Organization of Defensive Innovation and Research (known by its acronym SPND), was targeted on November 27 in a multi-pronged attack by suspected Israeli-tied terrorists.

Unlike other regional countries, including its allies at the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Saudi Arabia has refused to condemn the assassination of the senior Iranian physicist. Abdallah al-Mouallimi, permanent representative of the kingdom to the United Nations, however, claimed during an interview with Russian RT television news network on Tuesday that his country “did not support the policy of assassinations at all.” It is not the first time that the Islamic Republic finds Saudi Arabia’s footprints in terrorist operations on Iranian soil.

Biden...  
FROM PAGE 1

“Look, there’s a lot of talk about precision missiles and all range of other things that are destabilizing the region,” Biden was quoted as saying.

But, he added, “the best way to achieve getting some stability in the region” was to deal “with the nuclear program”. Biden warned that if Iran acquired a bomb, it would spark a nuclear arms race in the Middle East, “and the last goddamn thing we need in that part of the world is a buildup of nuclear capability”.

“In consultation with our allies and partners, we’re going to engage in negotiations and follow-on agreements to tighten and lengthen Iran’s nuclear constraints, as well as address the missile program,” he told the Times.

Biden was cited as saying that the United States always had the option to international snap back sanctions if need be, and that Iran knew that. The 2015 nuclear deal -- known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA -- gave Iran relief from sanctions in return for curbs on its nuclear program. In response to Trump’s withdrawal, the Islamic republic has retaliated by rolling back its commitments to the accord. Iran’s government has offered a cautious welcome to Biden’s victory, but conservatives have accused it of yielding to what they say is an “illusion” of a change by the “Great Satan” of America.

# Gov’t Submits... FROM PAGE 1

The Parliament speaker said the budget’s dependence on petrodollars would be totally damaging and abortive.

The overriding concern is a budget deficit, he said, adding that the Parliament is pushing for a budget reform with new sources of revenue.

It is estimated that Iran’s budget revenues for next Iranian year (from March 21, 2021, to March 21, 2022) will amount to a total of 8.41 quadrillion rials (about \$241 billion), Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said at a meeting of the Iranian government. According to President Rouhani, the amount of revenues estimated for the next Iranian year’s budget has increased compared to the current year’s budget.

Rouhani added that the basis of budget revenues are taxes, customs revenues, duties, securities, stocks, and oil.

The president stressed that it is hoped that Iran’s crude oil sales will be normal in the next Iranian year.

‘According to budget, it is estimated that daily 2.3 million barrels of crude oil and gas condensate will be sold. The Iranian government considers that these products can be sold both in domestic and international markets,’ he said.

The president stressed that not all revenues from the sale of Iranian crude oil and gas condensate are intended for the budget.

According to the budget, it is estimated that 645,000 barrels of crude oil will be sold per day. Thus, Iran’s daily revenues from crude oil (a barrel equals to \$40) will amount to \$26 million, and annually about \$9.5 billion. Iran’s budget revenues for the current Iranian year (from March 20, 2020, to March 21, 2021,) was estimated to be a total of 3.38 quadrillion rials (about \$80.4 billion). However, so far, this figure has been 2.9 quadrillion rials (about \$69 billion).

# Rouhani Opposed... FROM PAGE 1

“My absence in the Parliament was only because of health protocols [against the coronavirus spread] and there is no other reason,” the president said.

On Tuesday, 251 out of 260 Iranian lawmakers present at the Parliament voted ‘yes’ to the outlines of the draft bill, which, if endorsed, will require the Iranian administration to suspend more commitments under a multilateral nuclear deal.

The lawmakers are currently studying the details of the proposed law, which gained momentum following the assassination on Friday of Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh by terrorists with suspected links to the Israeli regime. The bill will eventually need the approval of the Guardian Council — a 12-member vetting body that reviews all legislation adopted by the Parliament.

Iran’s Parliament, commonly known as Majlis, believes the initiative can open the locks placed on Iran’s nuclear program and seeks to make imposing sanctions against the Iranian people a costly measure for the West. The bill includes a provision requiring the Rouhani administration to suspend inspections of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) if the European parties to the deal keep failing to fulfill their obligation to facilitate Iran’s access to world banking and oil markets within a month.

It also calls for Iran to enrich uranium for peaceful uses to 20% purity, well over the limits set in the JCPOA, among other things. Elsewhere in his comments, Rouhani said, “The enemies did their best to make the Iranian people surrender during the past decade, and especially over the past three years. They turned sanctions into an all-out economic war.”

But at the same time, he added, “we think that the circumstances will be different next year with the failure of the war and ‘maximum pressure.’”

He was referring to the upcoming change of administration in the U.S. following President Donald Trump’s defeat in the 2020 presidential race. President-elect Joe Biden has said he will return the U.S. to the deal, which was negotiated during his term as vice president.

# India... FROM PAGE 1

Pradhan said India is all for reasonable and responsive pricing of crude. “Gone are days of monopoly. Oil producers have to recognise the aspirations of consumers. It is a consumer-driven market today. India needs a reasonable and responsible price,” he said.

India consumed just 6 per cent of the world’s primary energy and its per capita consumption is one-third of the global average, he said adding India will drive the growth in global energy demand. India’s energy consumption is projected to grow at 3 per cent per annum up to 2040, faster than all major economies of the world. Also, the country’s share of total global primary energy demand is set to roughly double to about 11 per cent by 2040, driven by strong economic development, he said.

The Minister said that India is in the midst of a major transformative shift that aims to enhance the availability and affordability of clean fossil fuels and also reduce the carbon footprint through a healthy mix of all commercially-viable energy sources. “Our government is also committed to reducing the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33 to 35 per cent from 2005 levels,” he said.

Talking about efforts to shift towards a gas-based economy, Pradhan said 14,700 km of gas pipelines are being added to over 16,800-km network presently. Also, gas import terminal capacity is being increased and city gas networks rolled out in 407 districts, he said. “To ensure energy security for our economic growth, we are expanding our refining capacity from the current 250 million tonnes per annum to 450 million tonnes,” he said without giving a time frame..



## Spanish Player Gets Eight-Year Ban for Match Fixing

MADRID (Reuters) - Spanish tennis player Enrique Lopez Perez has been banned from the sport for eight years for his involvement in match-fixing activities in three separate instances in 2017, the Tennis Integrity Unit (TIU) said on Tuesday. The 29-year-old Perez, who reached a career-high singles ranking of 154 in 2018 and a best doubles ranking of 135 last year, was also fined \$25,000. "The disciplinary case was heard by anti-corruption hearing officer Richard McLaren on 5 November 2020," the TIU said in a statement.

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## Newcastle's Match at Villa Postponed Due to COVID-19 Cases

LONDON (Reuters) - Newcastle United's game at Aston Villa on Friday has been postponed due to a "significant increase" in positive COVID-19 tests at the club, the Premier League outfit said on Tuesday. "Several Newcastle United players and staff members are now self-isolating at home after returning positive test results in recent days," a club statement said. "The club's training centre site has been temporarily closed in order to contain the spread of the virus."

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

THURSDAY DECEMBER 3, 2020

# Liverpool Advance, Real Madrid Suffer Defeat

LONDON (Dispatches) - Curtis Jones sent a depleted Liverpool through to the Champions League last 16 on Tuesday, while Zinedine Zidane dismissed suggestions he might walk away from Real Madrid after another defeat by Shakhtar Donetsk left their European hopes in the balance.

Liverpool were without a host of key players for the visit of Ajax to Anfield in Group D, with 22-year-old Irishman Caoimhin Kelleher starting in goal in the absence of Alisson.

Teenager Jones scored the only goal just before the hour, tucking the ball in after Ajax 'keeper Andre Onana thought he could afford to let a Neco Williams cross sail over his head. The result was vital for the Premier League champions after their home loss to Atalanta a week ago, and it allowed them to secure a spot in the knockout phase.

"Honestly since I was at Liverpool that feels like one of the biggest Champions League nights. Without supporters in, it was the most important, most difficult, most exceptional," Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp told BT Sport.

They will go through as group winners after Atalanta had to come from behind to draw 1-1 at home to Midtjylland, Cristian Romero heading in a late equaliser in response to Alexander Scholz's thumping opener for the Danes.

Atalanta are a point clear in second from Ajax, with the sides meeting in Amsterdam in their last game next week.

Two-time former European champions Porto also sealed a last-16 spot after drawing 0-0 at home to Manchester City, who were already through and are now guaranteed to top Group C.

Porto would have qualified regardless, because Olympiakos lost 2-1 to Marseille in France, with Dimitri Payet scoring two penalties in the second half to turn the game around after Mohamed Mady Camara fired the Greeks in front.

The result ends Marseille's Champions League record run of 13 straight defeats and means they could yet pip Olympiakos to third place and the consolation of a Europa League berth.

Real Madrid could yet be consigned to a similar fate after they went down 2-0 to Shakhtar in Kiev, their second defeat this season by the Ukrainians.

Substitutes Dientinho and Manor Solomon scored second-half goals in Kiev as Shakhtar stunned the 13-time European champions again, having won 3-2 in Madrid in October. Shakhtar had lost their last two Group B



matches against Borussia Moenchengladbach by an aggregate score of 10-0, but now move above Real into second place with one game remaining.

Gladbach are top by a point, while Shakhtar have the upper hand on Real thanks to their superior head-to-head record. However, the damage was limited for Real after Inter Milan won 3-2 away to Gladbach to keep their own hopes alive. Matteo Darmian put Inter ahead and Romelu Lukaku scored twice for Antonio Conte's side. Alassane Plea netted a brace for Gladbach but was denied a hat-trick, and a late equaliser, because of an offside call.

It means Inter are bottom of the group but could still qualify, while Real will definitely qualify as long as they win at home to Gladbach. Madrid have made it out of their group in every year since 1997 and so failure to qualify would be seen as a disaster, but Zidane is not considering stepping down.

"I am not going to resign, not at all. We are always going to have difficult moments, and we are on a bad run, but we need to keep going," said the Frenchman.

Real's city rivals Atletico Madrid will also still have it all to do in their final group game after being held to a 1-1 draw at home by a weakened Bayern Munich.

Joao Felix gave Atletico the lead against a Bayern side who had already won Group A. Thomas Mueller won and then converted a late penalty to earn the defending champions a draw. Salzburg can snatch a last-16 place if they beat Atletico at home next week, after the Austrians won 3-1 away to Lokomotiv Moscow.

Mergim Berisha scored twice in the first half for Salzburg, and Karim Adeyemi got their third goal after Anton Miranchuk converted a penalty for the railway-backed side.

## Hamilton Guttled After Positive COVID-19 Test



MANAMA (Reuters) - Seven-times Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton said he was devastated after testing positive for COVID-19 and being ruled out of Sunday's penultimate race of the season in Bahrain.

It will be the first time the 35-year-old Mercedes driver has missed a race in an F1 career that started with McLaren in 2007.

The sport's most successful driver of all time, with a record 95 wins and 98 pole positions, said on social media that he had tested negative three times in the past week but woke up on Monday with mild symptoms.

The Briton said he then requested another test which came back positive and he immediately started a 10-day self-isolation, ruling out the Sakhir Grand Prix and raising doubts about the Abu Dhabi finale on the following weekend.

"I'm gutted not to be able to race this weekend but my priority is to follow the protocols and advice to protect others," he said.

"I'm really lucky that I feel OK with only mild symptoms and will do my best to stay fit and healthy."

Hamilton said he and his team had taken all possible precautions and followed all regulations to stay safe since the season started.

## Yokohama Dump Out Big Guns Jeonbuk

DOHA (Dispatches) - Yokohama F Marinos cruised into the knockout phase of the Asian Champions League for the first time in their history on Tuesday, hammering two-time champions Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors 4-1 in their Group H clash.

Yokohama's Thai defender Theerathon Bunmathan thundered in a shot from the edge of the box in the 17th minute to set the tone, before three goals in the second half sent the 2006 and 2016 winners Jeonbuk crashing out of the tournament.

"It's a great performance and a credit to the players, because it's the first time the club has got out of the group stage," said Yokohama coach Ange Postecoglou.

"We started really well and put pressure on them, scored a goal — a good goal from Bunmathan.

"We missed some chances in the first half which always keeps the opposition in the game, but in the second half we were a bit smarter, worked our counterattacks really well and scored three good goals.

"It's a fantastic achievement and we are proud of everyone involved."

Besides being the first team from eastern Asia to win the Champions League when it was launched in its current format in 2003, Jeonbuk are also eight-time K League winners, a South Korean record, which includes four consecutive titles starting in 2017.

But at the Al Janoub Stadium on Tuesday, their only bright moment came in the 54th minute when Gustavo fired home from the penalty spot three minutes after Marcos Junior had put Yokohama 2-0 ahead.

Teruhito Nagakawa's 71st-minute strike and an own goal by Song — whose attempted headed clearance found his own net seven minutes from close — confirmed Jeonbuk's exit.

"The team gave what it was possible to do with the contingent that we have," lamented Jeonbuk coach Jose Morais.

"In the first half, strategically, we went in terms of containing the offensive game of Yokohama, which is a big game and a quality game."

"In the second half, the result as it was wasn't enough to take us forward, so we took more risks."



Northern Premier League Division One side Marine became only the second club from the eighth tier to reach the third round after beating Havant and Waterlooville after extra time on Sunday.

Their reward is a visit from Jose Mourinho's men, who last won the FA Cup in 1991 and have not lifted a major trophy since the 2008 League Cup.

Marine boss Neil Young told the BBC: "It's an unbelievable draw. We will plan as best we can.

## Spurs to Face Non-League Marine in FA Cup Third Round

LONDON (Dispatches) - Premier League leaders Tottenham were handed a trip to eighth-tier Marine in Monday's draw for the FA Cup third round.

Top-flight teams enter the competition at the third round stage and Tottenham were given a tie sure to capture the attention of football romantics.

Their reward is a visit from Jose Mourinho's men, who last won the FA Cup in 1991 and have not lifted a major trophy since the 2008 League Cup.

Marine boss Neil Young told the BBC: "It's an unbelievable draw. We will plan as best we can.

## Mazepin to Make F1 Debut With Haas Next Year

LONDON (Dispatches) - Russian driver Nikita Mazepin will make his Formula One debut with the Haas team next year and could be joined by the son of Michael Schumacher.

The 21-year-old son of Russian billionaire Dmitry Mazepin has signed a "multi-year" deal after a successful season so far in Formula Two, Haas said on Tuesday.

He will bring with him some much-needed financial backing for the team struggling from a dip in revenue due to poor results and the coronavirus pandemic.

Mick Schumacher, the son of seven-time world champion Michael, is the favourite to partner Mazepin at Haas, although the second driver is yet to be announced.

Mazepin said: "Becoming a Formula 1 driver is a lifelong dream come true for me. I really appreciate the trust being put in me by (team owner) Gene Haas, Gunther Steiner, and the whole of the team.

"They're giving a young driver an opportunity and I thank them for that.

"The team will be looking to me for feedback and inputs in order to refine its package for 2021 and beyond. I will take that responsibility on and can't wait to get started."

Team principal Steiner said: "Nikita has underlined his credentials in F2 this year, with two victories and a handful of podiums in a strong season."

Since switching to Formula Two this year from the lower-ranked competitions, Mazepin won the so-called "feature races", or longer races, at Silverstone and Mugello.

Steiner dismissed any suggestion that Mazepin was arriving solely as a 'pay driver' on the strength of his father's chequebook.



## Maradona's Shirt Is Not For Sale

LONDON (Reuters) - Former England midfielder Steve Hodge says he has spent a week fending off potential buyers for the shirt worn by Diego Maradona in the infamous 1986 World Cup quarter-final but insists it is not for sale.

Hodge, 58, swapped shirts with Maradona after England's 2-1 defeat in Mexico City's Azteca Stadium, the match in which Maradona scored his so-called "Hand of God" goal before also scoring one of the best ever seen at a World Cup.

The iconic player's death last week, aged 60, has created a frenzy of interest in the shirt, which belongs to Hodge but resides in England's National Football Museum in Manchester, and an American sports memorabilia expert said it could be available for \$2m.

Hodge, however, has disappointing news for anyone thinking of making him an offer.

"I have had it for 34 years and have never once tried to sell it," Hodge told BBC Radio Nottingham. "I like having it. It has incredible sentimental value.

"I've had people knocking on my door non-stop and the phone's constantly ringing from every TV and radio station, and even foreign stations.

"It has been uncomfortable and it hasn't been nice. There has been a bit of flak flying around saying I wanted a million or two million and am hawking it around for money. I find it disrespectful and totally wrong. It's not for sale."

It was Hodge's wayward aerial flick that Maradona chased before using his hand to push the ball past England keeper Peter Shilton. He was also one of the England players left trailing as Maradona slalomed through to make it 2-0.

"I have to say I have never once blamed him for the handball. Not once," Hodge added.

