

**Health Ministry Spokeswoman  
Sima Sadat Lari Said on Friday  
Some 347 People in Iran Have Died  
As a Result of the Coronavirus  
Disease Over the Past 24 Hours as  
The Death Toll Mounted to 49,695**

# IRAN NEWS

**Iran's Ambassador to  
International Organizations in  
Vienna Kazem Gharibabadi Has  
Called for Global Consensus  
Against Coercive Measures  
Especially Imposing Unilateral  
Sanctions Against Target States**

VOL. XXVI, No. 7108 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SATURDAY DECEMBER 5, 2020 - AZAR 15, 1399

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To the Sword as  
Dortmund Advance**



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## President Opens Several Energy Projects Across Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani officially inaugurated 25 energy projects in three Iranian provinces through video-conferencing Thursday.

The government has opened the projects all over the country in line with the guidelines of Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei on Surge in Production for the current Iranian year (started March 20, 2020).

The projects of the Ministry of Energy inaugurated today are collectively worth 6,936 billion tomans. Nine projects were inaugurated in Khuzestan, southwestern Iran; one in Khorasan Razavi, northeastern Iran; and 15 in Sistan and Baluchestan, southeastern Iran.

The energy projects aim at providing sustainable electricity in consumption peak especially in summer, improving services for industrial centers, and providing infrastructures for exporting electricity to neighboring countries.

Addressing the inauguration of several projects in Eastern provinces through video-conference on Thursday, President Rouhani said no one in the world expected Iran to show this level of resistance against the U.S.' economic war.

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## Int'l Community Urged to React to Killing of Elite

TEHRAN (MNA) - Calling on international community to react to the killing of the elite, Iran's Permanent Representative to the UN Office in Geneva said that the assassination of Fakhrizadeh is a clear example of warmongering state terrorism.

In a letter to the World Health Organization (WTO) Managing-Director Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Friday, Esmaeil Baghaei Hamaneh stressed the need for the international community to react decisively to the killing of the elite.

Outlining the services the martyred scientist rendered to health and medical sectors in Iran, including the production of the country's first-ever COVID-19 test kits and also supervising and managing COVID-19 vaccine production line, he described his savage assassination as a measure to continue the policy of exerting maximum pressure on the Iranian nation.

Keeping silent and sustaining inaction towards this murder has no justifications whatsoever as it may lead to becoming such crimes as habitual routines all over the world, he said.

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## Zarif Rules Out Renegotiating Nuclear Deal With Biden



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Javad Zarif reasserts Iran's position that its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers is not open to renegotiation and that the U.S. has to observe the agreement and the UN resolution that endorses it.

The deal "will never be renegotiated, period," Zarif said on Thursday, addressing the 6th edition of the Rome Mediterranean Dialogues 2020.

Officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the deal was made between the Islamic Republic and the P5+1 group of countries - the US, the UK, France, Russia, and China plus Germany - in Vienna in 2015. It put some restrictions on Iran's nuclear energy program in exchange for sanction relief.

The United States, though, left the deal in 2018 under President Donald Trump, returned the sanctions, and threatened those who would not abide by the economic measures with "secondary sanctions."

In committing the breaches against the historic deal, the Trump administration acted as a "rogue regime," Zarif regretted. He advised that the U.S. end its "grave breach" of the JCPOA and UN Security Council Resolution 2231 that has endorsed the nuclear deal, because Washington "has walked out of the nuclear agreement, but did not walk out of the United Nations."

"(It (the United States) has obligations, responsibilities as a UN member, as a Security Council member. And there's a Security Council Resolution 2231, which the US must observe," the senior diplomat noted.

Zarif said if the incoming administration of U.S. President-elect Joe Biden continues to ask Iran to come and renegotiate the JCPOA, it would be walking in the same "rogue" steps as Trump's team.

However, Washington "is not in a position to set conditions" for implementing its own commitments under the JCPOA and has to cease its violation of the international law, the Iran's top diplomat asserted.

He, therefore, reiterated that Tehran would not be negotiating something that has already been negotiated, adding that the deal's original "give-and-take" raison d'être has to be respected, instead of an attitude that is based on "one side asking and the other side giving."

Zarif said if the West, namely the U.S. and its allies in the deal, insisted on their continued violation of the JCPOA, Iran would have to act on a pending parliamentary measure that would restrict the UN nuclear agency's access to the Islamic Republic's nuclear facilities.

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## ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

## Brave Majlis in Claw of The Cautious Gov't

The open session of Majlis on Tuesday December 1 made history in the seven and half years life of the 11th and 12th government, namely, President Hassan Rouhani's governments. Majlis legislators with 251 votes in favor, in this session and during reviewing the outlines of a draft bill, dubbed the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions, for lifting of the sanctions and safeguarding national interests, approved its generalities that the government was totally opposed of its approval.

After the overwhelming approval of the generalities of the draft bill, lawmakers chanted slogans like "Down with the U.S.", "Down with Israel", "The blood in our veins, is the gift to our Leader." The double-urgency draft bill Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions which had been referred to the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee for further studies, was discussed and debated there in presence of the related executive bodies and experts of Majlis Research Center, and by ratification of its title and its text, the bill was approved and then the committee's report in accordance with the Article 161 of Majlis internal status book was handed over to Majlis for voting by legislators. The approved bill pursues goals as follows: The first goal is to undo the locks, inflicted on the national nuclear industry. The second goal is to confront with sanctions which are imposed on Iran by Western countries.

Spokesman to the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Abolfazl Amouei, regarding the committee's approach, says, "We believe by concentration on bolstering our nuclear program and creating restriction for inspections that today there is no logic behind it, we can stand against the sanctions while all balances in the previous agreements have been ruined. And regarding the base for these inspections from our nuclear centers there is a question and there should be a response to this balance and imbalance."

Lawmakers' votes insist on the text and content for Iran's withdrawal from implementing the additional protocol which has been created in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and any country can accept it voluntarily.

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## OPEC+ Decision Was Wise

TEHRAN (MNA) - Minister of Oil Bijan Zanganeh said that the crude oil output cuts will decrease from previously-agreed amount of 7.7 million bpd to 7.2 million bpd in January 2021, down 500,000 bpd, adding it was a wise decision.

Zanganeh made the remark after the 12th OPEC and non-OPEC Ministerial Meeting held on Thursday, adding OPEC+ meetings need to be held monthly to decide on the curbs for other months.

However, if further easing was needed, it should not be more than 500,000 barrels per day, he said, emphasizing the decision for future months would depend on crude oil supply and demand in the market.

Due to the uncertainty in the market, the monthly meeting could help to maintain market stability and support OPEC and non-OPEC's objective to create a fair price in the market.

I do not think the decision will have an influential effect on the market in terms of decreasing the prices as producing 500,000 barrels is not a big amount.

The 12th OPEC and non-OPEC Ministerial Meeting ended on Thursday with members reaching a consensus on easing crude oil output cuts by 500,000 bpd for January 2021.

Also, the decision on the amount of easing crude oil cuts in the future months will be made based on the global oil markets condition during a meeting due to be held by the group every month.

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## U.S. Seeks to Cut Iran Overflight Income

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump is reportedly seeking to persuade Saudi Arabia to open its airspace to Qatari flights and cut Iran's overflight revenues, as it scrambles to deal yet another blow to the Iranian economy before leaving office.

The New York Times said in a report published on Wednesday that Trump administration officials had held talks in Doha and Riyadh to help re-open Saudi Arabia's sky for Qatar Airways, less than three years after the kingdom barred Qatari flights from its airspace in light of a diplomatic feud between the two neighbors.

The paper said the White House's senior advisor Jared Kushner, heading a high-ranking delegation, had met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

"Meeting on Wednesday with Qatari leaders, Jared Kushner, a senior presidential adviser, and other White House officials raised the prospect of rerouting commercial flights from the Persian Gulf country through Saudi Arabia's airspace instead of over Iran, according to a diplomat with knowledge of the discussions," read the report.

"Two U.S. officials also described a goal of Mr. Kushner's diplomatic foray this week - which included a stop in Saudi Arabia - as seeking an agreement on the overflights issue," it added. The report claimed that the re-routing of the Qatari flights would cut some \$100 million in annual revenue for Iran, which currently serves as the only corridor for Qatari aircraft out of the region. Washington's earlier attempts to persuade Qatar over the issues have failed as Riyadh and Doha remain locked in what is generally described as the Persian Gulf's worst diplomatic dispute. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also traveled to Qatar last month to make what one official called his own pitch for the overflights issue to the Qatari government.

In June, Trump tried in person to pressure the Saudi leadership to end the restrictions, but to no avail, the Wall Street Journal reported citing US and regional sources. The report said Washington is also worried about the fact that many U.S. military men regularly take flights from Qatar when traveling to and from the al-Udeid Air Base, the largest American base in the volatile Middle East region. Qatar Airways has rerouted many of its flights through the Iranian airspace since it was banned from flying over several Arab countries in the Persian Gulf in June 2017 when the political standoff erupted between Qatar and a grouping of Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia.

Trump unilaterally withdrew Washington from a 2015 multilateral deal on the Iranian nuclear program in May 2018, and, consequently, re-imposed the anti-Iran sanctions that the accord had lifted.



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# Majlis Bill on Nuclear Power to Create Big Opportunities

TEHRAN (MNA) – Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says the newly-ratified bill of the Iranian Parliament will create ‘big opportunities’.

“Diplomacy knows language of power. Majlis bill on ‘sanctions removal’ creates big opportunities,” the Iranian Parliament Speaker’s Special Aide for International Affairs tweeted on Thursday.

“U.S./E3 have discredited JCPOA not to let #Iran sell oil & get revenues. Russian, Chinese will be set for cooperation & acts against U.S. sanctions,” he added, highlighting that the “weapon of sanctions” must be broken down.

## Tehran, Ankara Can Help Reduce Discord In Muslim World

**TEHRAN (IFP) - President Hassan Rouhani had a phone conversation with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Thursday.**



In the phone call, Rouhani described the Zionists’ assassination of Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh as a great and inhumane crime.

“Undoubtedly, this terrorist act shows the helplessness and inability of the sworn enemies of the Iranian nation against the scientific and research movements of our scientists and it is the right of the Iranian government to take revenge on the blood of this martyr from the perpetrators in the right time,” he said.

President Rouhani further expressed gratitude for Turkey’s expression of sympathy with the Iranian people and also its condemnation of the assassination, saying, “It is completely clear to us who was behind the assassination and what method it used.”

Rouhani stated that in the last months of his life, the Iranian scientist had spent most of his time finding ways to combat coronavirus and completing research to make diagnostic kits for the disease.

“The assassination of this scientist was a great crime and inhumane act,” he said. Referring to the US President-elect’s remarks on the return of the United States to the JCPOA, the President said, “We have repeatedly emphasized that if the other parties to this agreement fulfill their obligations, we will fulfill our obligations as well.”

Pointing to the trend of cooperation between Iran and Turkey, Rouhani said, “Both countries are determined to develop economic and trade relations, but unfortunately the U.S. sanctions prevented us from easily entering into trade and economic and banking cooperation between us.”

Rouhani also emphasised the development and deepening of relations with Turkey in all fields and the implementation of the agreements of the sixth meeting of the Supreme Council for Strategic Cooperation and the Joint Economic Commissions of the two countries.

The President also stressed the need for cooperation and unanimity between Iran and Turkey on international issues and said, “To prevent the infiltration of the enemies of Islam, repairing the gap in the Muslim world is an urgent need and Iran and Turkey can consult and work together to reduce the discords in the World of Islam and invite the Islamic Ummah to unity.”

Referring to the continued global crisis of coronavirus, Rouhani emphasized the participation and cooperation of the two countries in meeting medicine and medical equipment needs, as well as the exchange of experience in this regard.

Referring to the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the President stressed the need to prevent the infiltration of terrorists in the region and the problems arising from it. For his part, the President of Turkey expressed his condolences to the Iranian government, the people of Iran and the family of the Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, and strongly condemned the terrorist act, saying, “There is no doubt that this terrorist act is aimed at undermining peace in the region.”

“I hope that the perpetrators of this crime will be identified and brought to justice as soon as possible,” said Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Referring to the new international situation and the beginning of a new era in the US government, the Turkish President said, “I hope that in the new US administration, the mentality of threats and sanctions will give way to dialogue, cooperation and interaction with countries.”

Erdoğan further stressed the need to further develop and deepen Iran-Turkey relations and stressed that the rapid implementation and operation of the resolutions and agreements of the Supreme Council for Strategic Cooperation will be closely followed.

## Pakistan Condemns

## Assassination of Iranian Scientist

TEHRAN (Pakistan Embassy) - Pakistan condemns the assassination of Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh in Tehran.

We extend sincere condolences to the family members of Mr. Fakhrizadeh and to the Iranian people.

Such acts not only run contrary to all norms of interstate relations and International Law but also threaten the peace and stability of an already fragile region.

Pakistan strongly urges all sides to exercise maximum restraint and avoid further escalation of tensions in the region.

## Enemy’s Act of Terror, Crime Not to Be Left Unanswered

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran’s ambassador to China Mohammad Keshavarzzadeh said on Thursday that Iran will certainly exercise its legitimate right to identify the main perpetrators and agents behind the assassination of Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh and punish them in accordance with the international law.

Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, Deputy Minister of Defense and Head of the Research and Innovation Organization of the Ministry of Defense of Iran, who was described by Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei as “a distinguished nuclear and defense scientist”, was assassinated and attained martyrdom on Friday evening, December 27, near the town of Absard, Damavand city to the east of Tehran during a terrorist attack by the criminal agents of the Zionist regime.

Speaking to China’s Global Times in an exclusive interview, Keshavarzzadeh admitted that nuclear development in Iran will not end after the attack, and added, “We will continue activities to ensure the peaceful nuclear rights of the Iranian people.”

He went on to say that “the terrorist act” took place at a time when Fakhrizadeh was playing a “prominent role” in the production of the first indigenous diagnosis kits and coronavirus vaccine for the Iranian citizens.

“His great contribution to our national efforts in curbing the COVID-19 pandemic was conducted at a time when Iran is under inhumane sanctions of the United States, strictly preventing our access to humanitarian goods, including medicines and medical equipment,” he said.

He also said that the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientist Fakhrizadeh was committed by “perpetrators [who] have a long list of assassinations in the sensitive region of West Asia and beyond.”

He said that Fakhrizadeh’s assassination shows that the enemies of diplomacy are living in anxious days and intend to endanger world peace and security by disturbing the region. Regarding the future of Tehran-Washington talks he said, “As far as the US is not a member of the JCPOA [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action], we won’t negotiate with them.”

He urged the next administration of the US to explicitly condemn Trump’s policies against Iran and make up to its anti-human rights and terrorist acts and the wrong policies pursued by the current government over the past four years in its first steps.

## Iran Welcomes Return of Stability to Afghanistan

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh says Tehran welcomes the new agreement between Taliban and Afghanistan government.

In a statement on Thursday, Khatibzadeh stressed the Islamic Republic of Iran’s support for peaceful solutions for the situation in Afghanistan and the return of peace and stability to the neighboring country.

Welcoming the new deal, he hoped that the start of negotiations between parties could lead to a final agreement and the establishment of lasting stability in the country.

## UN Urged to Announce Fakhrizadeh Assassination as “Terrorist Act”



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Secretary of Iran’s High Council for Human Rights Ali Bagheri Kani called on the United Nations officials to “at least for a single time” deal with the issue of terrorism in Iran the way they do in cases of France and Austria and announce the assassination of the Iranian scientist and nuclear official Mohsen Fakhrizadeh as “an act of terrorism”.

In separate letters to the UN Secretary-General and chief of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), he called on them to condemn the assassination of Fakhrizadeh in clear terms as a terrorist act.

Elaborating on assassination of Fakhrizadeh who was a prominent and distinguished scientist active in Iran’s nuclear and defense industries, he said that “inaction and passivity in face of such criminal act will only give rise to speculations about efforts to legitimize the assassination, as well as extremism and terrorism and will also place the international responsibility for it on the United Nations”.

The Iranian official further pointed to the cases where the UN chief adopted vivid and transparent stances towards terrorist operations in other countries like in Austria and France and asked him, as the most senior official in the international body, to condemn it as an act of terrorism in a nonselective manner.

He also highlighted the importance of cooperation among world countries to serve justice in cases of terrorist actions and urged the two UN officials to raise awareness in the General Assembly and Security Council towards this particular case of state terrorism which jeopardizes international peace and security.

Stressing that “state terrorism” acts as a tool in the hands of big powers to advance their own illegitimate and illegal policies, he condemned politicized, discriminatory and double-standard treatment of this evil phenomenon by the western countries.

## Sanctions Targeting Iran’s Medicine, Medical Equipment Sectors

NEW YORK (IRNA) - Minister of Health and Medical Education Saeed Namaki said unilateral sanctions have been targeting Iran’s medicine and medical equipment needed by the nation.

In a statement delivered to the online session of the High-level Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Response to COVID-19 Pandemic, held in New York 3-4 December 2020, he first appreciated “the United Nations to hold High-Level Special Session in response to COVID-19 Pandemic to share experience and to demonstrate the utmost high level commitment to curb the disease which strongly hit the globe during the last 11 months.”

The Minister then noted that “Since the beginning of the outbreak in Iran, according to the ‘Whole of Government, Whole of Society’ approach, the National Committee to Manage COVID-19 was established under the chairmanship of president Rohani, fully supported by Supreme Leader, to utilize all capacities at national level, to monitor the disease, and to endorse strict public health measures to curb the disease.

Accordingly, our strong PHC Network was not only the core of three rounds of screening through Electronic Health Records, but we managed to sustain Essential Health Services to ensure maternal and child care, immunization, Tuberculosis and HIV case management are provided, and, as a pioneer in NCDs management, to continue health services for chronic patients and mitigating risk factors.

The Government, despite all restrictions due to unlawful and unilateral sanctions, has provided special financial packages for the poor and marginalized population; has done economic support measures especially for small businesses; and implemented testing and treatment coverage programs for 3.5 million legal and illegal Afghan

immigrants. We have taken additional environmental health measures at our borders with neighboring countries according to IHR-2005, which requires substantial support by Member States to maintain normal trade.”

He also said that “Covid-19 pandemic swept the world severely, providing many lessons to be learned nationally, regionally and globally, which demonstrated unpreparedness of the Global Community to deal with a Pandemic. Global preparedness and emergency response must be at the forefront of the agenda of governments and international agencies for decades to come. Leadership, solidarity, inter-sectoral collaboration, evidence-based interventions and coordination between countries are the tools needed to manage Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, we need to strengthen the IT infrastructure to provide more reliable data, tele-medicine and tele-education in the new era. I would like to emphasize the vital importance of global solidarity and international cooperation, with full support to the WHO, as the unique platform for Global Health activities, to overcome this pandemic. Timely, cost-effective and equitable access of all nations to diagnostic, medical equipment, medicines and vaccines are crucial, with no discrimination, sanction or unjustifiable prioritization, as the Secretary-General has rightly pointed out.”

Namaki added: “The unilateral coercive measures imposed by the Government of United States have negatively affected the process of combating the Pandemic in my country. Unilateral illegal measures, hampers easy access of the people to basic medical items and requirements and thus endangers health of the Iranian citizens. Medicines supply and health commodities have been targeted through tight restrictions of foreign exchange resources even for these humanitarian issues.”

## Iran Leaving Additional Protocol Under JCPOA

TEHRAN (IP) – Majlis Speaker said that the recent strategic action law for nullifying the sanctions was adopted to leave the voluntary implementation of the IAEA’s additional protocol, under paragraphs 36 and 37 of the JCPOA.

In an interview with IRIB on Thursday, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said that while Iran observed all of its commitments to the international nuclear deal, its Natanz nuclear facility was sabotaged, and Lt. Gen. Qasem Soleimani and nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh were assassinated, all by the U.S.

“If we do not resist against [the West’s] greed, we cannot do anything. In this law, we have explicitly stated that at any moment, the parties in the JCPOA fulfill their obligations, we will return to our obligations,” Qalibaf announced.

He reiterated that the nullification of the sanctions imposed on Iran is possible only through getting strong against the enemies, pointing to the Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif who told explicitly to the European party that the law adopted by the Iranian parliament is binding on the government.

The Speaker of Iran’s Parliament noted that the body along the government’s conformity goes ahead in the international arena to remove the sanctions and protect the Iranian nation’s rights.

### Second Announcement



### Subject : Invitation to Tender

Isfahan Fajr Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Company (Private Joint Stock) intends to purchase 60,000 tons of corn (Brazil, Ukraine or Russia) through an international tender

Eligible companies or representatives of active foreign companies interested in participating in the tender can receive the tender documents and information about its conditions, refer to the company’s website address [www.fajreisfahan.com](http://www.fajreisfahan.com)

Deadline for Submitting Offers:

Till 9 a.m December 08.2020

Data and place for opening the envelopes:

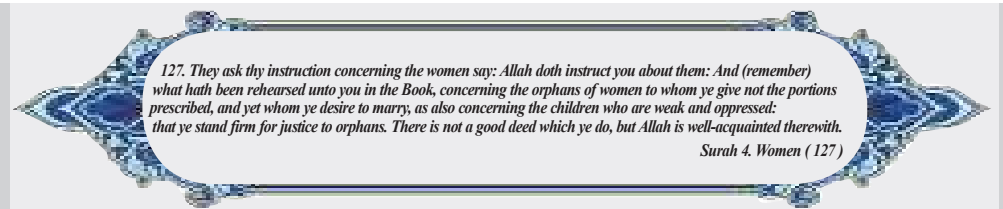
at 10 a.m December 08.2020 at central office of the company





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:55
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:10
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:31
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:00



## Iran, Russia Seek Improving Trade Via Samara and Saratov Channels

*IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK*

**TEHRAN - In a specialized webinar on food industries and agro products of Iran and Russia which was held by Tehran Chamber of Commerce, economic activists of both countries exchanged views for developing trade relations virtually, and officials of both parties during the webinar vowed to take measures to ease bilateral trade.**

According to reports, Tehran Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with Chambers of Commerce of Samara and Saratov regions of Russia as well as the commercial section of Russian Embassy in Tehran held this specialized webinar on trade of agro products and food industries of Iran and Russia.

Over 80 representatives of commercial and production companies of Iran and Samara and Saratov regions participated and they held direct talks for assessing the opportunities for common cooperation after officials of the chambers briefed the participants of the goals behind the webinar.

Addressing the webinar, Deputy Head of International Affairs of Tehran Chamber of Commerce Mr. Hesamuddin Hallaj said that despite geographical proximity and membership of Iran and Russia in Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the trade volume of both countries is unacceptable, adding that Tehran Chamber of Commerce is trying, in cooperation and interaction with Russia's Chamber of Commerce and related organizations with Russia's foreign trade, to find openings for trade cooperation between private sector enterprises of both countries in trade sector.

He then pointed to the agreement between Tehran Chamber of Commerce and Russia Export Center which was signed early this year in Tehran and noted that this cooperation will have significant role in identification of economic capacities in both states and getting acquainted with economic enterprises and specialized associations.

Hallaj further said almost 80 percent of trade between Iran and Russia in 2019 was in the fields of agro products and foodstuff, adding for this reason this webinar was held especially on these fields and Tehran Chamber of Commerce is trying to hold the similar webinars on specialized fields in 2021.

Meanwhile Russian Embassy's Trade Representation in Iran, Rustam Ziganshin, said Samara and Saratov regions can be two most active regions with high potentials for cooperation with Iran market.



He also announced the launch of Iran-Russia Trade Club for restoring economic relations between enterprises in both countries and removing the hurdles in way of businesses by both sides through talks with the state and private sectors officials of both countries.

On the Coronavirus pandemic and restrictions of countries for issuing visas, Ziganshin said currently Russia's Coronavirus Headquarters issues visas, and Iranian companies can get Russian visas from the embassy by bringing introduction letter from Tehran Chamber of Commerce.

He also announced that the representative of Russian Agriculture Ministry will visit Tehran next year as this representative will start its work at the commercial section of Russian Embassy in Tehran to help Iranian enterprises to enter Russia's market as well consulting and supporting Russian companies in Iran market.

Gorshenin Andrey, head of department on foreign trade relations in Samara Region Economy Ministry, also said that Iran market is a priority for the region and pointed that the economic relations of Iran and Russia is growing.

He said that diversity in exports of Samara Region to Iran is increasing and currently, grain, oil seeds, flour and latex are exported from Samara to Iran and Samara traders buy fruits and vegetables, cement and glass from Iran.

He also called for improving the capabilities and logistics between both states that some meetings are to be held on this issue in upcoming months.

Meanwhile Head of Samara Region Chamber of Commerce Valery Fomichev, addressing the webinar, said that holding such events will help companies in both countries to get familiar with the capacities in both states.

He also announced that soon Samara is to launch chambers of commerce with neighboring countries, adding that with the launch of Iran-Samara Region joint chamber, it is expected the trend for developing bilateral trade ties to accelerate more.

Head of Saratov Region Chamber of Commerce Mr. Alexei Antonov also pointed to the beginning of economic cooperation of the region with Iran in the past three years and signing a MoU on cooperation, and announced readiness of the chamber for setting up a joint chamber between Saratov and Iran. He also said that Volga waterway is ready for transportation of goods between Iran and Russia.

### Tehran Calls for Trade

### With Ankara at Pre-COVID-19 Level

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Iran's Presidential Office Mahmoud Vaezi described Iran and Turkey as good neighbors and friends and stressed expansion of their economic ties more than before.

In a phone conversation with new Minister of Finance and Treasury Lutfi Elvan, Vaezi hoped that during Elvan's term of office, the cooperation between Iran and Turkey will continue and expand.

Stressing the necessity of enhancement of economic cooperation between the two countries, he said using the new international conditions and taking into consideration the removal of obstacles on the way of trade, it is necessary that investment between the private sectors of the two countries be supported more than before.

Vaezi went on to say that the relations between Iran and Turkey should turn into a role model for all regional countries.

Elvan said on the phone call that Iran is a friend and brother to Turkey and their ties are expanding.

He said that he would spare no efforts to deepen and expand trade with Iran.

He hoped that the coronavirus epidemic will be curbed and trade between the two countries will go back to the conditions prior to the pandemic.

## 14th Cinema VÉRITÉ Postponed for One Week



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The pandemic in Tehran has pushed back the start of the 14th edition of the Cinéma VÉRITÉ festival, Iran's major international festival for documentary films, one week to December 15.

The festival will be running totally online on December 15-22.

The delay will help the organizers have a better chance to arrange the programs, and will give the filmmakers more time to submit their works," the director of the festival, Mohammad Hamidi-Moqaddam said.

After the spread of the coronavirus in the world, many festivals were canceled, but after several months, the world's big festivals were determined to keep their festivals going, he added. In the international section, we decided to screen and review a selection of documentaries acclaimed at 2020 international events across the world in a section named 'World's Best', he noted.

"We lost a number of beloved filmmakers over the past year and we will dedicate each day to pay tribute to one of them, including Khosro Sinai, Akbar Alemi, Hamid Soheili and Manuchehr Tayyab during the festival," he underlined.

"We will also honor filmmakers Kamran Shirdel, Mahvash Sheikholeslami and Farshad Fadaian," he added.

## Gov't Plans Changes to Law for Paying Tax Upon Leaving Country

*IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK*

TEHRAN - Iranian citizens must pay 2.64 million rials (about \$62.8) per person to travel to another country first time, according to Iran's draft budget for next Iranian year (from March 21, 2021 to March 21, 2022), Trend reports citing Plan and Budget Organization of Iran.

According to an Iranian law, every Iranian citizen must pay a certain amount of money before leaving the country, regardless of the purpose. According to the proposed changes, if each Iranian citizen travels abroad for the second time, this figure will increase by 50 percent, and if he travels 3 or more times, this figure will increase by 100 percent.

"About 800,000 rials (about \$19) of each travel fee will be spent on the development of tourism facilities and infrastructure, cultural heritage and support for the handicraft industry," the project said.

Furthermore, each Iranian citizen will have to pay a fee worth 1.32 million rials (about \$31.4) for Hajj Pilgrimage by air, 450,000 rials (about \$10.7) for other pilgrimages, and 150,000 rials (about \$3.57) by land and sea. On Dec.2, the budget project of the Iranian government for next Iranian year was submitted to parliament for approval. According to the budget project, next year's budget is estimated to amount about 24.4 quadrillion rials (about \$580 billion) in total.

## Joint Iran-Iraq Economic Commission To Be Set Up Soon

*IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK*

TEHRAN – A member of board of directors of Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce says soon Iran and Iraq will set up a joint economic commission which will help the bilateral trade activities.



Speaking to ILNA, Seyed Hamid Hosseini said that it has been promised the Joint Iran-Iraq Economic Commission to be established by January after 6 years of talks. He added the commercial commission is aimed at easing decision-making for resolving problems regarding trade between both states. He reiterated that if it happens, most problems regarding transportation, tariffs, documents, inspections and standards can be resolved through consultation.

On the latest developments regarding Iran-Iraq trade, he said the trade with Iraq is normal and there is no problem, and in the eight months this year, Iran exports to Iraq have been around \$5.35 and currently Iraq is Iran's trade partner number one.

Hosseini went on to say that all joint borders are open and the only problem existing now is travel of traders which is due to the restrictions for the sake of the virus pandemic. He added that Iran's imports from Iraq are around \$50m annually and some issues like transit of date from Iraq or purchasing barely from Iraq have been raised but so far nothing has happened.

He noted that efforts are underway for easing travel of traders as Iraqis have promised to find a solution for it.

On the presence of Israelis in Iraq's fruits and vegetables market, Hosseini said that Israelis are facing with some kind of popular sanctions in the world and for this reason Israeli products are not offered as Israeli products and they are offered under the name of Canadian products.

He also urged Iranian exporters to export their products especially their agro products wisely and after planning and consultation because tariffs for some products have changed and for this reason Iranian products face problems in the borders and sometimes traders have to return their goods into the country.

## U.S. Continued Oppression Against Iran Amid Pandemic

TEHRAN (MNA) –Health Minister Saeed Namaki condemned the continued U.S. economic war against Iran amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a meeting with Ambassador of Cuba to Tehran Alexis Bandrich Vega, Namaki said Washington has not let the import of medicine for Iranian people despite American officials' claims. America has put a lot of pressure on Iran at the time when the country is fighting against the pandemic, even seizing Iran's medical cargos in international airports.

Elsewhere, he said that relations between Iran and Cuba have always been friendly despite Americans' and Zionists' pressures.



grow in various fields such as biotechnology, health, and fight against COVID-19.

Slamming the U.S. sanctions, Bandrich Vega said such unilateral measures have hurt the people of Iran and Cuba as they endanger the lives of people.

## Iran First Export Consignment Arrives in Afghanistan Via Railroad

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The first consignment of Iranian export goods has arrived in Afghanistan through the long-awaited Khaf-Herat railroad, which is slated to be officially inaugurated in coming days.

The cement shipment was transferred from Iran to Afghanistan's Herat via rail, according to Jilani Farhad, the spokesman for Herat governor.

The consignment was reportedly dispatched on a trial basis to identify possible problems and challenges on that route.

The Afghan spokesman said the railroad, which is to be opened in less than 10 days by the two countries' high-ranking officials, will connect Afghanistan to Asian and European countries through Iran.

The railroad project is composed of four sections: one from Khaf to Sangan in Iran and the second one from Sangan to the Chah-Sorkh border crossing, each of which is 76 km long, according to the Afghan spokesman.

Farhad said the third part, 62 km long, extends from Chah-Sorkh to Afghanistan's Rozanak (or Rahzanak).

"These three sections have all been funded by Iran," he said.

The final part of the project, which has long been touted as the sole viable option to build Afghanistan's economy, stretches all the way from Rozanak to Herat.

A group of people watching the arrival of the train said they were "very happy to see a train in their place of living for the first time ever."

They said they would "wholeheartedly" cooperate with Afghan security forces to ensure the security of the railroad and the export consignments, as the railroad will definitely improve the economic conditions of Afghan people.

Afghanistan has almost no functioning railways, where there is less than 25 km of track in the entire country. The Afghan section of the Khaf-Herat railway built with Iran includes 114 km of track which will open a new chapter in domestic freight and passenger transportation. It will reduce the cost of moving goods across the region to a fraction of that of highway transport.

The railway will stretch to Chabahar in southeastern Iran, boosting Afghanistan's trade and bringing in its mining sector from the cold to exploit billions of dollars in untapped mineral reserves.





## U.S. Withdrawing Some Baghdad Embassy Staff Amid Regional Tension

ERBIL (Dispatches) - The United States embassy in Baghdad is withdrawing some of its staff ahead of the first anniversary of the U.S. assassinating of top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in the Iraqi capital, according to media reports.

The drawdown will continue until after the anniversary of the killing of Soleimani, who was killed in a U.S. drone strike outside Baghdad airport in January this year, the Washington Post reported on Wednesday.

The move also follows a string of rocket attacks and roadside bombs by Iran-backed armed groups on U.S. installations in Iraq.



## Former French President

## Giscard d'Estaing Dies of COVID-19

PARIS (Reuters) -Former President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who championed European integration and helped modernize French society in the 1970s, has died at the age of 94 after contracting COVID-19.

Giscard's foundation said he passed away in his family home in the Loir-et-Cher region of central France. He had been admitted to hospital in September with respiratory complications, and was hospitalized again in mid-November.

His funeral will be an intimate family affair, the Valéry Giscard d'Estaing Foundation said on Twitter. Giscard was elected president in 1974 at the age of 48 to become France's youngest postwar leader.



# France Targets Mosques to Crackdown on Radicalism



PARIS (Dispatches) - The French government launched a "massive and unprecedented" wave of measures to combat what it calls religious "extremism", targeting 76 mosques suspected of "separatism".

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin on Thursday tweeted his interview with RTL radio, writing: "In the coming days, checks will be carried out on these places of worship. If ever these doubts are confirmed, I will ask for their closure."

He also said 66 undocumented migrants suspected of "radicalisation" had been deported.

President Emmanuel Macron's government has responded to several deadly attacks in recent weeks with a promise to crack down on what Darmanin has said is "the enemy within".

Darmanin said 76 mosques out of the more than 2,600 Muslim places of worship had been flagged as possible threats to France's Republican values and its security.

"There are in some concentrated areas places of worship which are clearly anti-Republican [where] imams are followed by the intelligence services and where the discourse runs counter to our values," he said.

The inspections to be carried out are part of a response to two gruesome attacks that particularly shocked France – the beheading of a teacher who showed his pupils cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed and the stabbing to death of three people in a church in Nice.

Darmanin did not reveal which places of worship would be inspected. In a note he sent to regional security chiefs, seen by AFP news agency, he listed 16 addresses in the Paris region and 60 others around the country.

The minister said the fact only a fraction of the 2,600 Muslim places of worship in France were suspected of peddling radical theories showed "we are far from a situation of widespread radicalisation".

"Nearly all Muslims in France respect the laws of the Republic and are hurt by that," he said.

In October, Macron laid out a plan to tackle what he termed "Islamist separatism", as he described Islam as a religion in crisis across the world – comments that upset Muslims in France and globally.

France is home to the largest Muslim minority population in Europe, and some fear being collectively punished after a series of attacks in recent months.

On October 20, France ordered the temporary closure of a mosque outside Paris as part of a crackdown on people who are suspected of inciting hatred, after the killing of teacher Samuel Paty, who had shown his class caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad.

## U.N. Chief Pans Countries Who Ignored COVID-19 Facts

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Thursday decried countries - without naming names - who rejected the facts about the coronavirus pandemic and ignored guidance from the World Health Organization (WHO).

Guterres addressed a special session of the 193-member U.N. General Assembly on COVID-19, which emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year and spread globally, so far infecting nearly 65 million people and killing nearly 1.5 million.

Dozens of world leaders have submitted pre-recorded video statements for the two-day meeting.

"From the start, the World Health Organization provided factual information and scientific guidance that should have been the basis for a coordinated global response," Guterres said.

"Unfortunately, many of these recommendations were not followed. And in some situations, there was a rejection of facts and an ignoring of the guidance. And when countries go in their own direction, the virus goes in every direction," he said.

U.S. President Donald Trump cut funding to the WHO earlier this year and announced plans to quit the Geneva-based body over accusations it was a puppet of China, which the WHO denied. The U.S. withdrawal would have taken effect in July next year, but U.S. President-elect Joe Biden said he will rescind the move.

Long-simmering tensions between the United States and China hit boiling point over the pandemic at the United Nations, where months of bickering between the superpowers has spotlighted Beijing's bid for greater multilateral influence in a challenge to Washington's traditional global influence.

"This is not a time to point fingers," U.N. General Assembly President Volkan Bozkir said. "The United Nations must lead on this."

Guterres is pushing for a COVID-19 vaccine to be made available to all and for rich countries to help developing countries combat and recover from the pandemic.

## Bangladesh Ships Rohingya Refugees to Remote Island Despite Protests

DHAKA (Reuters) - More than 1,600 Rohingya refugees sailed on Friday from Bangladesh's southern port of Chittagong for the remote island of Bhasan Char in the Bay of Bengal, a naval official said.

The south Asian nation says it is only moving refugees who are willing to go and that this will ease chronic overcrowding in camps that are home to more than 1 million Rohingya, members of a Muslim minority who have fled neighbouring Myanmar.

But refugees and humanitarian workers say some of the Rohingya had been coerced into going to Bhasan Char a flood-prone island that emerged from the sea 20 years ago. The naval official said the Rohingya were aboard seven boats, with two more carrying supplies.

Pictures taken from aboard one of the vessels showed refugees lined up on blue plastic chairs under the watch of uniformed sailors.

"The government is not taking anyone to Bhasan Char forcibly. We maintain this position," Foreign Minister Abdul Momen told reporters late on Thursday. But two Rohingya being relocated told Reuters their names appeared on lists compiled by government-appointed local leaders without their consent, while aid workers said officials used threats and enticements to pressure people into going.

"They have taken us here forcefully," a 31-year-old man told Reuters tearfully by phone as he boarded a bus from the camps near Cox's Bazar. "Three days ago, when I heard that my family is on the list, I ran away from the block, but yesterday I was caught and taken here," he said.

An 18-year-old woman said her husband had put their names on the list thinking it was for food rations. He fled when they were told to go to Bhasan Char, she said, adding that she is also hiding in the camp.

They were among more than 730,000 Rohingya who fled Myanmar in 2017 following a military-led crackdown that the United Nations said was executed with genocidal intent. Myanmar denies genocide and says its forces were targeting Rohingya militants who attacked police posts.

## Romania's Liberals Favorites in General Election

BUCHAREST (Dispatches) - Romanians head to the polls in parliamentary elections on Sunday, with pro-European liberals tipped to win despite criticism for their handling of the coronavirus pandemic while in government.

In a region where populists and nationalists have recently gained ground, liberal Prime Minister Ludovic Orban, who has been running a minority government for the past year, has pledged to modernise one of EU's poorest countries and keep it on a "pro-European" path.

A recent opinion poll published by the IMAS institute put Orban's National Liberal Party (PNL) on 28 percent of the vote, ahead of the main opposition Social Democratic Party (PSD) on 23 percent.

The recently-formed centre-right alliance USR-Plus are on 18 percent, a result which would bolster their growing influence in Romanian politics.

While turnout is expected to be low at less than 40 percent, analysts say this isn't only due to the difficulties of holding an election in a pandemic.

"Many Romanians are demotivated because they believe that all parties are the same," said Liliana

Popescu, political science professor at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration. According to her, this impression has only been reinforced by several instances of candidates defecting between the main political parties.

The liberals have the advantage of being supported by President Klaus Iohannis, who has brushed aside criticism that he is disrespecting his constitutional role by campaigning for the PNL.

The left-wing PSD is the heir to the former Communist Party and has dominated Romanian politics over the past 30 years.

It won by a landslide in the previous elections in 2016, but its years in power were marked by massive anti-corruption protests and spats with Brussels over controversial judicial reforms.

"The PSD deeply disappointed voters who were interested in the rule of law, equality before the law and democracy," says Popescu.

Weakened further by the imprisonment on corruption charges of its former leader Liviu Dragnea, the PSD was removed from power through a no-confidence vote at the end of 2019.



## Hunger Surges to Record Levels in War-Torn Yemen



SANAA (AFP) - Malnutrition in conflict-hit Yemen has reached record levels, narrowing the window of opportunity to prevent a famine, the UN said Thursday, as the coronavirus and funding shortfalls threaten a humanitarian perfect storm.

The number of people facing the second highest level of food insecurity in Yemen is set to increase from 3.6 million people to 5 million in the first half of 2021, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) warned.

Yemen, which since 2014 has been gripped by a war between Huthi rebels and a beleaguered government supported by a Saudi-led military coalition, faces the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

"Pockets of famine-like conditions have already returned for the first time in two years," WFP said in a statement.

"The number of people experiencing this degree of catastrophic food insecurity could nearly triple from 16,500 currently to 47,000 people between January and June 2021."

WFP executive director David Beasley said the "alarming numbers must be a wake-up call to the world".

"Yemen is on the brink of famine and we must not turn our backs on the millions of families who are now in desperate need," he added.

Al-Jawf governorate, north of the capital Sanaa hosts 10,000 of the total 20,000 people estimated to be living in famine-like conditions, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. Those figures are forecast to almost double by June 2021, while Amran, north of Sanaa, could see 12,000 people in near-famine and Hajjah, west of Amran, 15,500 by the end of the first half of next year.

The UN warned in July that nearly one in nine people in the world are going hungry, with the novel coronavirus pandemic and climate-related shocks exacerbating already worsening trends this year.

In Yemen's children's wards, the evidence of the crisis is clear, with skeletal children crying weakly as anxious families hover over them. Many parents also now fear their youngsters are at risk of contracting the Covid-19 disease if they are hospitalised and are reluctant to send them to clinics for treatment.

UN relief efforts in Yemen have been squeezed by funding shortfalls -- only \$1.43 billion of the \$3.2 billion needed for aid projects in the country had been received by mid-October.





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## U.S. States Plan to Sue Facebook Next Week

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A group of U.S. states led by New York is investigating Facebook Inc for possible antitrust violations and plans to file a lawsuit against the social media giant next week, four sources familiar with the matter said on Wednesday.

The complaint would be the second major lawsuit filed against a Big Tech company this year. The Justice Department sued Alphabet Inc's Google in October.

More than 40 states plan to sign on to the lawsuit, one source said, without naming them.

Facebook declined to comment. A spokesman for the New York attorney general's office declined to comment.



## Chinese Firms on U.S. Exchanges Threatened by Bill Headed to Trump's Desk

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. House of Representatives passed a law to kick Chinese companies off U.S. stock exchanges if they do not fully comply with the country's auditing rules, giving President Donald Trump one more tool to threaten Beijing with before leaving office.

The measure passed the House by unanimous voice vote, after passing the Senate unanimously in May, sending it to Trump, who the White House said is expected to sign it into law.

"The Holding Foreign Companies Accountable Act" bars securities of foreign companies from being listed on any U.S. exchange if they have failed to comply with the U.S. Public Accounting Oversight Board's audits for three years in a row.

While it applies to companies from any country, the legislation's sponsors intended it to target Chinese companies listed in the United States, such as Alibaba, tech firm Pinduoduo Inc and oil giant PetroChina Co Ltd..

Measures taking a harder line on Chinese business and trade practices generally pass Congress with large margins. Both Democrats and Trump's fellow Republicans echo the president's hard line against Beijing, which became fiercer this year as Trump blamed China for the coronavirus ravaging the United States.

Democratic Senator Chris Van Hollen, who co-authored the bill with Republican Senator John Kennedy, said in a statement that American investors "have been cheated out of their money after investing in seemingly-legitimate Chinese companies that are not held to the same standards as other publicly listed companies." Kennedy said China was using U.S. exchanges to "exploit" Americans. "The House joined the Senate in rejecting a toxic status quo," he said in a statement.

The act would also require public companies to disclose whether they are owned or controlled by a foreign government.

The American Securities Association praised passage of the bill saying it was necessary to protect Americans from "fraudulent companies controlled by the Chinese Communist Party."

The Chinese embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said before the vote that it was a discriminatory policy that politically oppresses Chinese firms.

"Instead of setting up layers of barriers, we hope the U.S. can provide a fair and non-discriminatory environment for foreign firms to invest and operate in the U.S.," Hua told a news conference.

A spokesman for Alibaba pointed to a comment on the bill from May, when it was passed by the Senate. Chief Financial Officer Maggie Wu told investors the firm would "endeavor to comply with any legislation whose aim is to protect and bring transparency to investors who buy securities on U.S. stock exchanges." Chinese authorities have long been reluctant to let overseas regulators inspect local accounting firms, citing national security concerns.

Officials at China's securities regulator indicated earlier this year they were willing to allow inspections of audit documents in some circumstances, but past agreements aimed at solving the dispute have failed to work in practice. Shaun Wu, a Hong Kong-based partner at law firm Paul Hastings, said increased enforcement against Chinese companies was likely even though Democrat Joe Biden will become president in January.

## China Continuing to Outpace U.S. Economy

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's economic outlook is improving faster than in other regions around the world, including the U.S. according to the latest CNBC Global CFO Council survey for the fourth quarter 2020.

For the second straight quarter, the world's leading chief financial officers have a more positive outlook on the Chinese economy than they do for the economy of the United States. In the Q4 CNBC Global CFO Council Survey, CFOs gave an average outlook of "Modestly Improving" for China's GDP, upgrading the world's second-largest economy from its third quarter rating of "Stable."

The council's outlook for the U.S. economy also improved, from "Modestly Declining" in Q3 to "Stable" in the current quarter, but still trails China. Around the world, GDP outlook was generally improved from the second and third quarter surveys. This quarter, along with the U.S., the council upgraded Canada and the U.K. from "Modestly Declining" to "Stable." Japan, the rest of Asia, and the Eurozone maintained their "stable" rating from the previous quarter. Africa/Middle East, Latin America and Russia are still seen as "modestly declining."

The CNBC Global CFO Council represents some of the largest public and private companies in the world, collectively managing more than \$5 trillion in market value across a wide variety of sectors. The assessment of China having the best economic situation echoes reports that China's economy is rebounding as life looks more like it did pre-pandemic. In October, China said its economy grew 4.9% in the third quarter, after growing 3.2% in the second quarter. However, the third quarter number was below consensus estimates.

The U.S. economy surged 33.1% in the third quarter as it rebounded from the biggest quarterly decline since the government began keeping records. Estimates for the fourth quarter are for around 5% growth, but the resurgence of Covid cases in November presents a major obstacle for the economy to hit that number, and major Wall Street banks have been downgrading the U.S. GDP outlook in recent weeks.

For CFOs, the pandemic remains the biggest external challenge facing their business, with 28 (65.1%) of the 43 CFOs who responded to this quarter's survey citing the pandemic as the biggest external risk facing their companies. But when it comes to planning for 2021, a majority are basing their plans on the hope of a vaccine and an end to the global health crisis. Sixty-five percent of global CFOs say the promise of a Covid-19 vaccine becoming widely available by Q2 of next year is having the greatest impact on their plans for 2021, while roughly 21% say the current surge in Covid cases is having the greatest impact on next year's plans.



## Turkey Inflation Jumps To 15-Month High

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish inflation accelerated to the highest level since August 2019, increasing pressure on the central bank to raise interest rates for a third time in four months.

The inflation rate rose to 14 percent in November from 11.9 percent in October, the Turkish Statistical Institute said on Thursday. Annual price increases were expected at 12.7 percent, according to a survey of 23 economists by the state-run Anadolu news agency.

Prices rose by 2.3 percent month-on-month.

Turkey's central bank has hiked interest rates to 15 percent from 8.25 percent since September to rein in inflation and to defend the lira, which has dropped to successive record lows against the dollar. Monetary policymakers may now need to raise interest rates again, despite claiming last month that any acceleration in inflation would be temporary, economists say.

"Hard to see the central bank not hiking rates again at the next Monetary Policy Committee meeting later this month," said Tim Ash, senior emerging markets strategist at BlueBay Asset Management in London. "Inflation is being driven by pass thru from FX devaluation and it's a circular problem as high inflation is driving dollarisation and devaluation pressures."

The lira fell by 0.4 percent to 7.8777 per dollar after the data was released. The currency has lost about a quarter of its value this year as Turkish deposit holders purchased foreign currency to protect their savings and foreign investors pulled capital out of the country. It hit an all-time low of 8.58 per dollar on Nov. 6. The central bank has spent tens of billions of dollars of its foreign currency reserves defending the lira this year as it kept interest rates at below annual inflation to back government economic stimulus. As a result, its net reserves, minus liabilities, stood at a negative \$47.9 billion at the end of October.

Annual producer price inflation accelerated to 23.1 percent last month from 18.2 percent in October, the statistics institute said. Prices rose by 4.1 percent month-on-month.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan sacked and replaced the governor of the central bank in early November after reportedly being told about the sharp erosion of the bank's foreign exchange reserves. Erdoğan brought in Naci Ağbal, a former finance minister and his chief adviser on budgetary affairs.

When hiking interest rates to 15 percent from 10.25 percent last month, the central bank said any increases in November inflation would be temporary. It pledged to "sustain" tight monetary policy without signalling whether it may hike interest rates at its next monetary policy meeting on Dec. 24.

Economists are concerned that, rather than acting proactively to rein in price increases, the central bank will do the bare minimum to ensure lira stability while continuing to support the government's pro-economic growth policies at the expense of inflation. Erdoğan maintains that higher interest rates are inflationary, a view that jars with conventional economic theory.

## Pandemic Slows Down Energy Efficiency Progress to Decade Low



SINGAPORE (ICIS)--The coronavirus pandemic has slowed down global progress in energy efficiency to a decade low, posing a threat to meeting international climate goals. This makes the next three years critical to reverse the "worrying trend", the Paris-based International Energy Agency (IEA) said.

"Global primary energy intensity - a key indicator of how efficiently the world's economic activity uses energy - is expected to improve by less than 1% this year, the weakest rate since 2010," according to IEA's Energy Efficiency 2020 report released on Thursday.

"This is well below the level of progress needed to achieve the world's shared goals for addressing climate change, reducing air pollution and increasing access to energy," it said.

Investment in energy efficiency worldwide is on course to fall by 9% in 2020 amid the economic recession triggered by the pandemic, the IEA said.

"We welcome plans by governments to boost spending on energy efficiency in response to the economic crisis, but what we have seen so far is uneven and far from enough," IEA executive director Fatih Birol said.

"Energy efficiency should be at the top of to-do lists for governments pursuing a sustainable recovery - it is a jobs machine, it gets economic activity going, it saves consumers money, it modernises vital infrastructure and it reduces emissions," he added.

"There's no excuse not to put far more resources behind it," Birol said.

Global spending on efficiency-related stimulus measures so far announced by governments is estimated to generate nearly 2m full-time jobs between 2021 and 2023, based on IEA's analysis.

Further recovery efforts related to energy efficiency could create another 4m jobs globally through enhanced public and private sector investments in buildings, transport and industry, it added.

Visit the ICIS Coronavirus topic page for analysis of the impact on chemical markets and links to latest news.

## Indian Economy Witnessing V-Shaped Recovery

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - The Indian economy is witnessing a V-shaped recovery as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has recorded a quarter-on-quarter growth of 23% in the July-September quarter of this fiscal, according to the Finance Ministry's latest Monthly Economic Review.

The decline in the GDP narrowed to 7.5% in the second quarter of this financial year, over 23.9% in April-June quarter.

"The year-on-year GDP contraction of 7.5%

in Q2 of 2020-21 underlies a quarter-on-quarter surge in GDP growth of 23%.

"This V-shaped recovery, evident at the half-way stage of 2020-21, reflects the resilience and robustness of the Indian economy. The fundamentals of the economy remain strong as gradual scaling back of lockdowns, along with the astute support of Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission has placed the economy firmly on the path of recovery," the Monthly Economic Review for November said.

The growth drivers have obtained the largest support from agriculture followed by construction and manufacturing, it said, adding, the contact-sensitive services sector has also contributed although mainly through logistics and communication.

The recently celebrated festive season contributed to a rise in fresh COVID-19 positive cases in India, although numbers have started to decline again, a trend seen in many other countries, it said.

Consequently, it said, world-wide, the months of October and November, 2020 have been of economic uncertainty with global composite PMI and goods trade activity showing a tepid increase while energy and metal prices around the world have moved in different directions further adding to the uncertainty.

In general, it said, inflation has softened in advanced economies while climbing up further in emerging market economies reflecting a relatively larger impact of supply-side disruptions on economically more challenged countries in the world.

"High optimism among investors however continues unabated as seen in equity markets the world over. With further weakening of the US dollar in November, prospects of growth in the rest of the world have become stronger," it said. Sharing the outlook about the third quarter, the report said there is cautious optimism that global economic uncertainty does not mirror itself in India notwithstanding moderation of a few high frequency indicators late in the month of November.



## SSCO Condemns Assassination of Iranian Scientist Fakhrizadeh

TEHRAN (IP) - In a statement, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization condemned the assassination of Iranian defense industry scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation strongly condemns all destabilizing acts in the region, as well as terrorism, in any form, the statement said.

According to the organization, such actions are not only against all norms of intergovernmental relations and international law, but also threaten peace and stability in a fragile region.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization expressed hope that the perpetrators of this cowardly attack would be identified and brought to justice.



## EU Faces Dangerous Dilemma Over Financing Battle



BRUSSELS (Reuters) - Poland's and Hungary's veto of the European Union's 1.8 trillion euro financing package has plunged the bloc into a battle that threatens to damage both its economy and unity at a time when it is already struggling to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 27-nation bloc faces a dilemma over how to resolve the stand-off and has just a few days to avert a serious crisis.

Following is an explanation of the situation and scenarios for how it could play out. Warsaw and Budapest hold hostage the 1.1 trillion euro (\$1.3 trillion) long-term budget and a special 750 billion euro coronavirus recovery fund for all 27 countries because they do not want access to the money to be conditional on them respecting the rule of law.

Both countries are under EU probes for undermining the independence of courts, media and non-governmental organizations, so they risk losing tens of billions in funds.

The rule linking access to EU money with respect for the rule of law does not require unanimity, so Poland and Hungary can be easily outvoted. But the budget and recovery fund do need unanimity and the two countries are exercising their veto power.

To help them withdraw their veto, EU leaders are considering issuing a declaration at a Dec 10-11 summit to make clear that freezing funds for rule of law offenders would be an objective process and subject to verification by the EU's top court.

The EU's budget for 2021-2027 is a framework for seven individual annual budgets approved each year.

The deadline for agreeing on the 2021 budget is Dec. 7.

If Poland and Hungary remove their veto by Dec. 7 on the promise of a summit declaration, the EU could approve the 2021 budget, based on the already agreed 2021-2027 framework, and no damage would be done.

If Poland and Hungary do not withdraw the veto by Dec. 7, the chance to agree on the 2021 budget this year will be lost. But they could still remove their veto three days later at the summit, saving at least the deal on the wider 2021-2027 budget and recovery package.

In this case, from Jan. 1, 2021, the EU would move to an emergency funding arrangement called the provisional 12ths because each month the EU would be allowed to spend only 1/12th of what it spent in a certain area in 2020.

Under the provisional 12ths, no new projects would get financing, only those already started under the 2014-2020 budget. Farmers would still receive EU subsidies until 2022, although most likely with a delay and paid out monthly.

If Warsaw and Budapest do back down on Dec. 10, the executive European Commission would quickly prepare another 2021 budget that EU institutions would approve early next year, ensuring the disruption to fund flows is only short term.

If Poland and Hungary do not back down on Dec. 10, the EU will have no new long-term budget framework and no annual budget for 2021. Governments would have to pay into the EU budget based on their gross national income.

The EU would finance itself using the twelfth rule, funding only direct subsidies

for farmers, common foreign and security policy, humanitarian aid and civil protection, but no new projects except legacy ones from 2014-2020.

In this scenario, Poland and Hungary, large net beneficiaries of EU funds, could get 50-75% less money in 2021 even for already existing projects.

This is because the EU would be getting less money from contributions based on gross national income (GNI) due to the current recession and because net contributor Britain will be gone. Higher GNI contributions agreed for the 2021-2027 budget, a solution to that problem, would not kick in.

Funding for the popular Erasmus student exchange programme would stop, as would money for research and development, and new projects like roads, bridges, waste and water treatment plants, green buses and trams for cities, money for miners to find jobs in other sectors or better protection against pandemics.

A continued veto from Poland and Hungary freezes the EU's historic plan to jointly borrow 750 billion euros and spend it, as a mix of grants and loans, on stimulating economic recovery.

While the EU cannot bypass the two countries on the bloc's budget, it can do so on the recovery fund using a rule called "enhanced cooperation" that allows at least nine countries to pursue a project on their own.

A European Commission official said this would allow the recovery fund to apply to 25 countries, leaving Poland and Hungary out. Fund money could start flowing around mid-2021, as originally planned.

It is not clear if, as 25, the EU would have to reduce its planned borrowing by the amount originally meant for the two countries, or still borrow the entire 750 billion euros and distribute their shares among others.

### Zarif...

FROM PAGE 1

He was referring to a double-urgency draft bill that was recently approved in Majlis (Iranian Parliament). The measure has mandated the government to limit the UN nuclear watchdog's regulatory access, and tasked it with empowering the Islamic Republic's nuclear program further in retaliation for the Western non-commitment to the nuclear accord.

The Iranian foreign minister was also asked about conditions in Iran given the outbreak of the new coronavirus pandemic, in answer to which he described the situation facing the Islamic Republic as "pretty bad."

He reminded that Iran has been hit by a third wave of infections, and its medical staff have been putting up with too much for too long. The reason that the country has been overwhelmed by the virus to such an extent was that it is "suffering from something more than the rest of the world is," he said. "And that is an economic war. This is way beyond restrictions," the official noted, referring to the sanctions.

He also lamented that the U.S. has, meanwhile, been preventing Iran from gaining access to billions of dollars in its overseas financial resources to buy vaccines. He further said Iran was ready to engage in further prisoner swaps after last week exchanging a jailed British-Australian academic with three Iranians detained abroad.

"We can always engage in that, it is in the interests of everybody," Zarif told an Italian diplomatic conference speaking via video-link. "Iran is ready to reciprocate. We can do it tomorrow. We can also do it today."

Zarif, meanwhile, identified Yemen as another country that has been hit hardest by the virus in the region.

The impoverished country is struggling with the outbreak while it is also experiencing the six straight year of a Saudi Arabia-led invasion and economic blockade. The combined Saudi-led measures that have been seeking to restore power to Yemen's former Riyadh-allied officials have killed tens of thousands of Yemenis and devastated the country's health system. The Saudi-led invading coalition enjoys unstinting support from the US and its Western allies in terms of weapon supplies, political patronage, and logistical assistance.

Zarif said the same Western and regional officials, who have brought Iran under the economic "siege," have also afflicted Yemen with its blockade, Zarif said. He reminded that he used to identify the warlike team as "B-Team," comprising Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and former US national security advisor John Bolton.

Although Bolton is no longer serving in the position, Zarif said the architects of the draconian restrictions targeting Iran and Yemen were still "the same gang."

The foreign minister also addressed the West's insistence on talks about Iran's missile program and regional influence. He said these issued were intentionally kept out of the talks leading to the conclusion of the JCPOA because "the other sides were not prepared to end their malign behavior in our region."

As instances of the vicious Western actions targeting the Middle East region, including the Persian Gulf, Zarif cited its selling more arms to the region than any other part of the world, namely more than \$100 billion worth of weapons, last year, its support for the war on Yemen, and its support for Israeli terrorism. He reminded that the Israeli regime has been able to keep up its deadly aggressive actions thanks to the Western-sourced impunity.

The regime, he noted, has therefore carried on with annexation of Palestinian territories and assassinated yet another Iranian nuclear scientist as early as last week "without condemnation, without consequences."

"When they are ready to deal with their own problems of their own malign behavior in the region, their malign support for a terrorist regime, then they can start talking about other things," Zarif said.

However, "as long as they're not able to put up, they have to shut up," he concluded.

### Int'l Community...

FROM PAGE 1

Baghaei Hamaneh called Fakhrizadeh's assassination as a clear example of warmongering state terrorism which attaches no values on moral and human values, as well as international norms and regulations.

He had previously sent separate letters to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the head of the Human Rights Council and member states of the Non-Aligned Movement, stressing the need for a decisive international response to this terrorist act. Fakhrizadeh, who headed the Iranian Defense Ministry's Organization of Defensive Innovation and Research (known by its acronym SPND), was targeted on Friday in a multi-pronged attack involving at least one explosion and small fire by a number of assailants in Absard city of Damavand County, Tehran Province. Many countries, including Russia, Venezuela, South Africa, Qatar, Jordan, the UAE, and Turkey condemned the assassination.

## U.S. Economy Will Fall Into Double-Dip Recession Without Stimulus

LONDON (Dispatches) - The U.S. economy will fall into a double-dip recession and take nearly a year longer to return to pre-pandemic growth if Congress fails to pass a new coronavirus relief bill, according to an economic forecast released by S&P Globa.

"Since June, S&P Global Economics has said that it is not a far-fetched possibility that we could get a scenario of no more fiscal stimulus and a COVID-19 resurgence that cripples growth in the fourth quarter," S&P Global Chief Economist Beth Ann Bovino wrote in her analysis. "Unfortunately, this downside scenario seems more likely."

She went on to say that a surge in cases and the absence of fiscal stimulus would mean gross domestic product "will decline for two consecutive quarters," postponing a full recovery until the second half of 2022 and risking "longer-term scarring."

"On its own, a one quarter decline does not signal recession. But it increases chances that the U.S. will see another downturn in the near future," the report said.

Two consecutive quarters of economic contraction is considered the standard definition of a recession.

The S&P forecast predicts the economy will shrink at a 2.3 percent annual pace in the last three months of 2020, bringing the total economic decline for the year to 3.9 percent.

Without a roughly \$1 trillion relief bill, the outlook would get worse, S&P said, and the economy would stagnate at 0.8 percent growth next year instead of the 4.2 percent otherwise forecast. The prospects for a stimulus before the end of the year are grim. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) is pushing for a \$500 billion bill, while Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) is backing a \$2.2 trillion measure. A bipartisan, bicameral group of lawmakers this week introduced a \$908 billion measure they hope will serve as a compromise.

### OPEC+ Decision...

FROM PAGE 1

According to the group, the collective crude oil output cuts by OPEC+ members will decrease from 7.7 million bpd to 7.2 million bpd in January 2021, down by 500,000 barrels. This will continue until the total increase reaches 2 million bpd.

Meanwhile, those countries that did not fully comply with the agreement have to compensate for the amount by March 2021. OPEC and its allies will comply with 7.7 million bpd of production curbs in December.

Iran, Venezuela and Libya are exempt from any cuts.

### Brave Majlis...

FROM PAGE 1

The Islamic Republic of Iran on December 18, 2003, and during Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's presidency and just a verbal measure joined the IAEA's additional protocol. The story behind this was that in October 2003 and during the simultaneous presence of foreign ministers of UK, France and Germany in Tehran (Saad Abad talks). Iranian negotiating team, led by Hassan Rouhani, the then Secretary of Supreme National Security Council, in an action which they called it aimed at trust-building with European states, decided to sign and implement the additional protocol voluntarily and make themselves captive in the claw of IAEA inspections.

After revelation of Majlis decision to present the double-urgency draft bill and its approval, the government spokesman Ali Rabiei expressed the government's opposition to this bill and said, "The government believes the issue is only in the authority of the Supreme National Security Council, and responsibility for making any decision on the nuclear program and the JCPOA according to the Article 176 of the constitutions is beyond a branch of power and no branch of power cannot by itself act out of this framework and it seems Majlis (legislative power) cannot either enter these issues and the Guardian Council will definitely take it into consideration when it reviews the Majlis approval and it will consider legal restrictions and national expedencies." Touching upon this issue, President Rouhani officially said, "The government does not agree with the bill passed by the Parliament yesterday, and considers it to be detrimental to diplomatic efforts."

Touching upon the Majlis approval, the president in the cabinet meeting on Wednesday said the reason for his no show in Majlis for submitting the next year budget was only observing the health protocols recommended by the National Anti-Corona Headquarters, adding, "In this condition it is better to review statistics of the past years carefully. In all fields like nuclear field, the condition that the country is in it is by far better than eight years ago. We have reached IR8 and IR9 from IR1 and IR2. We today are able to enrich IR2M in different chains. We are also able to have enrichment chain with IR6. Such capabilities have never existed in the country. Today in terms of nuclear field, the country is stronger than any time. In terms of facilities and research and development, our condition is better than any time. We should not enter this issue due to political or electoral competition that I think it is too early, because it makes us to violate the ethics or avoid telling the truth."

Something which definitely clear is that Iran's pullout of the voluntary additional protocol is a right that Iranian nation and especially Majlis should fully consider it and President's remarks can observe his saving of his actions in drawing his horn during the Saad Abad nuclear talks, and he can also accuse Majlis actions as an electoral gesture which means Majlis Speaker Muhammad Baqer Qalibaf and his probable candidacy in the 2021 presidential election.

But that the government caution to what extent will be to the national interests will be forcibly be defined in the global reaction of Iran's enemies. Joe Biden's arrival at the White House has thickened the government's precaution as it both does not give any permission for taking revenge regarding assassination of Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh and leaves Majlis high and dry in order that it could not take retaliatory actions regarding the terrorist acts and West's stance.

### President...

FROM PAGE 1

"We are witnessing an all-out economic war. The war imposed on us during the past three years is far worse than the eight-year imposed war [against Iraqi Saddam regime]. This was an economic war and no one in the world expected Iran to demonstrate such a good resistance," Rouhani said.

"Many world leaders ask me during our contacts that 'how could you resist in this war?'" he continued, adding that of course the Iranian people are under economic pressure but the country's gas, water, and electricity supply was not cut and that Iran did not need to import fuel, rather, the country turned into a fuel exporter.

Recently, the Iranian Parliament passed a 'strategic' action plan that mandates the government and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) to boost the country's nuclear industry, announcing deadlines for other signatories of the JCPOA to implement their commitments. The government, however, has expressed opposition to the new law, describing it as detrimental to the country's diplomacy. "Let those who have over 20 years of experience, know what they are doing, have been successful in diplomacy, and defeated America many times in the past three years in UN do their work," Rouhani said on Thursday.

"Let us pursue our work with care. We ask you to help us. We are all brothers and have a shared goal," he said, calling for increased collaboration between different branches.





## Colombia Part Company With Queiroz

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Carlos Queiroz has lost his job as coach of Colombia, with the former Real Madrid boss paying the price for two expensive 2022 World Cup qualifying losses, the country's football federation announced on Wednesday. Queiroz, 67, leaves the job in the wake of a 3-0 home loss to Uruguay and a 6-1 rout in Ecuador, Colombia's worst defeat in four decades. The Portuguese manager, a former assistant coach at Manchester United under Alex Ferguson, arrived on the Colombia bench in February 2019.

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**E-Mail Address:**  
info@irannewsdaily.com  
**ISSN 1024-6053**  
**P.O. Box:** 15875-8551  
**Address:** No 13, Pajouhesh St.,  
Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzdaran  
Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
**Printed by:**Honar Sarzmin Sabz  
**Distributed by:**  
Cities of Iran Cultural and  
Artistic Institute  
**Managing Director:** Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

## France to Face Belgium, Italy Against Spain

PARIS (AFP) - World Cup holders France will play Belgium in the semi-finals of the UEFA Nations League following Thursday's draw for the final stages of the tournament. Finals hosts Italy will play Spain in the other semi-final tie, with the matches being staged on October 6 and 7, 2021, European football's governing body announced. Italy were earlier on Thursday confirmed as the hosts by UEFA for the finals of the tournament which was delayed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

SATURDAY DECEMBER 5, 2020

# PSG Put Man Utd to the Sword As Dortmund Advance

LONDON (Dispatches) - Neymar's brace helped Paris Saint-Germain to a vital 3-1 win over Manchester United on Wednesday that took the French club to within touching distance of the Champions League last 16, while Borussia Dortmund secured their qualification for the next round and Olivier Giroud scored all four goals in Chelsea's 4-0 thumping of Sevilla.

PSG could have been on the brink of elimination from Group H with a defeat at Old Trafford but Neymar put last season's runners-up ahead in the sixth minute and the world's most expensive player sealed their victory in stoppage time.

In between, Marcus Rashford's shot went in off Danilo Pereira to bring United level in the first half, and Edinson Cavani hit the bar against his former club.

Marquinhos prodded the French champions back in front midway through the second half and the game appeared up for Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side when Fred was sent off for a second yellow, having been fortunate to escape a red card early on.

Neymar's late clincher could prove crucial as it gives PSG the head-to-head advantage following United's 2-1 win in Paris in October.

"We had some big chances, big moments and that's the difference when you get to the big games," said Solskjaer.

There is a three-way tie on nine points at the top of the group with RB Leipzig right in contention after Norwegian striker Alexander Sorloth scored in injury time to give them a 4-3 victory at Istanbul Basaksehir.

Irfan Can Kahveci's superb hat-trick looked to have rescued a draw for Basaksehir as they came back from 3-1 down to draw level. Yussuf Poulsen, Nordi Mukiele and Dani Olmo also scored for Leipzig.

It all means PSG now need only draw at home to Basaksehir next week to qualify.

"We have almost qualified, which means we have not qualified yet. That is the reality. Being almost pregnant does not mean you are pregnant," said PSG coach Thomas Tuchel.

United also only require a point when they visit Leipzig, but will be out if they lose, while the Germans would in that case go through.



Dortmund secured their progress after a 1-1 draw at home to Lazio in Group F, despite losing Erling Braut Haaland to a leg injury. Raphael Guerreiro put the Germans in front but Ciro Immobile's penalty against his old side brought Lazio level.

Lazio will join Dortmund in the next round if they avoid defeat against Club Brugge next week. The Belgians are two points back and still in contention after beating Zenit Saint-Petersburg 3-0, with teenage Belgian international Charles De Ketelaere putting them ahead, Hans Vanaken adding a penalty and Noa Lang also scoring.

The performance of the evening came from Giroud, as the France striker scored all four goals in Chelsea's 4-0 win away to Sevilla.

On just his second start this season, Giroud produced two lovely finishes before heading in to make it 3-0 and then winning and converting a late penalty.

The 34-year-old is the oldest player to score a hat-trick in the competition since Hungarian great Ferenc Puskas in 1965 for Real Madrid against Feyenoord.

Both teams were already through but the win allowed Chelsea to secure top spot in Group E. "Amazing solo performance from Olivier. Delighted with him, delighted with the team," Chelsea manager Frank Lampard, the last Chelsea player to score four goals in a game in 2010, told BT Sport.

In the same group, Marcus Berg's goal gave Krasnodar a 1-0 win over Rennes, meaning the Russians will play in the Europa League in the New Year.

## Ronaldo Scores 750th Goal in first Champions League

TURIN (Reuters) - Juventus forward Cristiano Ronaldo scored the 750th goal of his remarkable career in a 3-0 win over Dynamo Kyiv on Wednesday as Stephanie Frappart became the first female referee to take charge of a Champions League match.

Federico Chiesa, with his first-ever Champions League goal, and Alvaro Morata were also on target while Ronaldo reached another milestone although it was far from his most spectacular goal as the ball appeared to go in off his shin.

The 35-year-old has scored 450 goals for Real Madrid, 118 for Manchester United, 102 for Portugal, 75 for Juventus and five for his first club, Sporting.

Ronaldo said on Instagram: "750 goals, 750 happy moments, 750 smiles on the faces of our fans. Thanks to all the players and coaches who have helped me reach this incredible number, thanks to all my loyal opponents who have made me work harder and harder every day."

With Juventus already qualified from Group G and Dynamo Kyiv already eliminated, the main interest was focused on Frappart but the Frenchwoman was barely noticed -- usually regarded as a good sign for a referee's performance.

## Chinese Football Clubs

### Ordered to Change Names

SHANGHAI (AFP) - Next season's Chinese Super League will take on a new look after the 16 teams were told to drop the corporate part of their names, infuriating some fans.

The Chinese Football Association is making good on its order that clubs must remove references to investors and the companies that own them, and instead adopt "neutral" names, state media said.

The move, part of wide-scale reform plans for football in China stretching back to 2015, will have a major impact when the new campaign kicks off in the spring and will reportedly affect most of the CSL teams.

At least one team in the second division is also asking for fan feedback for a new name, suggesting the edict could also apply to clubs in other tiers of Chinese football.

New Chinese champions Jiangsu Suning, Fabio Cannavaro's two-time Asian title-holders Guangzhou Evergrande and Oscar's Shanghai SIPG are prime among those likely to have to rebrand themselves.

Suning is a retail giant, Evergrande is one of China's largest property developers and SIPG is Shanghai International Port Group.

Tianjin Teda and title challengers Beijing Guoan will also fall victim to the name switch, the Tianjin Daily newspaper reported on Thursday.

"If there is no major change, the name 'Teda' will become history," it said.

"The club's recent communication with the Chinese Football Association and the result of its reasonable efforts (to keep the name) are not optimistic."

The club on China's northeast coast has had "Teda" -- a local state-owned enterprise -- in its name since 1998.

Sam Wang, a Tianjin Teda supporter, was irate.

"Company-based clubs have been part of our lives for generations," he said.

"It's just so sad that you hear it in the morning that the FA will not allow that name to exist anymore."

Zhu Fulei said that he was "so angry and sad" that his team Wuhan Zall will soon be known as something else.



# Neymar Keen for Messi Reunion

LONDON (Dispatches) - Neymar dropped a bombshell on Wednesday as he followed up scoring twice for Paris Saint-Germain in their 3-1 Champions League win over Manchester United by revealing his desire to reunite with Lionel Messi next season.

The Brazilian enjoyed four successful seasons alongside the six-time Ballon d'Or winner at Barcelona before making a world record 222 million euro (\$264m) move to the French capital in 2017.

"It's what I most want, to enjoy being with him on the field again," Neymar, whose contract at PSG runs until 2022, told ESPN.

"I want to play with him for sure, next year we have to do it."

Neymar was heavily linked with a return to Barcelona in 2019, but the Catalan giants were unable to fund an acceptable offer for PSG.

Barca have had to agree salary cuts worth 122 million euros in players' salaries

this season to help offset the financial hole left by the coronavirus pandemic and are highly unlikely to be in a position to bring Neymar back next year.

Instead, it is Messi who could be on the move as the Argentine is out of contract at the end of the season and publicly expressed his desire to leave in August.

Then Barca president Josep Maria Bartomeu would not free Messi from the final year of his deal at the Camp Nou, but Bartomeu has since resigned with new presidential elections scheduled for January 24.

Manchester City were the favourites to land Messi's signature earlier this year, but PSG could be an alternative for a player who will turn 34 at the end of this season.

"He can play in my position, there is no problem," Neymar joked. "Take me out."

Neymar's partnership with Kylian Mbappe is yet to deliver PSG's first ever Champions League title, but the French champions should have another shot in this season's knockout stages after a vital victory in Manchester. Thomas Tuchel's men are now level on points with United and RB Leipzig with one game in Group H to come.

But PSG are in the driving seat as they host already-eliminated Istanbul Basaksehir next week, while United travel to Germany needing a point to reach the last 16.

## Grosjean Hails Crash Heroes as FIA Launches Investigation

LONDON (Reuters) - Formula One's governing body said it had opened an investigation into Romain Grosjean's Bahrain Grand Prix crash on Thursday as the French driver hailed those who helped him escape the fireball.

Grosjean suffered burns to his hands after his Haas car split in two, penetrating a metal barrier and erupting in flames, in Sunday's race.

The Frenchman left hospital on Wednesday and in an Instagram post accompanying video footage pointed to "the moment I realized I was going to live".

He highlighted the "professionalism" of the marshal with the extinguisher and FIA doctor Ian Roberts.

"I told him he was a hero, he went into the fire as much as he could to save me," he said of Roberts.

"I felt Ian's hands pulling me over the barrier and knew I was safe. I remember every second of it and life will never be the same again, but I'm sure for the best," added the driver.

"I met with death and that is the worst feeling I ever had. But I'm alive and will enjoy every second of life and every small win in a much better way from now on."

The International Automobile Federation (FIA) expected its investigation to take six to eight weeks.

It will look at all safety devices, how the safety barrier performed and the role of track marshals and medical intervention team.

The body said it would work with Formula One, Haas and the Grand Prix Drivers' Association (GPDA), who had already been contacted for input. Grosjean is one of the three GPDA directors.

Researchers also have data from a driver-facing high speed camera, the in-car Accident Data Recorder and in-ear accelerometers that measure head movement.



## Murray Can Still Compete Against Top Guys

MUMBAI (Reuters) - A fit Andy Murray could still be competitive against top players and tennis fans should consider themselves lucky still to be able to see the three-time Grand Slam champion in action, the Briton's former coach Daniel Vallverdu has told Reuters.

Venezuelan Vallverdu currently coaches three-time Grand Slam winner Stan Wawrinka who crushed former world number one Murray 6-1 6-3 6-2 in the opening round of this year's French Open.

It was Murray's joint-worst loss at a Grand Slam and came on his return to the claycourts at Roland Garros after a three-year absence, during which he has had two major hip surgeries.

The heavy loss prompted seven-time Grand Slam champion Mats Wilander to suggest that Murray should consider whether he has the right to accept wildcards into majors at the expense of emerging young players.

"It's pretty amazing what he's doing, coming back from the type of injury that he's had," Vallverdu said by phone from Monaco. "We're all very lucky to still be able to have him around and not only in the locker room but to see him compete."

Vallverdu was part of Murray's team between 2010 and 2014 when the Scot won the U.S. Open and Wimbledon and also clinched the men's singles gold medal at his home Olympic Games in London.

"As long as he's able to keep himself fit and I wouldn't say pain-free but with not so much pain and physically fit, I wouldn't be surprised if Andy has some very good results next year," the 34-year-old added. "What they're going to be is difficult to say but I do believe that he if he manages to keep his body fit, he will be competitive against the top guys and in the big events as well. I would never write him off."

