

Turkish Interior Minister Announced
Turkey Has Completed an
81-Kilometer (50-Mile) Security Wall
Along Its Eastern Border With Iran,
Located in the Eastern Agri Province

IRAN NEWS

20 Iranian Knowledge-Based Firms
And Startups Will Participate
At the 40th International Exhibition
Of Electronics, Computers, and
E-Commerce in West Asia

VOL. XXVI, No. 7109 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SUNDAY DECEMBER 6, 2020 - AZAR 16, 1399

2

DOMESTIC

COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout
Shouldn't Keep People
From Observing Protocols



> SEE PAGE 2

3

DOMESTIC

Gov't Predicts
Oil Sales of Up to
2.3m bpd Next year



> SEE PAGE 3

4

INTERNATIONAL

Venezuela Pushes
Private Firms Into Asia,
Middle East Trade



> SEE PAGE 4

8

SPORTS

Mourinho Says
No Danger of Complacency
Against Arsenal



> SEE PAGE 8

COVID Death Toll Lower Than Predictions

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's Health Minister said that the number of coronavirus death toll dropped below the forecast of the world's scientific institutions.

Saeed Namaki noted that in the current situation, scientific institutions in the world predicted that Iran would have about 1,000 to 1,200 daily deaths due to coronavirus, but fortunately, with the cooperation of all public and government institutions as well as people, the prediction did not come true. According to the institutions' forecasts, Europe, the US, and many countries are in an unfavourable situation, he highlighted.

Emphasizing that the United States, Germany, and Britain have a large increase in coronavirus infections and deaths, he said that yesterday, Germany and the US had 432 and 2,800 deaths, respectively. Namaki pointed out that the effective plan of Martyr Qassem Soleimani (A family-centered plan to manage and control the coronavirus epidemic in neighborhoods) reduced the death toll in Iran to less than 400, stating that the support of people made a great achievement in reducing this number.

See Page 7

German FM, E3 Urged Not to Lecture Iran

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif fires back at his German counterpart over the latter's call for renegotiation of the 2015 nuclear agreement and claims about Iran's national defense program, saying the European parties to the Iran deal should first change their own harmful behavior before lecturing the Islamic Republic.

In an interview with Spiegel magazine released on Friday, Germany's top diplomat, Heiko Maas, toeing the line of America, spoke of what he called a "nuclear deal plus" with Iran that would also cover the country's conventional missile program and regional role.

Maas said "a return to the previous agreement will not be enough," and that "there will have to be a kind of 'nuclear deal plus', which is also in our interest."

The German minister — whose country currently holds the presidency of the European Union (EU) — said the Europeans have "clear expectations for Iran: no nuclear weapons, but also no ballistic rocket program which threatens the whole region. Iran must also play another role in the region."

See Page 7

Foreign Investment in Iran Soars 97% in 5 Months



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran attracted \$2.351 billion of foreign investment during the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-August 21), up 97 percent compared to the same period last year, Finance and Economic Affairs Ministry data showed.

According to the mentioned data, \$1.189 billion of foreign investment had been attracted in the country during the first five months of the previous year.

Also, in the mentioned period the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade approved 81 projects with foreign investment, compared to the 51 cases in the previous year's same five months.

Based on the Finance and Economic Affairs Ministry data, in the mentioned period 590 cases for foreign investment were assessed among which 192 cases had the necessary standards.

Back in October, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjasand announced that over \$3.8 billion of foreign investment was attracted in the country during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-September 21).

"Foreign investment acts as a window through which technology, employment, and production enter, so the executive bodies should make their most effort to attract foreign investment," Dejjasand said.

Dejjasand also said that Finance and Economic Ministry has outlined a plan for facilitating and expediting the attraction of Iranian expatriates' investment, based on which some incentives and guarantees will be allocated to those investors.

The minister said Iran minimized the effects of the enemy's economic war by adopting the necessary measures coupled with people's rapport and cooperation.

According to the finance minister, materializing the motto of "Surge in Production" requires an investment of 7-10 quadrillion rials (about \$166.6-\$238 billion), and the attraction of foreign investment can play a significant part in this regard.

Meanwhile last week, Government Spokesman Ali Rabiei noted the lifting of sanctions will also contribute to a growth in foreign investment.

"With the easing of 'maximum pressure' and lifting of cruel sanctions and with Trump gone, the presence of foreign firms and willingness to invest in Iran will rise," said the spokesman.

He said foreign companies have recently increased their contacts requesting to open offices in Iran.

Rabiei underlined the companies which have already been present in the country will have more opportunities to expand their activities.

The current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20) is named the year of "Surge in Production" by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

It should be considered that the trend of strengthening domestic production has been started in Iran a couple of years ago, as the country is determined to nullify the U.S. sanction on its economy through boosting production to reach more and more self-reliance.

Biggest Iranian Flotilla Yet En Route to Venezuela With Fuel

LONDON (Dispatches) - Iran is sending its biggest fleet yet of tankers to Venezuela in defiance of U.S. sanctions to help the isolated nation weather a crippling fuel shortage, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

Some of the flotilla of about 10 Iranian vessels will also help export Venezuelan crude after discharging fuel, the people said, asking not to be named because the transaction is not public.

The Nicolas Maduro regime is widening its reliance on Iran as an ally of last resort after even Russia and China have avoided challenging the U.S. ban on trade with Venezuela. The country's fuel crunch follows decades of mismanagement, corruption and under-investment at state-owned Petroleos de Venezuela since the time of Maduro's late mentor and predecessor, Hugo Chavez.

The country that was once a top supplier of crude to the U.S. and boasted one of the lowest domestic gasoline prices in the world, now can barely produce any fuel. The last Iranian fuel shipments sent in early October on three vessels are running out, threatening steeper nationwide shortages with hours-long queues at gas stations.

The current fleet under sail is about double the size of the one that first startled international observers in May, crossing a Caribbean Sea patrolled by the U.S. Navy, to be greeted by Maduro himself upon arrival.

"We're watching what Iran is doing and making sure that other shippers, insurers, ship owners, ship captains realize they must stay away from that trade," Elliott Abrams, the U.S. special representative for Iran and Venezuela, said in September.

See Page 7

SNSC Rejects Gov't Claim Over Majlis Strategic Action

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Following disagreements between the Iranian administration and the Parliament on "strategic action" for lifting of the sanctions, the Supreme National Security Council said that the newly-ratified law would not cause any harm to the country's national interests.

In a statement released on Saturday, the Supreme National Security Council underlined that its secretariat has not been involved in the course from the formulation to the final ratification of the strategic action for lifting of the sanctions and safeguarding national interests.

All procedures relating to the new law have taken place in accordance with the Parliament's regulations and customary norms, it added.

The SNSC also noted that its secretariat believes the new law does not cause any specific problem that may be to the detriment of national interests.

The statement said what are harmful to the national interests as a source of concern are the controversies that may undermine the authority of domestic institutions and damage national unity.

See Page 7

IAEA Duty-Bound to Ensure Confidentiality of Safeguards Information

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's permanent representative to Vienna-based international organizations has called on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to ensure confidentiality of safeguards information after a confidential report by the UN nuclear watchdog on the Natanz facility was leaked to the media.

Kazem Gharibabadi made the remarks in a post on his twitter account on Friday as the confidential IAEA report obtained by Reuters said the Islamic Republic plans to install three more cascades, or clusters, of advanced IR-2m centrifuges in the enrichment plant in the central city of Natanz. "In a letter dated 2 December 2020, Iran informed the Agency that the operator of the Fuel Enrichment Plant (FEP) at Natanz 'intends to start installation of three cascades of IR-2m centrifuge machines' at FEP," the IAEA's report to its member states said.

Gharibabadi wrote, "@iaeaorg confidential report, based on Iran's confidential letter, appeared in Media immediately even before the BoG Members could track it down," referring to the IAEA Board of Governors.

See Page 7

UNESCO Urged To Condemn Assassination of Fakhrizadeh

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's Ambassador to UNESCO Ahmad Jalali asked the organization not to seal its lips in the face of such terror acts. "You are all aware that terrorists assassinated the fifth Iranian top scientist six days ago ... Today, not as an Iranian, nor as an academic, but as an individual, who has spent 20 years [...]"

Iran's Ambassador to UNESCO Ahmad Jalali asked the organization not to seal its lips in the face of such terror acts.

"You are all aware that terrorists assassinated the fifth Iranian top scientist six days ago ... Today, not as an Iranian, nor as an academic, but as an individual, who has spent 20 years of his life in this house, I urge UNESCO not to remain silent, but to condemn it," he said.

"It hurts the human conscience, let's find a solution together," the official added.

"Terrorism must be condemned, no matter who it targets, scientists, teachers, journalists or anyone else," he said.

"For many years, hundreds of scientists from developing countries have been killed and we are doing nothing," he said.

"Dear colleagues, if there is only one world organization to address this serious issue, it is UNESCO," said Iran's ambassador.



Advertisement Department
021-44253335-39

www.irannewsdaily.com
info@irannewsdaily.com

@irannewsdaily @irannewsdaily

Some 412m Cyber-Attack Against Iran Foiled

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Computer emergency response coordination center, known as Maher, in a report announced that 412 million cyber-attacks against Iran have been foiled last year.

Maher has also discovered over 56 million malware infections.

Some 37 million malware attacks from inside and 375 million ones from outside were failed by Maher. According to its official website, “Maher Center began work as Iran’s national CERT in 2008. Since then Maher Center has had the responsibility of country-wide actions for the prevention of and response to such security incidents in information exchange environments.”

COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout Shouldn’t Keep People From Observing Protocols

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian president says the hope that a vaccine for coronavirus could become available in the near future should not stop citizens from observing health protocols.

President Hassan Rouhani said compliance with health measures should not decrease at any rate.

“Abidance by health protocols should not decrease in the hope that a vaccine may be developed, and we know that no vaccine is 100% effective,” he said.

Rouhani noted relevant measures are enforced depending on how affected an area is.

“Any place which is declared as a red, orange or yellow area, we will act in accordance with protocols again,” he said.

“The restrictions have had positive effects, and this trend (drop in infections) will continue only if people keep wearing masks, do not hold gatherings and minimize travel,” he added.

The president underlined the number of COVID-19 tests will soon reach 100,000 per day. He said those ordered to remain in quarantine must do so or they will have to pay fines.

“If it becomes evident to us that someone has violated quarantine instructions, they will be fined,” he noted.

The president then said the capital, Tehran, is in an “orange” state, but that it is on the verge of turning “red.”

“Seven cities are in an “ultra-red” state which is getting worse,” he said.

“We will re-impose the restrictions in any place which is in a red state,” he noted.

The President further emphasized on increasing the number of tests to identify



patients and diagnose the disease, and said, “With the efforts made, the number of tests performed per day has reached 100,000 and the diagnosis has been greatly improved”.

Emphasizing that the patients must fully observe the quarantine period, Dr Rouhani said, “Those who violate the quarantine period must be dealt with decisively”.

The President went on to thank all those who worked to implement the resolutions of the National Task Force Against Coronavirus and to impose restrictions, including the Ministries of Health and Interior, Coronavirus Operational Headquarters, specialized committees, the Police and the Basij, and unions and guilds.

In the end, Dr Rouhani said, “I hope we all help to get rid of this virus, which has caused problems for all people, as soon as possible, by reducing the number of deaths and hospitalizations of patients and also helping the medical staff”.

Iran Welcomes Kuwait Statement on Resolving Persian Gulf Row

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says Tehran welcomes a statement by mediator Kuwait in resolving a persisting diplomatic row in the Persian Gulf, expressing hope that the reconciliation will contribute to the stability as well as the political and economic development of the regional nations.

“We welcome understandings in the Persian Gulf announced by Kuwait. Iran’s longstanding policy is diplomacy, good neighborly relations & regional dialogue,” said Iran’s top diplomat on his official Twitter account on Friday. Zarif added, “We hope reconciliation contributes to stability and political & economic development for all peoples of our region.”

He also posted the Arabic version of the same tweet on his account.

Back in June 2017, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Egypt severed diplomatic and trade ties with Qatar. They also banned all Qatari planes from their airspace, accusing Doha of meddling in regional affairs and supporting “terrorism.”

Qatar has repeatedly condemned the decision as unjustified and the allegations as based on false claims and assumptions, saying it was targeted because it followed an independent foreign policy. Doha has since highlighted its readiness for dialogue.

A number of regional and international attempts were made in lifting the diplomatic, trade and travel embargo against Qatar and resolving the row, but all to no avail.

However, Kuwait, as a mediator in resolving the ongoing crisis, hosted talks between the Saudi-led quartet and Qatar, and earlier on Friday described the talks as “constructive and fruitful.”

President Hopes for Closer Ties with Thailand

TEHRA (IFP) - President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Hassan Rouhani has expressed hope that Tehran’s relations will further expand with Bangkok in light of age-old friendship between the two nations.

President Rouhani on Saturday sent a letter to Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand Prayut Chan-ocha to congratulate the Thai people and government on the Southeast Asian country’s National Day.

In the congratulatory message, President Rouhani

expressed hope for the promotion of relations between Iran and Thailand in light of their age-old friendship and the mutual determination of the two countries’ authorities, and also for the expansion of bilateral ties in all fields.

The president also wished the Thai prime minister, people, and government health, success and prosperity.

Thailand marks its National Day, also the National Father’s Day, on December 5, commemorating the birth of late King Bhumibol Adulyadej in 1927.

Iranian Embassy in Kabul Denies Alleged insulting of Afghan Citizens

KABUL (IP) - The Iranian Embassy in Afghanistan issued a statement on Saturday, noting that some malicious people have released unreal or old clips with the aim of destroying relationships with Afghanistan and starting a psychological war.

The Iranian Embassy in Afghanistan stated: “Following the release of two clips over insulting prominent Afghan nationals in Iran and the subsequent issuance of a statement by the Afghanistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs to pursue this matter, an extensive technical investigation was immediately launched by the police and the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.”

“Unfortunately, some people inside Afghanistan with the aim of destroying and creating cross-sectional tensions in the relations between the two countries have started sharing these videos, one of which is related to a country other than Iran and the other is related to five years ago.”

The statement added: “There is no doubt that the relations between the two brotherly and neighboring countries are based on strong principles, which have not been disrupted by malicious actions, and on the contrary, will make the officials of the two countries more aware of dealing with psychological war and propaganda games in the future.”

The Islamic Republic of Iran is the largest host of Afghan refugees and migrants in the world, hosting 2.5 million people.

Envoy Confirms IRGC Quds Force Chief Visit to Iraq



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran’s ambassador to Baghdad confirmed that Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Quds Force Brigadier General Esmail Qaani visited Iraq lately for talks with senior Iraqi officials.

In an interview with Al-Alam News Network, Iranian envoy to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi said General Qaani continues the same mission pursued by his predecessor, Lt. General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated in an American attack in Iraq in early January.

The interaction between Iran and Iraq has not changed after the martyrdom of General Soleimani, the ambassador noted, saying General Qaani also pays visits to Baghdad in coordination with the Iraqi authorities to hold meetings with the Iraqi president, prime minister, political and party officials, and various figures.

In his recent visit to Iraq, the IRGC Quds Force commander held talks with many Iraqi officials, Masjedi said. The envoy further denounced the U.S. presence as the source of threats to the region, saying American interference that causes regional insecurity must end with the withdrawal of U.S. forces.

Masjedi also warned the U.S. that the mistake of taking any action on Iran will draw a decisive response from Tehran.

Describing self-defense as an inalienable right, the ambassador cautioned the U.S. against the reaction it will receive in case of a wrong move against the resistance currents, leaders and bases.

Iraq’s anti-terror Kata’ib Hezbollah group, a faction of the country’s Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) or Hashd al-Sha’abi, warned last month that a “tougher and stronger” confrontation awaits U.S. forces should they defy a timetable set for their withdrawal from the Arab country.

Iran Overturns Death Sentences of 3 Convicts Involved Fuel Protests

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran’s Supreme Court has accepted a request by three convicts sentenced to death to have their cases heard again in another court.

Upon a decree by the head of the Supreme Court, the three convicts, Amir-Hossein Moradi, Mohammad Rajabi, and Saeed Tamjidi will be tried again in another court branch.

They had been found guilty of involvement in unrest and riots in the country in late 2019, and sentenced to death.

The Supreme Court had earlier upheld their sentences and they were awaiting execution.

Retrial is an extraordinary proceeding which can take place only with the approval of the Supreme Court.

Qalibaf to Travel To Moscow

TEHRAN (IP) - Russian State Duma Speaker said that Iran’s Parliament Speaker would travel to Moscow this month.

Vyacheslav Volodin told local media, given the epidemic situation, he believes it would be right for Russia to resume the previous process of communication, and the visit of Iran’s Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf to Russia is expected by the end of this month.

He stated that the Duma representatives will resume face-to-face meetings with their foreign counterparts this year, and trips to some countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, Vietnam, Serbia, and Turkey are planned.

“We are gradually resuming the previous process before the pandemic,” he said, noting that “Next year, in terms of the epidemic, should be a year of change for us.”

The chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Russian State Duma had invited Qalibaf to visit Russia during a visit to Tehran this summer.

Qalibaf and Volodin also discussed the latest developments in bilateral relations and regional issues in a telephone conversation on October 5.

According to Russian media reports, a Conference of Speakers of the Parliaments of Russia, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, and China on Counter-Terrorism will be held in May 2021 in Sochi.

Iran Reacts to UN Reclassification Over Cannabis, Marijuana

TEHRAN (MNA) – Following the recent decision of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs to remove cannabis and marijuana from the list of very dangerous drugs, Iran’s envoy said that these are still very dangerous to human health.

“Cannabis and marijuana are among the most dangerous and addictive drugs and are also prohibited by the law and regulations of the Narcotics Commission,” said Iran’s Permanent Representative to Vienna-based International Organizations Kazem Gharibabadi.

“The use of these drugs for medical purposes is also the responsibility of each country and there is no obligation to implement this decision in this regard,” he added.

“Many countries still believe that these drugs are very dangerous to human health and, therefore, do not use in their medical sectors based on their scientific studies and research,” Gharibabadi noted.

“The use of these drugs is absolutely forbidden in Iran and the country, in accordance with its domestic law and the Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, continues to take national and strict measures over the illegal use and production of cannabis and related drugs with the aim of protecting public health,” he added, saying, “The ban also includes medical uses.”

He also asked Iran Drug Control Headquarters and the NAJA to, if necessary, inform the public that these drugs are still banned in the international arena and are absolutely prohibited under domestic law.

A United Nations commission voted on Wednesday to remove cannabis for medicinal purposes from a category of the world’s most dangerous drugs, a highly anticipated and long-delayed decision that could clear the way for an expansion of marijuana research and medical use.

UNHCR Welcomes Iran New Child Citizenship Law

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees welcomed a recently declared law on conferring Iranian citizenship on children born to Iranian women and non-Iranian men regardless of where they are born.

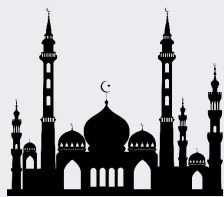
The law was approved by the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) and submitted to the government for implementation on October 8, allowing Iranian women to pass their nationality to their children. According to the law, children of Iranian women and non-Iranian men who were born before or after the law can be an Iranian citizen in case the Iranian mother requested if they have no security problem before the age of 18.

These children, after reaching the age of 18, can apply for Iranian citizenship if not requested by the mother, then will be granted Iranian citizenship in case of no security problem, Tehran Times reported.

Through a series of resolutions beginning in 1995, the UN General Assembly gave UNHCR the formal mandate to identify stateless people, prevent and reduce statelessness around the world, as well as to protect the rights of stateless people.

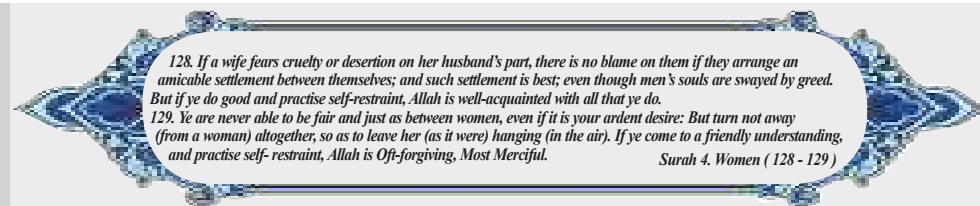
At the 14th World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates, Nobel Peace Laureates and Peace Laureate Organizations demonstrated their support for UNHCR’s global campaign called #IBelong launched in November 2014 to end statelessness within ten years.

By now, UNHCR is in the middle of its 10-year campaign to eradicate statelessness; a high level will be held as part of UNHCR 2019 Executive Committee meeting in Geneva in October, which will assess the achievements to date and to encourage concrete pledges by member states and others on this issue.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:55
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:10
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:31
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:01



Gov't Predicts Oil Sales of Up to 2.3m bpd Next year

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Vice President and Head of Plan and Budget Organization (PBO) Mohammad Baqer Nobakht says Iran is fully ready to export 4.6m bpd of crude oil in case the sanctions are lifted by the U.S. but in the budget bill, it is predicted the country to sell between 1 to 2.3m bpd next year.

Speaking in a press conference yesterday, Nobakht revealed more details on the government's budget bill which was submitted to Majlis on Tuesday. He said that according to the predicted revenues for the current year, the government was to earn 384,000b tomans in the first eight months of the current year but the earning in the mentioned period is 50,000b tomans shy of the set target.

He went on to say that the government payment and salary this year has been 53 percent more than last year, adding that whatever revenue the government has economized has been spent for the public livelihood.

Nobakht further said that development credits have increased by 65 percent, adding that this rise of the credit shows itself in forming investment in housing which has grown by 5.4 percent. He said the government has received only 19,000b tomans of petty cash from the central bank while it had authority to get 39,000b tomans.

He refuted allegations that the government has transferred its budget deficit to the Central Bank, adding that they are baseless remarks, as the government has only used 19,000b tomans of petty cash while it was allowed to get 39,000b tomans.

Nobakht reiterated that the GDP in all groups was positive in the summer and the country experienced positive growth 0.2 percent with oil sale. He noted although due to the coronavirus pandemic some jobs were lost, the growth in the agro sector was



positive 2.7 percent and in mining sector positive 4 percent, admitting that the figure was minus 3 percent in the service sector without oil.

Nobakht said that the government predicts to earn 199,000b tomans through oil sales revenues and it will be possible if the country can sell 1 to 2.3m barrels per day, adding that if the oil exports miss the mentioned target, the government has to sell bonds or shares of the companies and factories. He reiterated that the oil sale in the budget bill is flexible from 1 to 2.3 million barrels, reiterating that the government is optimistic to regain its OPEC quota in the market and in case it does not happen, it can sell bonds and shares.

Nobakht added that for the basic goods, the government eyes the price of dollar for 4200 tomans but all depends on the forex prices in the market.

He rejected the allegations that the government intentionally lets the dollar price go up in the market to compensate its budget deficit, reiterating that the government could do it with the dollar with price of 22,500 tomans and not with the price of 11,500 tomans which is to be the base price for the dollar in the budget bill next year.

Nobakht reiterated that currently and due to the devaluation of the dollar in the market, the capital market is witnessing growth.

Shipbuilding, Backbone of Iran's Domestic Industries

BANDAR ABBAS (IRNA) - Shipbuilding is the backbone of the domestic industries with contribution to technology know-how and advances in different branches of the manufacturing sector, Managing director of Iran Shipbuilding and Offshore Industries Complex (ISOICO) Hamid Rezaeian said on Saturday.

Hamid Rezaeian said that ISOICO is the biggest infrastructure of marine industries of the country and the pioneer in the Middle East.

Offshore shipbuilding has direct and indirect impacts on technology know-how advances of other industries

of the county, so it is considered a strategic industry all over the world.

ISOICO was established in 1973 in an area of 1100 hectares, 37 km West of Bandar Abbas, southern Iran, in order to repair and build vessels and now it is able to build oceangoing ships.

The half-a-century old industrial complex has been able to put on display a good performance in the current Iranian year (starting on March 20). This year was named "Surge in Production" by Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Seyed Ali Khamenei.

Iran Foreign Currency Reserves to Exceed \$65b by Yearend

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Economist's Intelligence Unit has estimated Iran's total foreign currency reserves to reach \$65.919 billion by the end of 2020, while the country's assets in foreign banks are estimated to be about \$19 billion at the end of June 2020.

The Economist's Intelligence Unit, in its latest report, has also assessed the country risk level for Iran to be CCC, with no changes compared to the institute's previous report.

The Economist risk index for each country is comprised of two factors namely credit risk and operational risk.

The Economist's Intelligence Unit analyses and forecasts credit risk posed by countries, including a regularly-reviewed country risk rating. In addition to the currency, sovereign debt and banking sector risks posed by a country, the service also looks at political, economic policy and economic structure risks. Includes short- and medium-term economic and political forecasts for the country, while the Operational Risk, looks at issues from politics and security to finance and infrastructure.

Khaf-Herat Railway to Be Officially Inaugurated in 10 Days

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Khaf-Herat railway Project will be inaugurated officially in 10 days with the presence of the Presidents of Iran and Afghanistan.

The third section of the economic project of the Khaf-Herat railway has been completed and it is scheduled to be tested for the first time and be inaugurated officially in the coming 10 days with the presence of the Presidents of Iran and Afghanistan.

With the inauguration of this project, Afghanistan will be able to transfer its commercial properties through Herat-Khaf railway at a low cost and in a short period of time, said Yamma Shams, General Director of Afghanistan Railway, adding, "In this regard, Afghanistan will have access to the Middle East, Turkey, and Europe."

"The capacity of this railway reaches 2 million tons, and in addition to transporting imported and exported goods, the transfer of passengers will kick off through an agreement reached with the officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran", the Afghan official added.

Seyed Mostafa Davoudi, a deputy with the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways also said, "Given that Iran enjoys a strategic position in the world in terms of having access to the waters of Central Asia and Europe, now with the opening of the Khaf-Herat railway such potential will be shared with the friendly country of Afghanistan."



508,000 Tons of Commodities Traded on IME

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Within the week ending November the second, 2020, the Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) played host to trading 508,000 tons of various types of commodities worth more than \$242m.



According to a report by the IME financial affairs and PR, on the mineral and industrial trading floor of the exchange 210,039 tons of commodities changed hands with a total trading value of nearly \$122m.

On this trading platform the IME sold 202,036 tons of steel, 1,205 tons of aluminum, 3,280 tons of copper, 120 tons of molybdenum sulfur, 12 tons of precious metals concentrate, 200 tons of cast iron and 3,480 tons of zing ingots.

Furthermore, the exchange witnessed trade of 297,836 tons of commodities on both domestic and export rings valued at more than \$120m.

Commodities traded on this floor were 105,500 tons of vacuum bottom, 64,194 tons of bitumen, 59,072 tons of polymeric products, 27,984 tons of chemicals, 37,500 tons of lube cut, 360 tons of insulation, 1,951 tons of base oil, 150 tons of argon and 670 tons of sulfur.

Next trading floor was the agricultural which sold 1,000 kg of saffron.

Last but not least was the IME's side market with 654 tons of commodities trade on it.

It's worth noting that a property belonging to the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics with an area of 3623 square meters was offered on the IME.

5 Years Without Any Major Incident, Big Achievement at MSC

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN - Public Service and welfare affairs manager of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) says due to the measures taken in the transportation section of the company and fully implementation of related instructions, accidents leading to injury has not been reported in the company for five years.



Sadeq Farrokhi said with constant training of drivers and cooperation with the traffic police of the province, the company has witnessed rise in the safety factor in offering service for transporting the staff of this gigantic industrial complex. He added that comparing to the considerable amount of services, very good results have been achieved in the field of transportation of staff of the company as well as rise in the safety factor, and fortunately, the transportation sector of the company has not reported any major accident leading to injury for five years and by employing technical safety system and strong technical inspection, the number of incidents in the company has been minimized.

Farrokhi pointed to the activities of 600 heavy vehicles and 400 light vehicles for transportation affairs at the company, and said technical inspection of the vehicles is carried out as a routine task by a team comprised of veteran drivers and retired traffic police officers.

Beside observing safety issues, the company seriously holds training courses for the drivers by using university teachers and police officials, he added.

Farrokhi reiterated that observing safety regulations is the red line for this management and health and safety of staff is very important for the company.

Iran Western Province Exports to 36 States Rise Up

HAMEDAN (IRNA) - Export of Western Iranian province of Hamedan to 36 countries rose up by 18 percent over the past eight months of the Iranian year started on March 20 compared with the preceding period, a provincial official announced on Saturday.

Despite the sanctions and the pandemic, the province saw an increase in its exports, Head of Hamedan's Organization of Industry, Mine and Trade Hamid-Reza Matin said.

During eight months, Hamedan exported 339,000 tons of commodities worth more than 89 million dollars to 36 different world countries, Matin added.

He said that the figure has been near 75.5 million dollars in the preceding period.

Industrial, petrochemical, and agricultural products, as well as handicrafts, have mostly been exported from the province, the official noted.

He further referred to ferrosilicon as the most important mining material which has major customers from many Asian and European states.

Iran due to its geographical position has great sea and land access to different states.

Meanwhile, the country through land roads and its transit capacity developed trade with different world countries.

Zinc Exports Rise 34% in 7 Months



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The volume of zinc exports from Iran reached 110,932 tons in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-October 21), registering a 34-percent rise compared to the figure for the last year's same period.

The exports of zinc and zinc products, however, fell 22 percent in terms of value in the mentioned seven months, IRNA reported.

Iran exported \$152 million worth of the said commodities in the said time span.

The total exports of the country's mining and mineral industries in the period under review were reported to be 21,176,921 tons valued at over \$3.049 billion.

Meanwhile, the country imported about 10,890 tons of zinc worth \$6 million in the mentioned seven months, which shows a decrease of 77 percent in terms of volume, and a 71-percent fall in terms of value compared to the same period last year.

Lead and zin extraction reached 584,248 tons during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year.

Also, the extraction amount of lead and zinc in the seventh month of this year was 81,682 tons, which was seven percent more than the figure for the same month in the past year.

According to the data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the total value of Iran's zinc ingot exports in the first five months of this year (March 20-August 21) was \$73 million.

Zinc is used in alloys such as brass, nickel, silver, and aluminum, and also in galvanizing steel structures. Furthermore, the metal is widely used in the manufacture of products such as paint, rubber, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, plastic, ink, soap, batteries, textile, and electrical equipment.

According to the United States Geological Survey, Iran holds the world's largest zinc, ninth largest copper, 10th largest iron ore, fifth largest gypsum and barite, and 10th largest uranium reserves.

Austrian Ex-Finance Minister Gets 8 Years in Jail



VIENNA (Dispatches) - A Vienna court on Friday sentenced a flamboyant, jet-setting former Austrian finance minister to eight years in prison in the country's biggest corruption trial since World War II.

Karl-Heinz Grasser was found guilty of abuse of power and involvement in kickbacks totalling 9.6 million euros (\$11.7 million) over the sale of state-owned apartments.

During the trial, a co-defendant -- who was also best man at Grasser's wedding -- admitted passing on insider information enabling a consortium to buy 60,000 government-owned flats for 961 million euros, one million euros more than a rival bidder.

Israel Army Kills Palestinian Teen



RAMALLAH (Dispatches) - A Palestinian teenager was killed on Friday in clashes with the Israeli army on the sidelines of a protest in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said.

Ali Ayman Nasr Abu Aliya, 13, "succumbed to his wounds after he was shot with live rounds in the stomach" during clashes north of Ramallah, the ministry said in a statement.

The youth was hit during a demonstration in the village of Mughayir and was transported in critical condition to a hospital in Ramallah, where he died, it said.

Venezuela Pushes Private Firms Into Asia, Middle East Trade



CARACAS (Reuters) - Venezuela's government is encouraging private firms to sign import and export deals with companies in Asia and the Middle East as part of an effort to limit the impact of U.S. sanctions, according to four sources with knowledge of the matter.

The plan expands on President Nicolas Maduro's existing commercial relationships with allies such as Turkey and Iran, which have already been providing the cash-strapped government with food and fuel in exchange for gold.

Vice President and Finance Minister Delcy Rodriguez has been developing the strategy for over a year, according to the sources, paving the way for private firms to export pineapples and mangos to Iran and import pasta from Turkey.

Rodriguez has created a new vice ministry of foreign commerce and sent allies to these new markets to promote private trade deals, according to public statements, seeking ways around a broad sanctions package meant to force Maduro from office.

Because operations of private Venezuelan companies are not explicitly targeted by U.S. sanctions, shifting trade away from state-run firms and toward private enterprise makes foreign partners more interested in Venezuela deals, said the sources, who asked not to be identified.

Venezuelan companies also benefit from trading with firms in Turkey or Iran because Western hemisphere businesses are so scared of sanctions that they at times avoid operations even when the U.S. Treasury has explicitly authorized them, the sources said.

Though the total volume of trade remains low, it signals a new effort on the part of the ruling Socialist Party to skirt sanctions that the incoming Biden administration is expected to maintain even though they show few signs of toppling Maduro.

"They're creating a new institutionality to confront sanctions," said one finance sector source with direct knowledge of the strategy.

"There's a transition from the West to Asia and the Middle East. With the difference that they're going to allow private players to participate in the business without the government's involvement."

Rodriguez, along with advisers skilled in diplomacy, have attended virtual forums and meetings with local and foreign companies to discuss foreign trade, according to the sources and public documents.

The information ministry, the finance ministry and the vice president's office did not reply to requests for comment.

The new exports are reflected in data provided by Import Genius, a firm that collects customs records for the import-export industry. The figures provided by the company show volumes, but not the associated monetary values.

Kuwait Says Progress Made in Resolving Saudi-Led Boycott of Qatar



KUWAIT CITY (Dispatches) - Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser al-Sabah says there have been "constructive and fruitful discussions" on efforts to achieve reconciliation in the Persian Gulf crisis.

The foreign minister said on Friday that there was progress in resolving the row that has seen Saudi Arabia and its allies boycott Qatar since mid-2017.

He stopped short of announcing any breakthrough in the dispute.

"Fruitful discussion have taken place recently in which all sides expressed their keenness ... to reach a final agreement," al-Sabah said in a statement read out on Kuwait TV, thanking White House senior adviser Jared Kushner for his "recent efforts". Following the statement, Qatar's Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani thanked Kuwait for its mediation.

Kuwaiti statement is an imperative step towards resolving the GCC crisis. We express our gratitude to the State of

Kuwait for their mediation & the United States for their efforts. The interest and security of the people of the Gulf & the region remain our top priority.

"The Kuwaiti statement is an imperative step towards resolving the PGCC crisis. We express our gratitude to the State of Kuwait for their mediation & the United States for their efforts," Al Thani said on Twitter.

"The interest and security of the people of the Gulf & the region remain our top priority," he added. Al Jazeera's senior political analyst Marwan Bishara, reporting from Doha, said: "A Persian Gulf summit expected to take place next week[could] be a good occasion for Kuwait to introduce the new agreement between Qatar and the other Persian Gulf countries."

He also said Kushner did not really seem to have brought much to the crisis resolution.

"Clearly, he came too late in the game and he left too late in the sense that he came to get some credit, but it didn't really work out because everyone understands that Qataris and Saudis did most of the work and Kuwait of course has been mediating this crisis for years," he said.

Iraqis Renew Protests in Solidarity After Violence

NASIRIYAH (AFP) - Protesters hit the streets in several Iraqi cities on Friday, one week after clashes between supporters of a controversial Shiite cleric and anti-government demonstrators left nine people dead.

On November 27, followers of militiaman-turned-cleric Moqtada Sadr turned out in a show of force in the Iraqi capital, southern hotspot of Nasiriyah and other cities.

While the massive Baghdad protest ended peacefully, Sadrists in Nasiriyah clashed with the dwindling numbers of anti-government demonstrators who have been rallying there since October 2019.

Last week's clashes left nine people dead, medics said, including several who died of their wounds days later.

On Friday, thousands in Nasiriyah held a protest and funeral march for those lives lost.

"The violence last week won't prevent us from carrying on in our protests. Our only option is achieving the goals of this uprising," Hussein al-Saidi, a demonstrator in Nasiriyah's Habboubi square, told AFP.

Habboubi Square is the heart of the anti-government uprising in Nasiriyah and the site of last week's clashes.

Security forces on Friday had sealed off streets leading to the square to keep a Sadrist rally from reaching it.

Thousands of followers of Sadr, a firebrand cleric who tweets often but is rarely seen in public, held their own prayer-protest on Friday for the second week in a row.

Other cities also held rallies in solidarity, with a small flash protest held in Baghdad's Tahrir Square. In the southern city of Diwaniyah, hundreds gathered to condemn ongoing violence against demonstrators.

Since anti-government rallies broke out in October 2019, nearly 600 people have died in protest-related violence.

Erdogan Hopes France Will Get Rid of Macron "Burden" Soon

ANKARA (Reuters) - Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday he hoped France would soon get rid of President Emmanuel Macron, describing him as a burden on France which was going through dangerous times.

Ties between Turkey and France, both NATO members, have been particularly tense in recent months over policy differences on Syria and the publishing of caricatures about Prophet Mohammad in France.

"Macron is a burden on France. Macron and France are going through a very dangerous period actually," Erdogan told reporters, referring to protests in French cities. "My hope is that France gets rid of the Macron trouble as soon as possible."

Ankara and Paris have also traded accusations over their roles in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. France says Turkey fueled fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, internationally

recognised as part of Azerbaijan but populated by ethnic Armenians.

Ankara, which backed its ethnic Turkic kin in Azerbaijan during weeks of fighting which drove Armenian forces from territories around Nagorno-Karabakh, denies this.

Turkey has said France, a co-chair of the Minsk group formed to mediate the issue, was not objective. Erdogan said on Friday that Paris' status as a mediator was "no more" due to its support for Armenia and slammed a French Senate resolution this week urging that Nagorno-Karabakh be recognised as a republic.

"(Azeri President) Ilham Aliyev had some advice for the French. What did he say? 'If they love Armenians so much, then they should give Marseilles to the Armenians'. I am making the same recommendation. If they love them so much, they should give Marseilles to the Armenians," he said.



U.N. Warns 2021 Shaping Up to Be A Humanitarian Catastrophe



NEW YORK (Reuters) - Next year is shaping up to be a humanitarian catastrophe and rich countries must not trample poor countries in a "stampede for vaccines" to combat the coronavirus pandemic, top U.N. officials told the 193-member U.N. General Assembly on Friday.

World Food Programme (WFP) chief David Beasley and World Health Organization (WHO) head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus spoke during a special meeting on COVID-19, which emerged in China late last year and has so far infected 65 million globally.

The pandemic, measures taken by countries to try to stop its spread and the economic impact have fueled a 40% increase in the number of people needing humanitarian help, the United Nations said earlier this week. It has appealed for \$35 billion in aid funding.

"2021 is literally going to be catastrophic based on what we're seeing at this stage of the game," said Beasley, adding that for a dozen countries, famine is "knocking on the door."

He said 2021 was likely to be "the worst humanitarian crisis year since the beginning of the United Nations" 75 years ago and "we're not going to be able to fund everything ... so we have to prioritize, as I say, the icebergs in front of the Titanic."

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and his top officials have also called for COVID-19 vaccines to be made available to all and for rich countries to help developing countries combat and recover from the pandemic.

Tedros appealed for an immediate injection of \$4.3 billion into a world vaccine-sharing program.

"We simply cannot accept a world in which the poor and marginalized are trampled by the rich and powerful in the stampede for vaccines," Tedros told the General Assembly. "This is a global crisis and the solutions must be shared equitably as global public goods."

Elahieh Apt (\$1800)
200sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
pkg, & F.F

Shanon (adviser)

Niavaran Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
green yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

(\$2500)
Velenjak Apt
230sq.m, 3bdrs
S/pool, S, J, pkg
roof garden, F.F

Farmanieh (\$2200)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony, pkg, F.F

(\$6000)
Fereshteh bldg
4storey, 13bdrs
enough pkg lots
recently renovated

Sa'adat abad (\$1000)
2bdrs, balcony, & F.F

Cell: +989121907875
Shanon_tari@yahoo.com
Tel : 88510081
Fax : 88506474

Commercial Office (Vanak)
300sq.m, 3bdrs, & pkgs

IRAN NEWS ADVERTISING
44253401

Don't Waste Your Time

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www.DeltaHOME.ir
The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

HOME
Real Estate
Member of **DELTA** Real Estate Group
(021) 88888865

IRAN NEWS
PUBLISHER OF NEWSPAPERS
ADVERTISING

TEL: 44253448-50
FAX: 44253234
ADIRANNEWS@GMAIL.COM

Higher OPEC+ Output Unlikely to Upset Oil Market Rebalancing

LONDON (Reuters) - OPEC+ members' decision to slowly ramp up production from next month will be balanced by increased demand as a result of the expected roll-out of coronavirus vaccines, Goldman Sachs said in a note dated Thursday.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and Russia agreed on Thursday to ease

oil output cuts by 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 7.2 million, from 7.7 million now, starting January.

"OPEC+ clearing the hurdle of exiting its current cuts in a coordinated way and its focus on both growing production and drawing inventories reinforces our conviction in a steady and sustainable rally in oil prices through 2021," Goldman said.



France Warns Risk of No-Deal Brexit Remains

PARIS (Dispatches) - European diplomats warned Thursday they have made all the concessions they can in trade talks with Britain, as Downing Street vowed to press ahead with a UK law that could undermine Brussels' remaining trust in London. The risk of a no-deal Brexit remains, according to France.

The EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier has been in London for six days, trying to carve out a difficult compromise with his UK counterpart David Frost and draw up a trade pact that can be ratified within weeks.

"We are at the end of a marathon, probably past the 40 kilometre (25-mile) mark. But there's still a little way to go," Barnier adviser Stefaan de Rynck said, during a debate at the European Policy Centre.

As the finish line nears, tempers were fraying in Brussels, with some of the EU's 27 member states -- led by France and the Netherlands -- worried that Barnier would shake hands on something that in their view gives up too much ground to a country quitting the club.

There remains a risk that Britain and the EU will fail to agree a post-Brexit trade deal, according to French European Affairs Minister Clement Beaune, who said Friday if a good deal could not be reached, France would veto it.

"I want to tell our fishermen, our producers, the citizens who are listening that we will not accept a deal with poor terms," Beaune told Europe 1 radio. "If a good agreement cannot be reached, we will oppose it. Each country has a veto right, so it is possible ... We will do our own evaluation of this draft deal, if there is one."

An EU diplomat insisted the Europeans remain united, but warned that it was clear that Barnier "was millimetres away from the red lines" he had been given.

"I think it's quite clear that at this moment in time that we've reached a point where we are so close to the limits of our mandate, that we need a movement on the side of the UK if we want to strike a deal," he said.

"I do not have the impression that we are hours away from a deal... what has to be bridged is still quite substantial," the diplomat added.

Negotiators are working day and night to agree on a deal in time to be ratified before December 31, when Britain will no longer be bound by EU single market rules under the terms of a post-Brexit transition.

A European source with close knowledge of the negotiations said the talks would continue on Thursday "and no doubt on Friday."

"Everything could change at any moment," the source said, adding that the sense of urgency was "now understood in London".

A British government source said the EU had brought "new elements" into the negotiations. "A breakthrough is still possible in the next few days but that prospect is receding," the source said late Thursday. Barnier could brief EU members Friday afternoon but the meeting has yet to be confirmed, a European source said.

In London, Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesman earlier said the negotiating teams were "continuing to work hard to resolve the differences that remain."

"Our focus remains, and will continue to be, on trying to secure a free trade agreement."

But Number 10 also confirmed that it would go ahead next week with a plan to push through the Internal Market Bill, a draft law to govern UK business after it leaves the EU single market.

Johnson admits that clauses in the bill would breach the withdrawal treaty he signed with Brussels, and EU officials have warned that it could be impossible to ratify a trade deal if he persists.

Greek Economy Swings Back to Growth in Q3

ATHENS (Reuters) - Greece emerged from its worst quarterly contraction on record to report 2.3% growth in output for the third quarter, aided by a tentative return to economic activity following the country's first coronavirus lockdown.

The Greek economy shrank 14.1% from April to June, covering most of the period it was in lockdown. It was the sharpest economic decline in at least 25 years, revised data showed.

On a yearly basis, output contracted 11.7% compared with the second quarter, confirming official expectations that for the year, gross domestic product would drop more than 10%.

"A decline in tourism by about 75 percent is reflected in the yearly data," said Nikos Magginas, chief economist at the National Bank of Greece.

Tourism is a key money maker, representing about 18% of output and employing one in five people.

Government support measures, along with spending deferred from the locked-down second quarter, supported the quarterly expansion, Magginas said.

The contraction is still bad news for Greece, which had, until the pandemic appeared, hoped to turn a page on years of economic hardship.

The country lost a quarter of its output during a decade-long financial crisis that required three international bailouts between 2010 and 2015.

A second nationwide lockdown, not as stringent as the first, is now in place following a surge in COVID-19 cases from October onwards. Greece has recorded fewer cases and deaths of COVID than most countries; by Thursday, it had 111,537 cases registered since February, and 2,706 deaths.



German Industrial Orders Rise More Than Expected in October

BERLIN (Reuters) - German industrial orders rose more than expected on the month in October, data showed on Friday, raising hopes the manufacturing sector in Europe's biggest economy started the fourth quarter on a solid footing during a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Industry is doing well again," said Jens-Oliver Niklasch, senior economist at Landesbank Baden-Wuerttemberg. "The economic weakness resulting from the pandemic is more or less the result of the services sector. And this will not change soon."

The Federal Statistics Offices said orders for industrial goods rose by 2.9% in seasonally adjusted terms, marking the sixth increase in a row and beating the Reuters consensus forecast for a 1.5% rise. September's figure was revised up to an increase of 1.1%.

"This is an early Christmas present," said Thomas Gitzel, chief economist at VP Bank. "As long as the services sector is suffering under restrictive measures, it is all the more important that industry provides a compensation effect." Germany imposed a lockdown early last month to reverse the tide of a second wave of the coronavirus that saw both infections and deaths rise sharply.

Restrictive measures that include keeping restaurants, hotels, fitness studios and other leisure venues shut as well as limiting private gatherings to five people from two households will be extended until Jan. 10.

Figures from the Economy Ministry showed domestic orders rose 2.4% on the month, while orders from abroad were 3.2% higher. Contracts from the euro zone increased by 0.5%.

Japan Machinery Orders to Rebound in October

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan's core machine orders likely rebounded in October along with demand for Japanese exports, a Reuters poll showed on Friday, but a resurgence in coronavirus cases at home and abroad could dampen the economic outlook.

Core machinery orders, widely considered an indicator of capital spending in the next six to nine months, likely rose 2.8% in October from the previous month, when orders fell 4.4%, according to the poll of 18 economists.

But the highly volatile data due on Wednesday is expected to show core orders, excluding those for ships and electrical utilities, likely dropped 11.3% in October from a year earlier after falling 11.5% year-on-year in September.

Japan's economy rebounded sharply in the third quarter from its biggest postwar slump but a resurgence in coronavirus cases has clouded the outlook of the world's third-largest economy.

"Machinery orders in the manufacturing sector likely grew led by a recovery in exports," said Yusuke Shimoda, senior economist at Japan Research Institute.

"But such gains will be limited because firms remained cautious about capital spending as the outlook uncertainty remains strong."

Revised data was expected to show gross domestic product expanded an annualised 21.5% in the July-September period, which would be a record growth, little changed from an initial reading of 21.4% growth, the poll showed.

The revised data would translate into 5.0% quarter-on-quarter growth, the same as the initial estimate.

Capital spending, a key component of GDP, likely eased 3.2% in the third quarter, little changed from a 3.4% fall in a preliminary reading, the poll showed.

Household spending likely rose 2.5% in October from a year earlier, the poll showed, rebounding from a 10.2% drop in September.

The government's domestic travel campaign aimed at reviving tourism likely helped consumer spending in the services sector, analysts said, but the coronavirus could hamper a recovery in spending going forward.

U.S. Adds China's SMIC and CNOOC to Defense Blacklist

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Trump administration on Thursday added China's top chipmaker, SMIC, and oil giant CNOOC to a blacklist of alleged Chinese military companies, drawing condemnation from Beijing as President-elect Joe Biden prepares to take office.

The Department of Defense designated a total of four additional companies as owned or controlled by the Chinese military, including China Construction Technology Co Ltd and China International Engineering Consulting Corp.

The move, first reported by Reuters on Sunday, takes to 35 the total number of blacklisted companies. While the list did not initially trigger any penalties, a recent executive order by Republican President Donald Trump will prevent U.S. investors from buying the firms' securities from late next year.

In Beijing, a foreign ministry spokeswoman said China opposed U.S. efforts to suppress its companies, adding that Washington's moves run counter to principles of market competition. "The U.S. should stop abusing national power and national security concepts to suppress foreign companies," Hua Chunying told a regular news briefing on Friday.

In a stock market statement, SMIC said it strongly opposed the decision, which reflected a fundamental misunderstanding by the U.S. administration of the end-uses of its business and technology.

The company also said there was no major impact from its addition to the list. Its Hong Kong shares closed Friday down 5.4% after having resumed trading in the afternoon following a suspension.

CNOOC, formally known as China National Offshore Oil Corp, said it was "shocked and regretful" at being added to the list. The move was based on "false and inaccurate information", it said in a statement on its website.

In an exchange filing, the state-owned company's listed arm, CNOOC Ltd, said it was assessing the impact of the situation on the group and would closely monitor developments.

Shares of CNOOC Ltd had fallen nearly 14% percent after Sunday's report, and tumbled 3.9% by Friday's market close.

SMIC, which relies heavily on equipment from U.S. suppliers, was already in Washington's crosshairs.

In September, the U.S. Commerce Department informed some firms they needed to obtain a license before supplying goods and services to SMIC after concluding there was an "unacceptable risk" that equipment supplied to it could be used for military purposes.

The expanded blacklist is seen as part of a bid to cement Trump's tough-on-China legacy and to box Biden, the Democratic president-elect who takes office on Jan. 20, into headline positions on Beijing amid bipartisan anti-China sentiment in Congress.

China's Exports, Imports Seen Expanding At Faster Pace in November



BEIJING (Reuters) - China's exports and imports are expected to rise at a faster pace in November, helped by strong demand and coronavirus-related disruptions at factories in other countries, a Reuters poll showed on Friday.

Exports are expected to have risen 12% from a year earlier, according to a median estimate of a Reuters poll of 24 economists, quickening from an 11.4% gain in October.

Booming sales of fridges, toasters and microwaves to households across the locked-down world have helped propel China's mammoth manufacturing engine back to life, super-charging demand for key metals like steel, copper and aluminium, after a sharp slump early in the year.

Imports likely rose 6.1% on-year, also accelerating from the previous month's 4.7% pace, buoyed by improving domestic demand and higher commodity prices.

China's trade surplus is expected to have narrowed a bit to \$53.5 billion in November from \$58.44 billion in October, according to the poll. The data will be released on Monday.

Improving external demand signalled by November U.S. and European factory surveys, and continued strong shipments of face masks and other medical supplies underpinned exports last month, analysts with China Minsheng Bank said in a note.

"The substitution effect of China's exports will continue to increase as supply capacity of emerging economies has not recovered yet."

China's official and private manufacturing surveys also showed new export orders expanded at a faster pace.

But some analysts cautioned that surging infections and fresh lockdowns in some of its key trading partners could dent demand for Chinese goods.

A sharp appreciation of the yuan currency in recent months could also cloud the outlook for exporters. Some firms reported that a strong yuan squeezed profits and reduced export orders in November, the statistics bureau said this week.

Iran, Russia Launch Container Shipping Line in Caspian Sea

MOSCOW (IP) - The unloading of the first test container cargo was carried out within the framework of the new services of Caspian container shipping line companies for transporting goods in Armada Port between Astrakhan of Russia and Iran.

The first special work vessel in the container shipping

line between Astrakhan and Iran in the Caspian Sea arrived in Astrakhan on Saturday from the International North-South Transport Corridor.

The ship's next voyage is scheduled for mid-December.

This is the first dedicated ship in the Iran-Astrakhan freight container shipping line.



Hungary Stands by EU Budget Veto as Poland Shifts

BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said Friday that he would continue to block the EU's budget and coronavirus recovery fund over rule-of-law criteria, although his veto ally Poland signalled a possible compromise.

Budapest and Warsaw last month vetoed the EU's 1.8-trillion-euro (\$2.1-trillion) budget and coronavirus rescue package over its tying of funds to respect for the rule of law.

Both governments are accused by Brussels of rolling back democratic freedoms, notably judicial independence in Poland and press freedom in Hungary.

Polish Deputy Prime Minister Jaroslaw Gowin said late Thursday that Warsaw could yield if a document is attached to the rule-of-law regulation to clarify how the criteria are applied.

Orban dismissed the idea and insisted Warsaw and Budapest have agreed to hold out on separating the funds from any rule-of-law conditionality.

"For us such a solution... that some kind of statement is attached to it, like some kind of reminder note pinned to a cardboard placard, will not work," Orban said during a public media radio interview.

He added that "the Poles cannot back out of the veto" after signing a deal with Hungary last week.

At their Budapest meeting, Orban and Polish counterpart Mateusz Morawiecki proposed decoupling EU payments from the row over the rule of law.

But Gowin said that Poland now wants certainty that the link between money and the rule of law only applies to issues related to transparent and fair use of EU funds.

A "binding interpretive declaration" from Brussels on the rule of law conditions could be enough to clinch a compromise, he told Polish media.

Orban has portrayed the rule of law criteria as "blackmail" against member states opposed to immigration, and insisted Friday that it was the planned mechanism, not Hungary, that was holding up the package's approval.

"We can agree on the financial package but not on the political questions arising from the rule of law decree criteria attached to it," said Orban.



"As we must not waste time...the two things should be separated," he said.

Pressure on Orban grew this week as a close ally and prominent MEP from his ruling Fidesz party was embroiled in a sex scandal in Brussels.

Belgian police said Tuesday that it caught Jozsef Szajer, 59, fleeing an illegal sex party last week while in possession of ecstasy.

Szajer, who was the main author of Hungary's new ultra-conservative constitution after Orban came to power in 2010, resigned two days before the scandal erupted citing only "personal reasons".

Critics at home and abroad say the affair shows the moral hypocrisy of Fidesz, which paints itself as a Christian conservative party based on traditional "family values".

Orban said Friday he could "imagine" that the affair is "part of the pressure" applied on Hungary by external forces, but said he does not see any proof to link the scandal to the budget row.

China Comfortable With Yuan Rises for Now



BEIJING (Reuters) - Chinese policymakers are comfortable with the yuan's rise to two-and-a-half-year highs as a rebound in the world's second-biggest economy accelerates and the central bank gives the market greater leeway in setting the currency's value, sources said.

But the central bank might take action if further rises in the closely managed currency, especially if they were rapid, were to hurt the country's exports, the sources involved in internal policy discussions told Reuters.

Amid broad expectations for further yuan gains and more prolonged weakness in the dollar, the PBOC's acceptance of the currency's rise runs counter to recent market speculation that the bank might take steps to stabilise the rising yuan.

"Yuan appreciation is supported by China's economic fundamentals," said Yu Yongding, an influential government economist who previously advised the People's Bank of China.

"We don't need to intervene as we haven't seen any shocks from big capital inflows or outflows," Yu told Reuters. "The exchange rate is mainly driven by the current account."

The yuan, which closed at 6.5302 to the dollar on Friday, has gained about 6.6% against the U.S. currency this year, although that is largely explained by a nearly 6% decline in the dollar's value against a basket of currencies.

The yuan is on course to post the biggest annual rise since its 6.8% appreciation in 2017.

Some policy advisers think the yuan may strengthen to 6.4 per dollar next year, a further 2% rise. The authorities could still take steps to brake a rapid rise if Chinese exporters were to feel the pinch or speculative "hot money" were to flood in, the sources said.

The PBOC has recently taken some technical steps that analysts read as a willingness to allow some weakness in the yuan but are not aimed at actively depressing the currency.

The relatively light approach to a stronger yuan may reflect the PBOC's efforts to give market forces a greater role, part of longer-term reforms to make the yuan a more international currency, insiders said.

The central bank did not respond to Reuters request for comment.

Policymakers believe this year's yuan climb is supported by the sharp recovery from the economic damage of COVID-19, which emerged in China a year ago.

Iraqi Minister Terms Iran, Iraq Academic Relations Fruitful

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Iraqi Minister of Higher Education described the bilateral cooperation between the two neighboring countries of Iran and Iraq as fruitful and positive.

Gholamreza Abazari, Cultural Attaché of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the Ministry of Science and Technology of Iraq in Baghdad met and held talks with the Iraqi Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research, Nabil Kazem Abdul Sahib.

The Iraqi Minister assessed the bilateral cooperation between the two countries of Iran and Iraq fruitful, stressing that the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education is keen on expanding scientific and academic cooperation at the international level.

The Iranian side, for his part, emphasized strengthening relations between universities of the two countries in various scientific and academic fields.

IAEA...

FROM PAGE 1

"Agency is not merely responsible to update the development, but shall ensure confidentiality of safeguards information," he added.

"If neither the Agency nor its Member States are to be blamed for this crack in confidentiality, @iaeaorg should revise its confidentiality mechanisms including regarding using GovAtom as the safe and confidential means for communications."

GovAtom is a service provided by the IAEA to its Member State representatives. It provides them with online documentation on the work of the Board of Governors and its Committees.

Additionally on Friday, Russia's Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov criticized the leaking of the confidential IAEA report on Iran.

"Yet another confidential #IAEA report on #Iran was leaked to mass media immediately upon its circulation in Board of Governors. The Ambassador of Iran in his Twitter account has already reacted by suggesting to strengthen mechanisms of confidentiality. Good idea but will it help?" he asked.

Iran showed to the world the peaceful nature of its nuclear program by signing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with six world states — namely the US, Germany, France, Britain, Russia and China — in 2015. The nuclear deal was also ratified in the form of a UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

However, Washington's exit in May 2018 and the subsequent reimposition of unilateral sanctions against Tehran left the future of the historic agreement in limbo. Tehran remained fully compliant with the JCPOA for an entire year, waiting for the co-signatories to fulfill their end of the bargain by offsetting the impacts of Washington's bans on the Iranian economy.

As the European parties failed to do so, Tehran moved in May 2019 to suspend its JCPOA commitments under Articles 26 and 36 of the agreement covering Tehran's legal rights.

Biggest Iranian Flotilla...

FROM PAGE 1

Several vessels that transported fuel to Venezuela earlier this year, including Forest, Fortune and Faxon, appear to be returning to the South American nation and turned off their satellite signal at least nine days ago, according to Bloomberg tanker-tracking data. The Zarif appeared to be transiting through the Strait of Hormuz, the data show.

Turning off transponders is a commonly used method by ships hoping to avoid detection. In other instances of Iranian aid to Venezuela, ship names were painted over and changed to obscure the vessel's registration.

The oil ministry in Tehran was not immediately available for comment during the Iranian weekend. Messages sent to several officials at PDVSA, as Venezuela's state oil company is known, also weren't immediately answered.

A line of cars waits to refuel outside a PDVSA gas station in Caracas.

In addition to importing fuel, Venezuela also needs to export enough crude oil to free up storage space and prevent field stoppages, a task made more difficult by the sanctions against Maduro's regime. Production at Venezuela's network of six refineries has gone into steady decline, with spills and accidents becoming routine. Maduro's government has increased pressure on the poorly-maintained infrastructure to ensure output for local consumption.

Sanctions have made it difficult to import parts or hire contractors, and the Maduro regime is running out of cash.

Consequently, the two nations are also discussing ways for Iran to help Venezuela overhaul its Cardon refinery, the last fuel plant there to operate more or less regularly, people with knowledge of the situation said. In 2018, Chinese oil companies also looked at helping Venezuela fix its refineries, but lost interest after a review of the installations, people familiar with those plans said.

It's unclear whether the Iranians would be able to achieve what the Chinese didn't. Venezuela's refineries were built and operated for decades by U.S. and European oil majors until nationalization in the 1970s. Even then, PDVSA relied on U.S. technology and parts for maintenance and expansions. This means the Iranians will need to make certain parts from scratch to carry out key repairs. Some fixes made in June and July haven't been successful yet and four local contractors are still conducting repairs, said one of the people.

Maduro is under renewed international pressure after the opposition decided to boycott Dec. 6 National Assembly elections that are widely considered to be overseen by Maduro loyalists. Maduro is hoping for a big turnout to claim he has public support.

COVID Death...

FROM PAGE 1

He stressed that "the result of restrictions shows that two weeks ago we had 160 red cities, but now 130 of cities have turned orange."

The minister concluded that these conditions are not normal and people should continue to help improve the country's situation. Meanwhile some 321 people in Iran have died from COVID-19 disease over the past 24 hours, Iranian Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said on Saturday.

Sadat Lari added that 50,016 citizens have passed away from coronavirus (COVID-19) in the country so far.

She pointed out that 719,708 people out of a total of 1,028,986 people infected with the deadly virus have recovered and been discharged from hospitals.

The official noted that 12,151 new infected cases have been detected in Iran, some 1,562 of whom have been hospitalized, over the past 24 hours. Some 5,817 other COVID-19 patients are in critical condition and being treated in intensive care units, the spokeswoman said. She added that 6,342,628 tests have so far been carried out in Iran.

The outbreak of dangerous coronavirus (COVID-19) has been affecting the world since December 2019 requiring a collective campaign of the international community to thwart the threat posed to humanity by the pandemic.

German FM...

FROM PAGE 1

"We need this accord because we distrust Iran," he added

In response, Zarif took to Twitter later in the day to remind the European signatories to the Iran deal — Germany, France and Britain — of their own "malign behavior" in the Middle East region and failure to live up to their obligations under the multilateral nuclear deal following the US's unilateral pullout in May 2018.

Before speaking about Iran, Zarif said, the European trio — also referred to as E3 — should stop violations of the Iran deal, named the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which has been ratified by UN Security Council 2231.

Under intense pressure from Washington, the Europeans failed to fulfill their side of the bargain by neutralizing the sanctions that the US re-imposed on Iran in the aftermath of its exit, which was meant to force Iran back to the negotiating table for expanding the deal to include the country's missile program and regional role.

A year into Washington's withdrawal and the ensuing European failure to protect its business ties with Iran, Tehran began suspending parts of its commitments under the JCPOA on a step by step basis in retaliation.

The Europeans, however, continued to fail to put their verbal support for the deal into action, ultimately prompting the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) to intervene in the case and vote for a law designed to protect Iran's interests against the Western sanctions.

The law — named the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions — will require the administration to suspend even more contractual obligations if the European trio does not provide Iran with the sanctions relief it has been promised under the JCPOA in two months.

Iran has repeatedly clarified to the Western parties to the deal that it will not renegotiate the deal, but it is ready to return to the original agreement if the other sides begin to live up to their commitments to Tehran.

Along with the tweet, Zarif posted a report about Germany's plan to include Israel, and not Palestine, in a European COVID-19 vaccine distribution program, calling on Berlin to stop the "despicable" coronavirus "apartheid."

The chief Iranian diplomat further urged an end to lucrative European arms sales to the repressive Persian Gulf regimes and offering "blind support" for Israel's terrorism.

He was apparently referring to the trio's refusal to condemn outright the suspected Tel Aviv-linked

SNSC Rejects...

FROM PAGE 1

The SNSC called on all parties to end the futile debates, warning that it will not allow anybody to play with national interests.

Iran's administration has opposed a parliamentary bill that requires the government to halt voluntary implementation of the NPT if the European signatories to the 2015 nuclear deal keep failing to honor their commitments.

The Iranian administration is now bound to withdraw from the Additional Protocol in case the remaining parties to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - France, the UK, Germany, Russia and China- fail to honor their commitments in full within two months, if Iran's banking relations are not normalized, if the obstacles to the Iranian oil export and sale are not removed, or if the revenues from the sale of crude are not repatriated fully and immediately.

Spokesman for the Iranian Administration Ali Rabiee says the new law would not provide any help in lifting the sanctions.

Sullivan Maintains Slender Lead

DUBAI (Reuters) - England's Andy Sullivan stayed ahead of the chasing pack at the Golf in Dubai Championship on Friday with a steady third round of 68 at the Jumeirah Golf Estates for a two-shot lead over compatriot Matt Wallace heading into the final day.

Sullivan began the round ahead by three strokes and landed three birdies on the front nine after the start of the day's play was delayed by 45 minutes due to fog.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

Switchboard:

(+98) (21) 44253448

Public Relations Tel:

(+98)(21) 44253450

Editorial Board: 44253449

Public Relations Fax:

(+98)(21) 44253395

Advertising Department:

Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234

Website:

http://www.irannewsdaily.com

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

West Indies Win MCC's Spirit of Cricket Award

LONDON (Reuters) - West Indies have won this year's Spirit of Cricket award after sending both their men's and women's teams to tour England during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) has announced.

The men's side arrived in England in June for a three-test series played in a biosecure environment, which saw international cricket resume for the first time since the novel coronavirus outbreak brought the global calendar to a halt.

Mourinho Says No Danger of Complacency Against Arsenal

LONDON (Dispatches) - Jose Mourinho says Premier League leaders Tottenham will not need to be warned about complacency ahead of Sunday's north London derby despite Arsenal's poor recent form.

The Portuguese manager criticised members of his squad following the 3-3 draw with LASK in the Europa League on Thursday.

He believes some players have lacked motivation during the group stages of the competition, but there will be no shortage of incentive this weekend when Mikel Arteta's team travel to face Spurs.

The Gunners are 14th in the Premier League, eight points behind Tottenham, but just four months ago they clinched the FA Cup at Wembley.

"I think everybody knows what Arsenal did recently, the way they beat Chelsea (in the final) and (Manchester) City to win the FA Cup," Mourinho said.

"The way they played in Liverpool in spite of defeat, the way they beat (Manchester) United at Old Trafford, the way they normally play against the top teams."

He added: "I don't think I need to (warn the players about complacency). But probably I will... we all know that a derby is nothing to do with form, momentum, injuries, suspensions. It's nothing to do with that. It's just Tottenham v Arsenal."

Spectators will be back at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium for the first time in nine months when Arsenal visit but just 2,000 will be allowed in due to coronavirus limits.

Asked if the backing of the sparse crowd could lift his players, Mourinho pointed out it would depend on which type of supporter was there. "If they want to enjoy the stadium and their passion for football, I don't think it makes a big difference," he said.

"If they want to go there and play, wear a Tottenham shirt and play the game, that can give a little more motivation and pleasure for us, yes."

Meanwhile Arsenal defender Hector Bellerin urged the club to use Sunday's derby against bitter north London rivals Tottenham Hotspur as a springboard to putting their recent struggles behind them and getting their Premier League season back on track.

Jeonbuk Salvage Pride With Consolation Shanghai SIPG Win

DOHA (Dispatches) - Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors outclassed Shanghai SIPG with a 2-0 victory in the Asian Champions League on Friday, a result that helped the two-time champions from South Korea bow out of the competition with some of their pride intact.

Sydney FC meanwhile claimed a 1-1 draw with Yokohama F. Marinos by holding the group toppers from Japan despite finishing bottom with five points from six matches, which included just one win.

With Shanghai SIPG and Yokohama F. Marinos already in the last 16, Friday's matches were only meant to complete the formalities.

At the Khalifa International Stadium, Jeonbuk were served well by Cho Gue-sung whose first-half double helped the South Koreans establish an early foothold on the match against the Chinese giants who fielded several untested players.

Cho put Jeonbuk ahead in the 16th minute with a header from the centre of the box from a measured cross from Lee Sung-hoon, catching the Shanghai SIPG defence with surprise.

As Shanghai SIPG struggled to gain control, Jeonbuk consolidated their advantage, scoring from a penalty in the 32nd after another Lee pass found Cho, but his shirt was pulled preventing him from taking a shot.

Cho fired home with a confident shot from the spot to give the Koreans a comfortable cushion, which they maintained until the end.

Jeonbuk's Portuguese coach Jose Morias was in a positive mood after the three points despite coming to the end of his contract with the side, having already announced his intention to move back to Europe after leading them to the K League title last month.

"Today I am smiling for the effort of the players and because it was our last game together. It's good to end things with a positive memory," said Morais who has worked as Jose Mourinho's assistant at Inter Milan, Real Madrid and Chelsea.



League leaders Spurs are on a nine-match unbeaten streak and have the best defensive record in the top flight this season while Arsenal have lost four of their last six in the league and languish in 14th place.

"It doesn't matter what stage of the season it is. It doesn't matter whether you're playing for something or not, it is always such a meaningful game," Bellerin told beIN Sports.

"I've always enjoyed the pressure and the aggressivity of those games... When you're in a negative spiral, having a game like that at the weekend is the best way to turn things around."

Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta has been under pressure following the club's slide down the standings. Bellerin said calls for him to be sacked were unfair as he needed time to implement his philosophy at the club.

"When you're planning on doing something big... changing the identity of the team, of the club, change the behaviours - he's not trying to make changes just on the pitch but outside of it, this isn't something you can do overnight," Bellerin said.

"We have to, as players, take responsibility... because I think we all know that Mikel and his coaching team give us all the tools that we need to win all the games."

Vieira Sacked as Nice Coach



PARIS (Dispatches) - Patrick Vieira has been sacked as coach of Nice and replaced by his assistant following a run of five consecutive defeats, the French Ligue 1 club announced on Friday.

The final straw for the former Arsenal player and France 1998 World Cup winner was Thursday's 3-2 defeat at home to Bayer Leverkusen, which confirmed Nice's elimination from the Europa League.

Adrian Ursea will take over from Vieira. The 53-year-old Romanian, who has spent much of his playing and coaching career in Switzerland, had been an assistant to previous Nice coach Lucien Favre and returned last year to work under Vieira.

"In a meeting after last night's match, the Nice board informed Patrick Vieira of its decision to put an end to their collaboration," the club said in a statement.

"Patrick Vieira put all his heart and professionalism into his service for OGC Nice over the last two and a half years."

Appointed in 2018, Vieira had been under growing pressure after last week's shock home defeat by struggling Dijon left the ambitious Cote d'Azur club in the bottom half of Ligue 1.

Ronaldo Wins "Golden Foot" Award



10 candidates selected this year," the organisation said.

At 35, the Juventus player succeeds Croatian midfielder Luka Modric, with whom he

LISBON (Dispatches) - Portuguese footballing star, Cristiano Ronaldo won on 1 December the 'Golden Foot' 2020 award, an accolade given to footballers over the age of 28.

Supporters from all over the world have chosen the best football player of 2020, giving the 18th 'Golden Foot' award to Cristiano Ronaldo. The star of Juventus and the Portuguese national team who obtained the highest number of votes among the

played with at Real Madrid. CR7' has outperformed other stars such as FC Barcelona's Argentinian Lionel Messi, Bayern Munich's Pole Robert Lewandowski, his Juventus Italian colleague Giorgio Chiellini, Manchester City's Argentinian Sergio Aguero, Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian Neymar, Real Madrid's Spaniard Sergio Ramos, Liverpool's Egyptian Mohamed Salah, Barcelona's Spanish Gerard Piqué and Inter's Chilean Arturo Vidal.

The 10 finalists who are chosen to go to the public vote have been appointed by a panel of international journalists.

For the first time, the 'Golden Foot Prestige' award was given in honour of the Italian Andrea Agnelli, President of Juventus, who won nine Italian championships in a row and won 17 trophies in 10 years.

The Golden Foot organisation recalls that it did not hold the usual gala in Monaco due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Koeman Frustrated At Barca President's Messi Comments

MADRID (Reuters) - Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman criticised on Friday comments from the club's interim president Carlos Tusquets, who said this week that it was in the Catalan side's economic interests to have cashed in on Lionel Messi.

Barca's all-time top scorer Messi attempted to leave the Camp Nou in the close season, and is expected to walk away on a free transfer when his current contract expires in June.

Tusquets, who also described the club's economic situation as worrying, said selling Messi would have been "desirable" in terms of lowering the club's wage bill and the money made from a transfer.

"We know what Leo's situation is," Koeman told a news conference.

"If there's anyone who needs to decide about his future, it's Leo himself. I don't care what's said outside the club, however comments from inside the club don't help us have the calmness we need to do our job."

"We can't control what's said outside, but from within it's a different story."

"It (selling Messi in the transfer window) might have been his (Tusquets') personal opinion and I respect that, but Leo's got a year left on his deal and he is the one who needs to decide."

Koeman was talking ahead of the visit to Cadiz. The promoted side have already beaten Real Madrid this season and with Barca lagging behind in the title race, Koeman admits they can ill-afford another slip-up.

"Right now I think Atletico Madrid are looking strong. They don't let many goals in and win games."

"It's a long season, lots can happen, but we cannot afford to drop any more points. We need to win every game we have left this year."

Barca, who sit seventh in the table, will be without the injured quartet of Gerard Pique, Samuel Umtiti, Sergi Roberto and Ansu Fati for the trip to Andalusia.



Nishikori Keen to Test Himself Against The Best Again

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan's Kei Nishikori hopes to be back on court playing against the best in the world next year after his 2020 season was wrecked by COVID-19 and injury.

Nishikori spent 10 months on the sidelines after undergoing elbow surgery and was slated to return at this year's U.S. Open but pulled out after testing positive for the novel coronavirus.

He played six tour-level matches before his season was cut short by another injury, this time to his shoulder, in a five-set loss to Italian Stefano Travaglia at the French Open in September.

"We had few tournaments (due to the pandemic) and my season came to an end when I was beginning to get my feel back," Kyodo news quoted the former world number four as saying on Friday.

"I really can't wait for next year."

"I couldn't face top-10 ranked players this season. I want to compete at that level again as soon as I can."

Nishikori was the first man from Asia to reach a Grand Slam final when he finished runner-up at the 2014 U.S. Open but has struggled for consistency at the highest level, lifting just one ATP Tour title in the past four seasons.

The 30-year-old is also keen to compete at the Tokyo Olympics, which were pushed back by a year due to the pandemic.

"(My shoulder) has recovered to a decent level. It'll be definitely okay for next year," Nishikori said. "I'll prepare (for the Olympics) assuming that they will take place."

