

Health Ministry Spokeswoman  
Sima Sadat Lari Said Some 323 People  
In Iran Have Died From COVID-19  
Disease over the Past 24 Hours as The  
Death Toll Mounted to 50,917

# IRAN NEWS

The EU Foreign Policy Chief, Josep  
Borrell, Stressed on Tuesday the Need  
For the U.S. to Rejoin the JCPOA,  
Naming the Deal as the Biggest  
Success of Diplomatic Capacity

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## Iran Economy on Way To Stability, Growth

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday that his administration's wise investment in infrastructure projects has directed the country's economy towards stability and progress.

In a meeting of the Economic Coordination Headquarters on Tuesday, President Rouhani said the investment made in the development of Iran's infrastructures has enabled the economy to endure severe shocks of the sanctions.

Notwithstanding the unprecedented pressure of the sanctions and the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, the economic signs in summer have indicated promising signals in Iran, he added.

He noted that Iran's economy is on the verge of a return to stability and growth after two difficult years.

President Rouhani said that unfortunately, the coronavirus outbreak has caused the country's economic success to become conspicuous, noting that the country needs unity and integration in the current sensitive circumstances.

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## IAEA Informed of Iran's New Centrifuge Installations

TEHRAN (IFP) - Spokesman for the Iranian Administration Ali Rabiei says the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been informed about Iran's decision to install new centrifuge machines in the Natanz nuclear site.

Speaking in a weekly press conference, Rabiei said Tehran's decision to install 500 new centrifuges for uranium enrichment in Natanz has not been made recently.

"This has been anticipated long ago and in line with the balanced reduction of commitments because of the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA. We have not made a new decision about the issue," he added.

The new centrifuges installed in Natanz site are IR-2M machines, each with an enrichment capacity of five to six Separative Work Units (SWUs), the spokesman explained.

The enrichment capacity of the newly-installed centrifuges is around six times higher than the previous generation, namely the IR-1 machines, he added.

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## Decisive Response Awaits Scientist Assassination



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) said that Iran will respond decisively to the assassination of the country's prominent nuclear scientist, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

"The sworn enemies of Islamic Iran must know that we will continue the path of this martyr and the path of martyrs will never stop," said Major General Hossein Salami on Tuesday on the sidelines of the commemoration ceremony of Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

Stating that the enemy is focused on the strengths of the Iranians out of fear, he added, "To resort to criminal acts such as assassination means that we must train the likes of Martyr Fakhrizadeh."

He emphasized that the path of this martyr will continue with more determination by his students, saying, "The enemies must await our reactions; we determine the time, place and quality of the response."

Previously, IRGC Chief Commander in a message had highlighted, "The enemies of the Iranian nation, especially the commanders, perpetrators and supporters of this crime, should know that such crimes will not undermine the determination of the Iranians to continue this glorious and authoritarian path, and severe revenge and punishment of the perpetrators are on the agenda."

Meanwhile yesterday, Deputy Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps stressed the revenge on perpetrators of the Iranian scientist assassination is definite.

Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi announced the progress of the investigation on the case of the assassination of Martyr Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, saying that the final results will be declared as soon as possible.

"We will definitely move forward in this case, and various relevant institutions from the IRGC and the Ministry of Intelligence are investigating this case around the clock," he said.

Emphasizing on taking revenge on the perpetrators and commanders of the assassination of Martyr Fakhrizadeh, Fadavi said, "We will definitely act as soon as our response is sufficient and appropriate."

Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, head of the Research and Innovation Organization of the Ministry of Defense and a scientist in the country's nuclear industry, was martyred on Friday (November 27th) in a terrorist attack around Tehran.

The assassination of the Iranian prominent nuclear and defense scientist followed many international reactions and many countries including Syria, Russia, Swiss, Venezuela, South Africa, Turkey, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Jordan, and Afghanistan condemned it.

## World Will Be Safer Without Israeli Regime

TEHRAN (PressTV) - High-ranking Iranian officials have in separate meetings with visiting Syrian foreign minister highlighted the destabilizing role of Israel in the region and insisted that without the Zionist regime, the world will be a safer place.

As part of a chain of meetings with top Iranians officials on his first foreign visit since being appointed to the post last month, Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad held talks with Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani in Tehran on Tuesday.

During the meeting, Shamkhani said the US presence in Syria is meant to plunder the Arab country's oil, protect Israel and strengthen Daesh terrorists, adding, "America's evil presence in the region must end."

Israel relies on human rights violations and terror for its existence, thus the international community must stand firm against the actions of "this bloodthirsty regime," he said.

"Undoubtedly, the world will be safer without the Zionist regime," he said. "Those government officials that are seeking, with humiliation, to normalize relations with the fake Zionist regime and are helping to implement the US schemes in the region will not have a better fate than those of [ousted Libyan and Sudanese leaders Muammar] Gaddafi and Omar al-Bashir," Shamkhani said. He was referring to the Washington-mediated deals Israel reached with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in September.

The following month, U.S. President Donald Trump said Israel and Sudan had also established economic ties as a pathway toward normalized ties.

Shamkhani gave assurances that the Islamic Republic will never leave the Syrian government and nation alone in their fight against aggression and terrorism.

Also late Monday, Mikdad held talks with Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf.

During the meeting, Qalibaf described Israel as an obstacle to achieving sustainable security in the region, urging Muslim governments to stand against the US-brokered normalization deals between the occupying regime and Arab states.

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## ViewPoint By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

### Europe's Delay in Autonomy Affected by Biden Election

Donald Trump's election as the U.S. President in 2016 was a turning point for many countries in the world to experience a new strategy with the U.S. introversion in strategy of recouping their lag from China. Both Russia benefitted from Trump's performance to earn more authority, and Europe began to ponder establishing an independent army because of its weak military structure and lacking independence and mandatory subordination of the NATO.

Recently and in this regard, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell in an article has tried to explain the reason for "European Strategic Autonomy" and expressed his concerns in this regard. Although the former Spain Foreign Minister agrees with the appropriate opportunity for mending relations of the EU with the transatlantic following the election of Joe Biden as the U.S. president and believes that Biden's election will be a ground for a wiser economy for Europe and will provide the ground for expansion of peaceful relations in the world, and he, at the same, time believes irrespective of changes in the network of arrangement and new approach of the White House, EU should try to expand its thoughts and values through interactions with other countries.

In his article by referring to some part of work of 18th Century famous French writer and philosopher Montesquieu with the title of "How Can Anybody Be Persian (Iranian)," he writes, "We Europeans should also raise this question how Europe can be a Europe and, in other words, how it can have a strategic autonomy."

By writing this, he means an awareness to European countries how much they have been forced to resort to pragmatism regarding protecting the value of national currency under influence of Trump's serious challenge with Europe in damaging Euro against dollar, and this may ebb by Biden's election but there is always potential for another election en route to make fragile the Western unity. In the article of this Spanish veteran politician, we realize that the issue of strategic autonomy has been delayed by the European leaders and politicians due to the U.S. passivity. He writes, "The outbreak of coronavirus showed us that Europe needs to have strategic independence in economic and technology grounds."

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## Court Upholds Zam's Death Sentence

TEHRAN (MNA) - Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili announced on Tuesday the confirmation of Ruhollah Zam's death sentence in the Supreme Court.

"The Supreme Court has considered this case and the ruling issued by the Islamic Revolutionary Court has been approved by the Supreme Court," said Gholamhossein Esmaili in his press conference on Tuesday.

In June, Judiciary spokesman announced that the death sentence for Ruhollah Zam has been initially upheld, explaining that 13 of his accusations have been identified as 'Corrupt on Earth', which is a title of capital crimes in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Ruhollah Zam, the administrator of the Amad News counterrevolutionary website and Telegram channel, was arrested after a complex intelligence operation and through cooperation with other intelligence services in mid-October, 2019.

Amad News was known for disseminating incriminating content against the Islamic Establishment, insulting the sanctities of Iranian Muslims, and publishing fake news in order to drive a wedge between the Iranian people and government.

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# Sri Lanka Condemns Assassination of Iranian Scientist

TEHRAN (IFP) - Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka Dinesh Gunawardena has condemned the recent assassination of prominent Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh. In a telephone conversation with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Tuesday, Gunawardena offered the Sri Lankan government's condolences to the Iranian government and people for the loss of Fakhrizadeh. The top Sri Lankan diplomat also condemned the terrorist assassination that led to the martyrdom of the Iranian scientist.

## Tehran to Stand By Damascus Until Achieving Victory

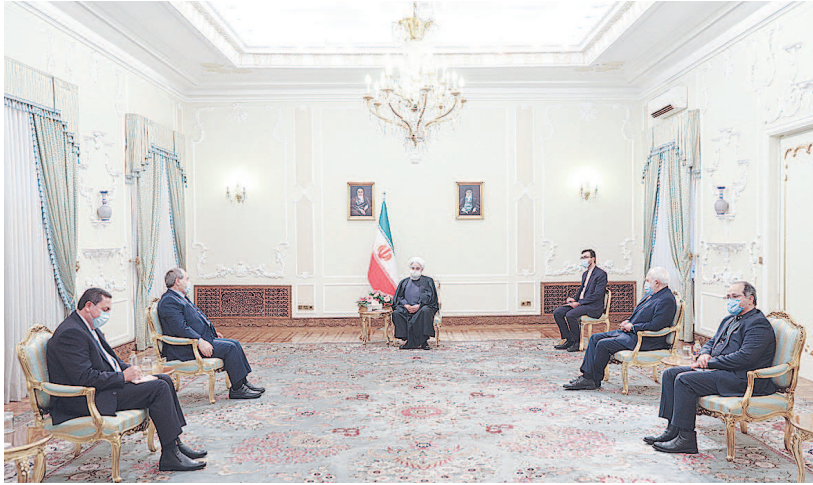
TEHRAN (MNA) – President Hassan Rouhani said that Islamic Republic of Iran will stand by Syria until achieving the final victory, stating that Iran considers Astana Peace Process ‘useful’ in maintaining interests and territorial integrity.

Speaking in his meeting with visiting Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mikdad, Rouhani expressed his condolences on the passing of former Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Moallem and added, “Amicable and friendly ties between Tehran and Damascus founded after the victory of Islamic Revolution in 1979 during the late founder of the Islamic Revolution Imam Khomeini (RA) and the late Hafez Assad.”

Today, the amicable ties between Iran and Syria continue to be strengthened by the officials of the two states, Rouhani added.

Islamic Republic of Iran will stand by the Syrian people and government wholeheartedly, he said, reiterating, “Islamic Republic of Iran will continue its determination and will to support Syrian government and people as a strategic ally and we will always stand by Syria until its final victory.”

President Rouhani termed confrontation with the Zionist occupiers and terrorism ‘a common goal of the two nations of Iran and Syria’ and said, “There is no doubt that we must continue our resistance and perseverance until complete annihilation of



terrorists from the region.”

The main purpose of terrorism and sanctions is to put pressure on the legitimate and independent nations and governments of the region, so “We fully understand situation of Syrian people in the face of sanctions, because, we have experienced the worst sanctions in the last three years.”

Syrian foreign minister, for his part, called Tehran-Damascus relations one of the most valuable and honorable political relations in the world and said, “We believe that other countries should learn how to build a real relationship and friendship and how this amicable ties can be continued strongly.”

He expressed his condolences on the martyrdom of Iranian prominent nuclear and defense scientist ‘Dr. Mohsen Fakhrizadeh’ and added, “Those who commit such heinous crime do not know that such terrorist act will make us more determined in achieving victory and Syrian people will never forget the sacrifices of martyr Lt. Gen. Soleimani in the fight against ISIL in Syria.”

## Tehran, Rome Hold Fresh Round of Political Consultations



TEHRAN (IFP) - The deputy foreign ministers of Iran and Italy have held a new round of political talks via videoconference. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Seyyed Abbas Araqchi and Secretary General of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Elisabetta Belloni held a second meeting of their political consultations via videoconference on Monday, December 7, 2020.

The two ranking diplomats discussed various topics in the online meeting, including the bilateral issues between Tehran and Rome, the latest developments surrounding the JCPOA, and the regional and international developments.

Pointing to the close political, economic, and cultural relations between the two countries, the Iranian deputy foreign minister highlighted the abundant capacities for the promotion of trade cooperation between Iran and Italy.

For her part, Belloni hailed the age-old relations between Italy and Iran, and expressed her country's willingness to continue bilateral ties and regional dialogue with Tehran.

## Iran Not to Negotiate With West Over Region

TEHRAN (MNA) – Addressing some neighboring countries in the Persian Gulf region, Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif said that Iran won't negotiate with the West over the region.

In a Tuesday tweet in Arabic, Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote, “Some neighboring countries appear to have asked the West to be part of the negotiation process with Iran.”

“We will not negotiate with the West over the region. The main problem is their interventions,” he added.

“Meanwhile, we are always ready to negotiate with

our neighbours, and projects such as the 1986 Regional Security, the 2016 Regional Dialogue Forum, and the 2019 Hormuz Peace Initiative illustrate this point,” Zarif noted.

On Monday, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh pointed to Riyadh and Manama rulers' wish to be partners to “future talks on Iran's nuclear program” and said some regional countries have made every effort, in the cost of their people's livelihood, to ensure their own security with the help of the U.S.' outgoing president.

## Zarif Appoints Sajjadi as New Deputy FM

TEHRAN (IP) - Kazem Sajjadi was appointed as the deputy foreign minister for Expatriates and Parliamentary affairs.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif accepted the resignation of Hossein Jaber Ansari and appointed Kazem Sajjadi as deputy foreign minister for Expatriates and Parliamentary affairs.

Kazem Sajjadi has the responsibilities of the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Republic of Armenia, the Director-General of Iranian Affairs, the Director-General of the Resistive Economy, and the Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran in his job profile.



## Afghanistan Promises to Secure Khaf-Herat Railway

TEHRAN (MNA) – Stating that Khaf-Herat railway will be a viable route for economic ties between the two countries, Head of Iran-Afghanistan Parliamentary Friendship Group said that Afghan officials have promised to secure the railway.

Referring to the completion of the Khaf-Herat railway and also the operation of the Chabahar-Zahedan railway in the coming months, which is in line with increasing transportation links between Iran and Afghanistan, Ali Jeddi said, “We have had a good volume of exports to Afghanistan in recent years and we can strengthen it by using recent capacities, especially through Khaf-Herat railway.”

“In the framework of this parliamentary friendship group, we seek to expand the export of goods from our country to Afghanistan and also the transit of goods from Iran to Afghanistan and other countries,” he added.

“On the outskirts of Khaf-Herat railway station and other border terminals of Iran and Afghanistan, we are looking to develop border markets and export terminals between the two countries,” Jeddi said.

He highlighted, “Afghan officials have promised to secure the Khaf-Herat railway and it should become a viable route for economic ties between Iran and Afghanistan.”

The Khaf-Herat railway is scheduled to be put into operation on Thursday in the presence of the presidents of Iran and Afghanistan through videoconference.

The 220-km Khaf-Herat railroad project includes four phases that are under construction. About 77 km of the project, which includes two phases, is on Iran's soil and the rest in Afghanistan. One of the phases that is in Afghanistan is to be inaugurated in the next few days.

The railroad project ensures Afghanistan's access to free waters and European markets.

## Iran 100% Self-Sufficient in Production of Freight Wagons

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) announced Iran has been able to achieve 100% self-sufficiency in the production of freight wagons.

Saeed Rasouli, who is also the deputy road minister, made the announcement on Tuesday at the unveiling ceremony of domestically produced train wheels and braking system.

He expressed content that Iran is now capable of manufacturing parts that were imported previously and the job has been done under the tough and cruel US sanctions.

Rasouli added that in some cases, domestic production is not economical in some cases but the problem will be solved by mass production and exporting the products as well as creating a market in the region.

On November 24, the Iranian railway fleet received 70 domestically-made wagons and a rebuilt locomotive in a ceremony.

As the eighth stage of a program for renovation of the country's railway fleet in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20), 57 four-axle wagons, 10 two-axle container wagons, and a renovated self-propelled locomotive joined the railway fleet on the mentioned day.

## Hormuz Peace Endeavor Is Still on the Table

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a message stressed that Hormuz Peace Endeavor is still on the table, saying we can ask directly about our region without foreigners' meddling.

“Why ask US/E3 for inclusion in talks with Iran when:

a) There won't be ANY talks about OUR region with them as they're the problem themselves

b) We can speak directly about our region without outside meddling. Hormuz Peace Endeavor (#HOPE) is still on the table,” Zarif wrote in his Twitter account on Tuesday.

President Hassan Rouhani announced Hormuz Peace Endeavor at the 74th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September in a bid to bring back peace and security to the strategic region.

After that, the Iranian government has sent letters to the southern Arab states in the Persian Gulf to seize the opportunity to reduce tensions with Iran and provide free maritime navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

The move shows how serious Iran is in ending differences with its neighbors.

# Iran, Venezuela Stress Expansion of Cooperation

TEHRAN (IP) - The spokesman of the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of Iran's Parliament announced the expansion of Tehran-Caracas cooperation.

“Iran and Venezuela will strengthen friendships,” Abolfazl Amoui, who traveled to Venezuela as part of an Iranian parliamentary delegation to monitor the parliamentary elections in Venezuela, wrote on Twitter.

Venezuela's parliamentary elections were held on December 06, 2020.

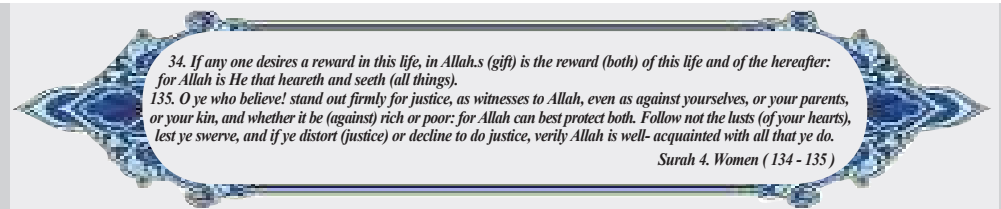
After the Islamic Republic of Iran, at the request of Caracas, sent a delegation to Venezuela to monitor the country's parliamentary elections, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro wrote on twitter: “The Venezuelan government has welcomed delegations from the United States, Russia, Iran, Turkey, members of the European Parliament and members of the Global Monitoring Bureau to monitor Venezuela elections.”





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:56
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:11
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:33
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:03



## COVID-19 Vaccine Can Be Biden's Green Light for Talks

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

**TEHRAN - Chairman of Iran-Switzerland Joint Chamber of Commerce Sharif Nezam-Mafi says the major problem hindering Iran for buying COVID-19 vaccine is the transfer of money which should be solved, adding that God willing it will happen in the next 45 days.**

Speaking to ILNA, Nezam-Mafi said that transfer of money is the major problem for the country for buying the vaccine which should be resolved soon and he hopes it would happen in the next 45 days, noting that until the time COVID-vaccine becomes accessible for the countries, Iran's financial mechanism will open regarding this issue.

On the effects of sanctions and FATF on blocking Iran's assets, he said the effects of sanctions are more than FATF on blocking Iran assets, adding that of course even all sanctions are lifted, the problem of being on the blacklist of the FATF will still remain but the FATF has always been an economic solution. He added that we can whether accept or reject the FATF but sanctions are one-sided, so the FATF is complementary to the sanctions and since it is a technical and economic issue, it can be resolved.

Nezam-Mafi further said that the goal behind sanctions is to frighten banks and companies not to work with Iran but the FATF has nothing to do with companies and it is only for foreign banks in order not to cooperate with Iran and it always gives time in order that the country can join its laws and regulations but sanctions have no laws and it actually shows some kind of lawlessness in the international community.

On the role of Switzerland financial mechanism (SHTA) on transfer of Iran's frozen assets, he said with election of Joe Biden as the U.S. President, Iran's frozen assets likely will be unfrozen little by little and will be handed over to Iran Central Bank in the SHTA in order that Iran can buy grains and necessary medicines especially COVID-19 vaccine through this channel.



He reiterated that FATF has nothing to do with release of Iran assets but since Iran is on its black list, foreign banks refrain from cooperating with Iran.

Nezam-Mafi noted that Biden Administration can unblock Iran assets in one day by an executive order, adding but it seems unlikely it happens and it will need talks. He admitted the third party countries have misused this condition by blocking Iran money and take advantage of it on the pretext of sanctions.

He said therefore Iran's frozen money in countries like Iraq, South Korea, China or other countries is because of their fear of punishment or pretext but they should be committed to unblock Iran assets.

Nezam-Mafi went on to say that with the current condition that Trump Administration has created, Iran probably will face problem in importing COVID-19 vaccine but it seems it will not last too long.

He further said that one of the humanitarian gesture that Mr. Biden should signal as green light for talks is to resolve problem for imports of vaccine and it seems in will be resolved in 45 days.

He reiterated that food and medicines are not under sanctions but since all channels for foreign trade are closed, the trade of medicine and food actually faces sanctions.

## 8-Month Exports To Arab Partners Exceed \$8.5b



TEHRAN (MNA) - The value of Iran's exports to its Arab trade partners in the region reached \$8.565 billion in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20), Farzad Piltan, the director-general of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO)'s Office of Arabian and African Countries, said.

According to Piltan, the value of Iran's total non-oil trade during the first five months of the current stood at \$21.5 billion.

The mentioned trade partners include Iraq, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Syria, and Bahrain.

Among Iran's top trade partners, Iraq was ranked the second export destination with about \$5.3 billion worth of goods exported to the country, followed by UAE, Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar.

Other Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Yemen (from the Persian Gulf region) and Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon (from West Asia) were not included in the list of the top 20 Iranian export destinations during the period under review, the official said.

Iran's trade data also show that during the first eight months of the current year, about \$13.377 billion worth of commodities were exported to 15 neighboring countries, of which about \$8.57 billion were exported to the Arab neighbors.

Among the country's neighbors, Iraq and the UAE were ranked first and second, followed by Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar which were ranked 9th, 10th, and 11th (after Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, and Russia), and Bahrain which was ranked 14th (after Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan).

Iran's top three non-oil export destinations during this period were China, Iraq, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Saudi Arabia was still the last in the list of the neighboring trade partners with zero any trade exchange.

The total value of Iran's non-oil trade during the first eight months of the current year reached \$44.6 billion, according to Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Mehdi Mirashrafi.

In the mentioned eight months, Iran imported \$23.1 billion worth of goods, while the exports stood at \$21.5 billion.

## Gas Production From SPGF Hits 139% Growth Annually

TEHRAN (MNA) - Statistics have shown that gas production from South Pars Gas Field has registered a 139 percent growth annually from 2013 to 2019.

Extraction of gas from South Pars joint field has increased 2.5 times in the last seven years, and this has caused total annual gas production volume from this field to increase by 139% in 2019 as compared to 2013.

The development of South Pars joint gas field started in early 2000s. Iran's gas production volume from this field was 56 million cubic meters, the rate of which gradually increased with the operation of different fields.



Some \$80 billion worth of capital has been invested over the past 20 years in order to reach the capacity of 700 million cubic meters of gas production from South Pars.

These measures caused Iran's rich gas production from South Pars joint field, which was 96 billion cubic meters per year in 2013, to hit 230 billion cubic meters in 2019. In 2013-2019, a total of about 1.1 trillion cubic meters of gas was extracted from this field by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

These figures show that an average of 17% has been added to Iran's production from the South Pars joint field annually and in total, Iran's production from this field has recorded a growth of 150%.

## Budget Bill Drafted Based on Facts, Look to Future

TEHRAN (IP) - The government spokesman said that the budget bill of 2021 is based on today's realities and with a view to the near future, noting that not staying in the realities that arose as a result of sanctions, shaping the atmosphere to push back sanctions and improving the situation in the future is considered in drafting the budget.

Ali Rabiei said in a press conference held on Tuesday: "The 2021 budget bill is based on today's realities and with a view to the near future and in an effort to improve the better future."

He noted that the first principle envisaged in the budget is the realities of the country today, but not staying in the realities that were created as a result of the sanctions, shaping the atmosphere of pushing back the sanctions and improving the situation in the future is considered in the budget.

The government spokesman said that actualizing revenues and covering unavoidable expenditures or eliminating unnecessary expenses was considered in the budget bill and stated that one of the efforts of the government in the past years has been to get the budget bill out of closed chambers and commissions and put it in the public eye and under the supervision of everyone, and today the budget is more available to the society than ever before.

The official went on to say that the budget always went to the parliament as a vague document by the government and was reviewed in the commissions and the parliament and there was no room for criticism and transparency, but in recent years the government tried to present the budget to the public so that let everyone see and criticize it clearly.

Rabiei highlighted that "The budget bill has been formulated in terms of fiscal policies with the aim of empowering the exit from the recession and production, industrial growth and economic prosperity and maintaining the purchasing power of the people and supporting wage earners." 207

## Energy Projects Worth Over \$135m Inaugurated in 3 Provinces

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN - Numerous energy projects worth over 5.69 trillion rials (about \$135.4 million) were inaugurated in three provinces in the 31st week of the Energy Ministry's A-B-Iran program, IRNA reported.

In a ceremony attended by the Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, projects including the establishment of some electricity transmission lines, some substations, water supply to rural areas, and a small-scale power plant were inaugurated through video conferences in Tehran, Ilam, and Golestan provinces.

Of the mentioned projects, eight were put into

operation in Ilam province, eight were in Golestan and the other one was inaugurated in Tehran.

Water supply to 43 villages was the only project inaugurated in Tehran province, which provided a population of more than 14,000 households with sustainable drinking water.

The inaugurated projects of Golestan include a 25-megawatt (MW) small scale generator, modification, and optimization of 28 electricity distribution lines, increasing Gorgan transmission substation capacity, as well as improvement and optimization of stations, transmission lines, and water supply projects to 39 cities and villages.

## Iran-Austria Energy Working Group to Meet Today

TEHRAN (Shana) -- The sixth meeting of the Iran-Austria Energy Working Group under the responsibility of the Iranian Ministry of Petroleum will be held today, December 9, via video conference.

The meeting of the Iran-Austria Energy Working Group with emphasis on renewable energies will be held in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Energy, Presidential Development Cooperation Center, Fuel Consumption Optimization Company, Renewable Energies Organization and the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization, Renewable Energies Association, the Electricity Syndicate and the MAGFA company and the representatives of the relevant Austrian organizations and companies.

The meeting will be attended by ambassadors of the two countries and special guests from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

The 5th meeting of the Iran-Austria Energy Working Group was held in Vienna from 14 to 17 January, 2019.

## Gov't Allocates \$40m for Purchase of COVID-19 Vaccines

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The government has allocated \$40 million for purchase of vaccines needed to tackle the coronavirus pandemic amid efforts to secure the supply of the jabs both from abroad and through domestic companies.

A spokeswoman of Iran's Plan and Budget Organization (PBO) said that a draft budget bill presented to the Iranian parliament for the next calendar year beginning March 21 earmarks 10 trillion rials for the purchase of vaccines to immunize people against COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus.

Mojgan Khanlu said the fund would account for more than a fourth of government's budget for supply of vaccines and medication in the next calendar year.

Iranian authorities had indicated last month that the country would rely on the supply of COVID-19 vaccines from abroad while efforts would continue to support domestic initiatives to develop a safe and effective jab.

However, government authorities said earlier on Monday that U.S. sanctions had made it almost impossible for Iran to secure abundant doses of the vaccines.

Central Bank of Iran governor Abdolnasser Hemmati said in a post on his Instagram page that United States Office of Foreign Assets Control had refused to grant waivers from sanctions to banks seeking to process Iranian funds for purchase of COVID-19 vaccines.

Iran has relied on home-grown efforts to tackle one of the hardest outbreaks of the virus in the Middle East region.

## Implementation of Managing Productivity Cycle in All Levels of ESCO



**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN - The project of implementing the productivity cycle management in all levels of Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) following the order of the CEO of the company with goal for boosting the value added and reduction of production costs has been defined and it is underway in four stages based on the conducted studies by the planning and industries engineering department of the company by consultation with advisor to the Industrial Management Institute Dr. Jafar Askari.

Director of planning and industries engineering department of the company Mr. Morteza Rabani announced the news, adding that the project is carried out in four stages: defining and measuring key indicators, analysis of productivity factors, identifying programs for improvement and implementing those programs.

He further added that for implementation of the productivity cycle management project, besides forming the main productivity committee of the company chaired by the CEO of ESCO, some specialized committees have also been set up.

Rabani noted that according to the third meeting of productivity committee of the company which was held on November 16 and presided by the CEO of the company, it was decided that the specialized productivity committees in collaboration with the related bodies and support of planning and industries engineering department of the company draws up and present the action plan of programs for improving productivity.



## Pope Francis to Make Risky Trip to Iraq in Early March

VATICAN CITY (Reuters) - Pope Francis will make the first visit by a pope to Iraq next March, the Vatican said on Monday, a risky four-day trip that has eluded his predecessors.

Spokesman Matteo Bruni said Francis, who turns 84 next week, will visit the capital Baghdad, as well as Ur, a city linked to the Old Testament figure of Abraham, and Erbil, Mosul and Qaraqosh in the plain of Nineveh.

The trip, at the invitation of the Iraqi government and the local Catholic Church, is planned for March 5-8, Bruni said.

"The programme of the journey will be made known in due course, and will take into consideration the evolution of the worldwide health emergency," Bruni said in statement.



## Protester Killed in Iraq's Kurdistan Region

BAGHDAD (Reuters) - A protester was shot dead during demonstrations against Kurdish political parties in the northern, Kurdish-run region of Iraq on Monday after several days of unrest, local medical officials and a lawmaker said.

It was a rare deadly incident involving protests against the political parties that run the autonomous Kurdistan region of Iraq, over delayed payment of public sector salaries.

The officials, including medics at a local hospital, said the protester had been shot by armed men guarding the headquarters of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in the town of Chamchamal, west of the city of Sulaimaniya.



## France to Sell Arms to Egypt Irrespective of Rights



PARIS (Reuters) - French President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday he would not condition the sale of weapons to Egypt on human rights because he did not want to weaken Cairo's ability to counter terrorism in the region, a comment likely to draw the ire of critics.

Both states - which share concerns about instability across the Sahel, threats from jihadist groups in Egypt and the political vacuum in Libya - have cultivated closer economic and military ties during President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's rise to power.

But 17 French and international human rights groups issued a statement ahead of a visit by Sisi to France, accusing Macron of turning a blind eye to what they say are increasing violations of freedoms by Sisi's government.

"I will not condition matters of defence and economic cooperation on these disagreements (over human rights)," Macron said during a joint press conference with Sisi after the two leaders held talks in the Elysee Palace.

"It is more effective to have a policy of demanding dialogue than a boycott which would only reduce the effectiveness of one our partners in the fight against terrorism," he added.

French officials have dismissed criticism, saying the government had a policy of avoiding public declarations about other countries' rights records and instead raises concerns in private.

Drums rolled and trumpets blared as the French Republican Guard cavalry earlier escorted Sisi through the centre of the capital and across the Seine over the Pont des Invalides. A masked Macron welcomed him at the Elysee Palace.

Nevertheless, even within French officialdom there are doubts about the close embrace of Sisi, who has presided while thousands of opponents have been jailed.

"I don't know what we gain from this visit. It's business as usual," said one French diplomat, deploring Macron's position.

Between 2013-2017, France was the main weapons supplier to Egypt. Those contracts have dried up, including deals for more Rafale fighter jets and warships that had been at an advanced stage. Diplomats say that is as much to do with financing issues as with France's response to human rights concerns.

Sisi dismissed the accusations of human rights abuses.

"It is not appropriate for you to present the Egyptian state and everything it does for its people and for the stability of the region, as an oppressive regime," Sisi said.

"We do not have anything to be afraid of or embarrassed about it, we are a nation that is striving to build a future for its people in extremely harsh conditions in a region of great turmoil."

Macron said the release of members of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) was an opening and that he gave Sisi a list of individuals who should be released.

## Trump to Order That Americans Get U.S. Covid-19 Vaccines First

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Donald Trump will sign an executive order today to ensure that priority access for Covid-19 vaccines procured by the U.S. government is given to the American people before assisting other nations, senior administration officials said on Monday.

The Trump administration is confident it will have enough vaccine to inoculate everyone who wants a vaccine by the end of the second quarter of 2021, one official said, disputing a New York Times story that the government declined when Pfizer Inc offered in late summer to sell more vaccine doses to the United States.

Trump, who has faced sharp criticism for his handling of the coronavirus pandemic, is eager to take credit for the speedy development and distribution of a vaccine.

One official said the executive order would lead to the formulation of guidelines for U.S. government agencies to help other countries procure the vaccine once demand in the United States was met.



## UN Urges Russia to End Temporary Occupation of Crimea

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The UN General Assembly on Monday adopted a resolution urging Russia to end its "temporary occupation" of Crimea, which Moscow took over in 2014, "without delay."

The resolution on the militarization of the peninsula of Crimea, the port of Sevastopol and parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov was adopted by 63 countries, with 17 voting against and 62 abstaining.

The resolution is non-binding but has political significance. It was put forward by 40 countries, including Britain, France, Germany and the Baltic states, as well as the United States, Australia, Canada and Turkey.

The resolution "urges the Russian Federation, as the occupying Power, immediately, completely and unconditionally to withdraw its military forces from Crimea and end its temporary occupation of the territory of Ukraine without delay."

Facing the "continuing destabilization of Crimea owing to transfers by the Russian Federation of advanced weapon systems, including nuclear-capable aircraft and missiles, weapons, ammunition and military personnel to the territory of Ukraine," the resolution called on Russia to stop all such transfers "without delay."

Fighting between Ukrainian troops and forces backed by Russia has left more than 13,000 dead since 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and pro-Russian forces in the east of Ukraine rebelled against Kiev.

At the UN Security Council, tensions between Russia and western countries over the conflict remain in sharp focus, as was shown by an informal meeting last week by Moscow on the 2015 Minsk accords between Ukraine and Russia, which were sponsored by France and Germany.

Berlin and Paris sparked Russian fury by boycotting the meeting, described by European countries as an international platform offered to the Donbass separatists, several of whom had been invited to speak by Moscow.

## Maduro Allies Win majority In Venezuela Congress Election

CARACAS (Reuters) - Allies of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro won a majority of votes in a parliamentary election that saw scant participation due to a boycott by the opposition, who called Sunday's event a farce.

The elections council said that 67.6% of the 5.2 million votes cast in Sunday's election went to an alliance of parties called the Great Patriotic Pole that backs Maduro.

There were few lines at voting centers. Just 31% of eligible voters participated, according to the council.

The results nonetheless return the congress to Maduro's control, despite an economy in tatters, an aggressive U.S. sanctions program, and a mass migration exodus.

"Venezuela already has a new National Assembly," Maduro said, in televised remarks that were muted in comparison with his frequent triumphalism. "A great victory, without a doubt."

Elections council chief Indira Alfonzo did not specify how many of the 277 seats would go to Maduro allies, based on the 82% of votes counted thus far. That was a departure from typical congressional poll-result announcements that usually break down the distribution of seats.

Alfonzo did name a handful of victorious candidates, however, including Cilia Flores, who is Maduro's wife, and Diosdado Cabello, who is vice president of the Socialist Party.

She added that 17.95% of the votes went to parties who have described themselves as Maduro adversaries, but are widely suspected of being Maduro's shadow allies.

Earlier in the year, the Supreme Court had put several opposition parties in the hands of politicians expelled from those same parties for alleged links to Maduro - one of the major reasons the opposition had called the vote a sham.

The elections council was also named without the opposition's participation, and Maduro refused to allow meaningful electoral observation.

More than a dozen Latin American democracies, including Venezuela's neighbors Brazil and Colombia, questioned the vote's legitimacy. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Sunday called the election a "sham."

The opposition in 2015 won control of the National Assembly in a landslide, but the pro-Maduro Supreme Court blocked even the most basic legislation. In 2017, Maduro supplanted parliament with the creation of an all-powerful parallel body known as the National Constituent Assembly.



## Turkey's Actions Worsen Gas Dispute Ahead of Summit

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - European Union foreign ministers said on Monday that Turkey had failed to help resolve a dispute over natural gas resources in the eastern Mediterranean, but they left any decision on retaliatory sanctions for an EU summit on Thursday.

The 27 ministers, who were tasked to evaluate the grounds for economic sanctions on Ankara, did not go beyond agreeing Turkey had aggravated tensions since October, when EU leaders voiced a threat to impose punitive measures in December.

"Unhappily, we haven't seen much progress or improvement since the last European Council," the EU's top diplomat Josep Borrell told reporters, referring to the Oct. 1-2 summit, when EU leaders gave Ankara time to find a diplomatic solution.

"We have not seen a fundamental change of direction in Turkey's behaviour. On the contrary, in several aspects the situation has worsened," said Borrell, who chaired the meeting.

NATO ally and EU candidate Turkey claims gas resources also contested by Greece and Cyprus, a dispute that has fanned territorial rows over the divided island of Cyprus, maritime boundaries with Greece and Turkey's broader foreign policy.

EU states cite Turkish exploration in contested waters, a decision to re-open part of a town in disputed territory in Cyprus and a row with Germany over a U.N. arms embargo on Libya as evidence that Turkey is no longer a reliable partner.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said his country would not "bow down to threats and blackmail" but repeated his call for negotiations over the conflicting claims to continental shelves and rights to potential energy resources.

Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias said on Twitter that "Turkey's stance is a challenge to the Union as a whole," appearing to challenge comments earlier on Monday by his Turkish counterpart that Greece and Cyprus were manipulating the EU to act against Turkey.

Tensions flared in August when Turkey sent a survey vessel to map out energy-drilling prospects in waters claimed by Greece.





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## World Economic Forum to Be Held in Singapore

(Dispatches) - The World Economic Forum (WEF) will be held in Singapore instead of Switzerland next year as the Covid-19 pandemic would make it difficult to ensure the health and safety of participants in Europe, Reuters reported on Monday (Dec 7), citing WEF organisers. The WEF's decision to hold the high-profile event in Asia for the first time reflects its confidence in Singapore's management of the Covid-19 pandemic, said Ministry of Trade and Industry in a statement.

The move will have a positive impact on Singapore's Mice and related sectors, it added.

The physical in-person meeting, which will be held in May next year, will be the first global leadership event to address worldwide recovery from the pandemic, the WEF said in a statement, adding that it will bring together leaders to focus on shaping solutions to the world's most pressing challenges.



## OECD Lifts Global Economic Outlook on Vaccine Progress

LONDON (Dispatches) - The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) expects the global economy to build momentum over the coming two years, with real gross domestic product (GDP) growth projected to reach pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2021.

"For the first time since the pandemic began, there is now hope for a brighter future," the OECD said Tuesday, citing progress with coronavirus vaccines and unprecedented government and global bank action to mitigate the economic impact of the crisis.

"The worst has been avoided, most of the economic fabric has been preserved and could revive quickly, but the situation remains precarious for many vulnerable people, firms and countries."

In its latest economic outlook, the OECD said it expects the global economy to contract 4.2% this year. That reflects an upward revision from an estimate made in September that pointed to a 4.5% fall in real GDP. Looking ahead, the group said worldwide economic growth would average 4% over the next two years. It expects real GDP growth to hit 4.2% in 2021 — trimmed from a September forecast of 5% — and 3.7% in 2022.

It warned "considerable" uncertainty remains, however, and urged policymakers around the world to maintain targeted support to vulnerable children, people and businesses to reduce the risk of the coronavirus crisis "leaving scars."

The OECD, which monitors and advises its 37 member countries on economic policy, expressed cautious optimism about the worldwide economy gaining momentum through to 2022.

It cited scientific progress, pharmaceutical advances, and adjustments in the behavior of people and firms, among others, as factors likely to help keep the virus in check, allowing strict restrictions on mobility to be lifted progressively.

Together with reduced uncertainty and the exceptional fiscal relief provided throughout 2020, which the OECD expects to "pay off handsomely," the global economic rebound is anticipated to keep getting stronger as more and more activities re-open.

Several encouraging developments in the race to deliver a safe and effective coronavirus vaccine have been announced in recent weeks, raising hopes the world could soon return to some semblance of normality.

It is hoped coronavirus vaccines will help to bring an end to the pandemic that has wiped out a chunk of the global economy and claimed more than 1.46 million lives worldwide. The OECD said the economic recovery would be uneven across countries, however, "potentially leading to lasting changes in the world economy."

It said China was expected to account for over one-third of world economic growth in 2021, while the contribution of Europe and North America "will remain smaller than their weight in the world economy."

The OECD said it sees China, which started recovering earlier than its peers, recording economic growth of 1.8% this year. It remains the only major economy expected to record economic growth in 2020. The world's second-largest economy was projected to record real GDP growth of 8% next year and 4.9% in 2022.

By comparison, the U.S. was expected to record an economic contraction of 3.7% in 2020, before posting growth of 3.2% in 2021 and 3.5% in 2022.

The euro area was seen reporting real GDP of -7.5% this year, 3.6% in 2021 and 3.3% in 2022.

"Despite the huge policy band-aid, and even in an upside scenario, the pandemic will have damaged the socio-economic fabric of countries worldwide," the OECD said in its report.

## Arms Sales by Chinese Companies Rise by 5% in 2019

STOCKHOLM (Reuters) - Arms sales by China's four biggest companies in the sector rose by 4.8% in 2019 compared with 2018 to \$56.7 billion, a leading conflict and armaments think-tank said on Monday.

Sweden-based Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said it had included data on Chinese companies for the first time in its annual ranking of the world's 25 largest arms manufacturing companies.

The four Chinese companies on the list were Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC), China Electronics Technology Group Corporation (CETC), China North Industries Group Corporation (NORINCO) and China South Industries Group Corporation (CSGC), which SIPRI said ranked 6th, 8th, 9th and 24th, respectively.

"Chinese arms companies are benefiting from military modernisation programmes for the People's Liberation Army," SIPRI Senior Researcher Nan Tian said in a statement accompanying the report.

China is considered more of a potential threat militarily than in the past by many western countries. A report on reforming NATO said last week the Atlantic alliance must think harder about how to handle China and its military rise.

SIPRI said on Monday that overall arms sales by the 25 companies in its ranking rose by 8.5% in 2019 to \$361 billion. The top five companies were all from the United States -- Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon and General Dynamics, with combined arms sales of \$166 billion. The think-tank has previously not included Chinese companies in its ranking due to what it has said was a lack of reliable data.

## Deutsche Bank Hikes Asia Profitability Targets by Half

FRANKFURT (Reuters) -Deutsche Bank is hiking its Asia profitability targets by half as the business benefits from an economic recovery and a global shift of money flows, Alexander von zur Muehlen, the board member responsible for the region said.

"We are aiming for 15% return on tangible equity (RoTE) in the core bank in the region by 2022", Muehlen told Reuters in an interview published on Monday, adding that compared to 10% this year.

Asia's economy has recovered relatively faster from the COVID-19 pandemic than Europe's with GDP expected to grow by 8% next year, according to OECD estimates, compared to 3.6% growth in Europe.

Deutsche Bank, like most other banks,

was forced to supply liquidity to corporate customers ailing from the pandemic, some of which eventually went bust.

"That situation has very much normalised", Muehlen said. "The real economy is entering a phase of repair work, where both public and the private sector will continuously require financial leverage."

"We are not out of the woods but we feel certain parts of Asia are ahead of Europe in terms of recovery", Muehlen said, adding that Asia - which accounts for 13% of Deutsche's group sales - has the potential to become the single biggest RoTE contributor to the core bank.

At group level, Deutsche Bank, which continues to restructure its operations, is aiming for 9% RoTE in its core operations by 2022, compared to 4.3% in the first nine months of 2020 when a pick up in trading after the summer saw it unexpectedly post a small profit.

"The world is underinvested in Asia when it comes to capital markets. With a zero interest rate environment around the globe, money will try to go where the growth is and therefore we will see more import of capital into Asia", Muehlen said.

Deutsche Bank is continuing to invest in Asia, including in the region's largest economy China where regulations for foreign financial institutions including wealth managers and asset management companies have eased further in the last couple of years.

"[Wealth management] is one of several areas where China indeed may provide interesting opportunities. But we will not build a retail bank in China", Muehlen said.

Deutsche Bank's 3 billion euros (\$3.63 billion) in annual Asia revenues is generated fairly evenly between corporate banking, its fixed income and currency businesses, credit origination and advisory business and wealth and asset management, including retail banking in India.

## Trump Bans U.S. Investments In Companies Linked To Chinese Military

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Trump administration on Thursday unveiled an executive order prohibiting U.S. investments in Chinese companies that Washington says are owned or controlled by the Chinese military, ramping up pressure on Beijing after the U.S. election.

The order, which was first reported by Reuters, could impact some of China's biggest companies, including China Telecom Corp Ltd 0728.HK, China Mobile Ltd 0941.HK and surveillance equipment maker Hikvision 002415.SZ.

The move is designed to deter U.S. investment firms, pension funds and others from buying shares of 31 Chinese companies that were designated by the Defense Department as backed by the Chinese military earlier this year.

Starting Jan. 11, the order will prohibit purchases by U.S. investors of the securities of those companies. Transactions made to divest ownership in the companies will be permitted until Nov. 11, 2021.

"China is increasingly exploiting United States capital to resource and to enable the development and modernization of its military, intelligence, and other security apparatuses," said the order released by the White House. The Chinese embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In a stock exchange filing, China Telecom said it estimated the executive order might impact the price of its shares, which closed down 7.8% in Hong Kong on Friday, and American depository shares, adding that it would "closely monitor" developments.

Another telecom operator, China Unicom Hong Kong Ltd 0762.HK, said companies affected by the order would include its parent, China United Network Communications Group Co Ltd.

China Unicom also said in its filing, it expected an impact on its shares, which fell 6.7% on Friday, and American depository shares, adding it was "considering appropriate steps to protect its and its investors' lawful rights".

White House trade adviser Peter Navarro estimated that at least half a trillion dollars in market capitalization was represented by the Chinese companies and their subsidiaries.

"This is a sweeping order designed to choke off American capital to China's militarization," he told reporters on a call.

The move is the first major policy initiative by President Donald Trump since losing the Nov. 3 election to Democratic rival Joe Biden and indicates that he is seeking to take advantage of the waning months of his administration to crack down on China, even as he has appeared laser-focused on challenging the election result.

## German Industrial Output Surges on Booming Car Sales



BERLIN (Reuters) - Booming car sales drove a stronger-than-expected jump in German industrial output in October, in a further sign that the export-oriented manufacturing sector helped Europe's largest economy to get off to a solid start in the fourth quarter.

The German government has unleashed an unprecedented array of rescue and stimulus measures to help companies and consumers get through the COVID-19 pandemic as unscathed as possible, including incentives to buy electric and hybrid cars.

Industrial output was up by 3.2% on the month after an upwardly revised increase of 2.3% in the previous month, figures released by the Federal Statistics Office showed on Monday.

That was the biggest increase since June and easily beat a Reuters forecast for a rise of 1.6%.

Compared to February, the month before the COVID-19 pandemic reached Germany, industrial output was down by roughly 5%, the office said. In the car industry, Germany's biggest industrial sector, production rose by nearly 10% on the month but was still roughly 6% below pre-pandemic levels.

"Industry had a very good start into the final quarter of 2020. It's an extraordinarily strong increase," VP Bank economist Thomas Gitzel said.

The surprisingly bullish output figures chimed with data released on Friday that showed industrial orders rose more than expected on the month.

Sentiment surveys and high-frequency data such as truck toll mileage have also pointed to relatively strong manufacturing activity in November despite a partial lockdown imposed to slow a second wave of coronavirus infections.

## Japan Gov't's New Economic Stimulus Likely to Amount 73 Trillion Yen

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said that the size of a new stimulus package to restore the economy, maintain employment and sustain business activity would be finalised this week.

Despite some signs of improvement in recent months, analysts expect Japan's economy to shrink 5.6% in the current fiscal year ending in March 2021 and say it could take years to return to pre-coronavirus levels.

The Japanese government is likely to decide on new economic measures totalling roughly 73 trillion yen (\$700 billion) on Tuesday, NHK public television reported on Monday.

The economic measures will include steps aimed at preventing the spread of the novel coronavirus and others focused on shifting towards building a post-pandemic economy, NHK added.

Later, NHK said that the general account of a third supplementary budget for the fiscal year ending on March 31 was likely to be 19 trillion yen.

Prime Minister said at a news conference that the size of a new stimulus package to restore the economy, maintain employment and sustain business activity would be finalised this week. He said it would include an "unprecedented" \$19 billion fund to promote carbon neutrality by 2050.

The world's third-largest economy rebounded in the third quarter from a pandemic-induced slump, thanks to surging consumption and exports, but some analysts worry about slowing growth ahead because of a recent resurgence in coronavirus infections.

Despite some signs of improvement in recent months, analysts expect Japan's economy to shrink 5.6% in the current fiscal year ending in March 2021 and say it could take years to return to pre-coronavirus levels.





## “Parva” Receives “Award of Merit” of Accolade Competition

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian feature film ‘Parva’ directed by Mehran Mahdavian, has received ‘Award of Merit’ of the 17th edition of the Accolade Global Film Competition in the U.S.

‘Parva’ is about a young man named Khosrow Amiri. Khosrow who is now in his early 30s does not have a good job. He does his best to change his job conditions and in doing so he faces some challenges.

The cast includes Asieh Soltani, Vahid Mirzabeigi, Mehrdad Bakhshi, Farzad Baqeri, Zeinab Shabani, Mohammad Shami and Mohammad Gohari.



## Vaccine Airlift Delivers Shot in the Arm for Airlines

PARIS (Reuters) - Airlines battered by COVID-19 are prepping for key roles in the mass vaccine rollout that promises to unlock an immediate boost for the sector - and beyond that, its own recovery and survival.

Big challenges await carriers leading the airlift, as well as the drugmakers, logistics firms, governments and international agencies planning the deployment across networks blighted by the pandemic.

The gargantuan effort should nonetheless help airlines involved to trim their crisis losses, experts say, while bringing additional benefits to the broader sector, from supporting cargo pricing and revenue to restoring routes.

Developing vaccines in record time was the easy part, or “the equivalent of building base camp at Everest”, according to World Health Organization vaccines director Kate O’Brien.

“The delivery of these vaccines, the confidence in communities, the acceptance of vaccines and ensuring that people are in fact immunized with the right number of doses - (this) is what it’s going to take to scale the peak,” she said recently.

Britain is about to become the first country to begin administering the Pfizer-BioNTech jab, which requires storage below minus 70 Celsius. Moderna’s shot, stored at -20C, is close behind.

In line for major roles are freight specialists and airlines with large cargo arms - such as Germany’s Lufthansa, Air France-KLM and Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific - often under contract for forwarders and integrators like UPS, Fedex and DHL.

Persian Gulf carriers Qatar Airways and Emirates as well as Turkish Airlines, all slammed by the long-haul travel collapse, can leverage their vast connecting hubs. Turkish has begun flying China’s Sinovac vaccine to Brazil and, like many peers, is increasing its cold chain capacity and storage.

While the earnings windfall is “difficult to quantify”, Cathay commercial chief Ronald Lam told analysts recently, “there will be a positive impact either directly through vaccine transportation or the surge in overall cargo demand.”

Freight is already a bright spot. Many airlines are making unprecedented cargo profits in 2020 even while chalking up record losses overall.

Before the crisis, half the world’s air cargo travelled on some 2,000 freighters, and the rest on passenger jets.

So as lockdowns grounded flights, cargo rates soared, helping carriers keep remaining passenger routes open and avoid more red ink. Cargo’s share of revenue will triple to 36% this year as prices or yields rise 30%, airline body IATA projects.

“The profit margins of all the cargo operations will be very strong in 2020 as a result of the extraordinary circumstances, and will be sustained at that level in 2021 as a result of the vaccine distribution,” HSBC analyst Andrew Lobbenberg said.

Carriers joining the airlift can expect “a very significant impact on the cargo economics”, he said in a note.

Flying one dose to every human would fill 8,000 747s, IATA estimates. While a minority of vaccine deployments may not need air transport, many require two shots per person.

Some freight operators are already seeing other goods bumped off flights by vaccines, trade newsletter The Loadstar reported here.



“There’s a lot less air capacity in the market,” United Airlines cargo chief Christopher Busch told Reuters. “So we need to balance not only what vaccines are coming, but how we continue to move the product that was moving before.”

IATA, representing 290 airlines, warns that vaccine rollout could be “compromised” without an easing of the travel curbs and quarantines it has lobbied against.

“There are parts of the world that have no cargo operations once the passenger networks are grounded,” IATA head of cargo Glyn Hughes said.

But UNICEF, whose polio and other immunization campaigns were initially hit by lockdowns, believes lessons have been learned and is now focused on resisting cargo price hikes, as it sources COVID-19 vaccines for 92 poorer countries.

The U.N. children’s agency is having an “early conversation” with airlines to plan capacity and keep rates down, said transport chief Pablo Panadero, who still sees prices as high as twice pre-crisis levels.

“Of course we as UNICEF are making them aware of the humanitarian and even societal importance of these undertakings - this is getting their own industry back in business,” he said.

Cargo carriers may face reputational risk if they use the full clout of their current pricing power, observers warn.

“It’s not a good look to be seen to be profiteering,” said Frederic Horst, managing director of Cargo Facts Consulting.

But Horst expects no repeat of the scramble for masks and medical equipment earlier in the pandemic, when “a lot of government-organised charters were bringing this stuff in, and they were just overpaying.”

This time the airlift will be run by logistics firms who make smarter customers, he said.

“They understand when they’re being pulled over the table and will just go to another carrier.”

### Europe's Delay...

FROM PAGE 1

Mr. Borrel emphasizes that actually this approach has emerged because of four years of Trump in power and his performance. That in the Western camp why and how one can give a definition to the unity, of course, does not and will not have a certain definition, and that one can define Europe alone in the framework of a sustainable unity is a fragile theory because of UK’s pullout of the EU, known as the Brexit. But this solidarity with the U.S. has once had meaning and just during the World War II and against Russia and it has lost totally its meaning and value in the framework of either culture or politics and even in the past decade in the economy.

Except what causes rift and division in the civilization structures, today the third factor has emerged which has made this unity meaningless under influence of economic authoritarianism in the world. Chinese goods, under the heavy dominance of China’s Communist Party over its people in competition with all of the world, have better prices and the world needs to these goods are on the rise day in day and without any doubt will surmount the Westernization of rules, and this factor has made each one of the western countries to focus more on the condition of their own people like employment and expenditures.

The unity of Europe and the U.S. may be considered as an action out of desperation in the framework of military and security with even heavy costs but economic unity will have no wise meaning. That Germany and France have so far paid the cost of EU in facing the value of euro and providing jobs in Europe, will definitely not continue in encountering China due to the impacts of decline of exports and if it is to define the meaning of autonomy in its true sense, this strategy will be nothing but rift in Europe’s unity with the U.S. in the first step and dispersion of other European countries in the next step.



### Iran Economy...

FROM PAGE 1

Rouhani stated, “Due to investments made in strengthening and developing infrastructure, the country’s economy was able to withstand severe shocks of sanctions and after going through the difficult years of 2018 and 2019, and is getting back on the track of stability and growth”.

Rouhani said, “Of course, the outbreak of coronavirus brought a new shock to the economy that did not allow the effects of this improvement to be felt by the people, but fortunately, after 9 months of resistance against the impact of coronavirus, now the country’s economy is again is getting back on the track of stability and growth.”

He stated that unfortunately the outbreak of coronavirus has made the country’s economic success in the face of U.S. sanctions intangible, and said, “In the current critical situation, the country needs cohesion and integration, so we all have a duty to maintain the peace of the country and emphasize unity and solidarity”.

Referring to the need to modernize and develop the country’s public transport fleet, the President said, “In order to achieve the goals of the country’s comprehensive transport plans and provide desirable services to citizens, the country’s public transportation system needs a new fleet”.

### IAEA...

FROM PAGE 1

“What Iran has done have been within the framework of the five steps to reduce the JCPOA commitments. It has been reported to the International Atomic Energy Agency and has been officially announced. Installation of this generation (of centrifuges) has been under the supervision of the agency (IAEA). The agency (IAEA) is currently monitoring them,” the spokesperson noted.

He also emphasized that Tehran’s measures “are definitely within the framework of the JCPOA, as the rights stipulated in it (JCPOA) are exercisable for the two sides.”

As already announced several times, all of Iran’s measures are reversible, Rabiei concluded, adding, “Whenever the U.S. returns to its commitments or the Europeans can cover the commitments from which the U.S. has withdrawn, we will rapidly return to the conditions we have agreed upon in the JCPOA.”

## EU Climate Deal Unlikely Without Breakthrough on Budget



BRUSSELS (Reuters) - European Union leaders are unlikely to strike a deal on a new emissions-cutting target for 2030 at a summit this week if they cannot also clinch an agreement on the bloc’s next budget, a senior EU diplomat said on Monday.

Leaders will discuss a more ambitious 2030 EU climate target when they meet in Brussels on Thursday, but hopes of agreeing the goal have become mired in a dispute over the bloc’s budget for 2021-2027, known as the MFF, which Poland and Hungary are threatening to veto over upholding democratic standards.

“It will not be possible ... (it is) difficult to see that it’s going to happen if there is no agreement on MFF,” the senior diplomat said. If leaders resolve the budget spat, then there is a “fair chance” they will reach a deal on the climate target, the diplomat said.

The climate and budget issues are interlinked. The EU has agreed that hundreds of billions of euros from its 1.8-billion-euro budget and attached COVID-19 recovery fund will be spent on helping countries cut greenhouse gas emissions.

The financial package also includes a “Just Transition Fund”, aiming to mobilise 100 billion euros to help wean poorer states off fossil fuels. Poland is expected to be the biggest beneficiary of that support.

The European Commission wants the EU to commit to cut net emissions at least 55% by 2030, from 1990 levels. The bloc’s current 2030 target is a 40% emissions cut.

But the new goal requires unanimous support from the EU’s 27 countries. They are wrangling over the “enabling framework” attached to the target, which will sketch out a plan to deliver the goal.

A group of mostly Eastern European countries - including Hungary, Poland and Slovakia - want clearer guarantees on funding and other conditions before they support the target.

## Germany, Struggling With Second Wave, Mulls Tougher Rules

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Chancellor Angela Merkel on Monday urged German regions with high coronavirus rates to tighten social contact restrictions before Christmas as the country struggled to slow a second wave of infections.

Long hailed as an example in the pandemic due to a far lower death rate than most of its neighbours, Germany has seen its infection levels plateau at a high level for more than a month.

Merkel’s spokesman Steffen Seibert told reporters that as a result, the government welcomed a move by Bavaria on Sunday to step up its shutdown rules and limit New Year’s Eve gatherings.

“These are worrisome days,” Seibert said, noting that infections rates “are not consistently going down” but rather rising in some areas and that Germany was “far from turning the corner”.

“It is obvious and also necessary for individual states to think about which measures they could use to curb new infections,” he said, calling Bavaria’s planned tightening from Wednesday “good and right”.

The eastern state of Saxony, coping with its own infections spike, followed suit with an announcement it would meet Tuesday to agree stricter rules.

Under Germany’s federal system, states are given leeway to set their own rules making coordinated action from the top more complicated.

Merkel’s economy minister Peter Altmaier acknowledged that at least parts of the country were going to need to take a tougher line.

“We can say and must say that our measures to date are insufficient to really break the second wave,” he said in remarks reported by news agency DPA.

Seibert noted that Merkel and Germany’s 16 state premiers had “specifically agreed” that regional governments could go beyond national guidelines if conditions demanded it.

Although they are not scheduled to have another meeting to assess country-wide rules until January 4, Seibert said such a meeting was possible again “at any time” in the run-up to Christmas if deemed necessary.

Under a so-called “lockdown light”, German cultural and sporting facilities as well as restaurants and bars have been shut since early November, with public gatherings limited -- but schools and shops remaining open.

Merkel and the state leaders agreed last week to extend those restrictions until January 10, while allowing some exceptions for gatherings at Christmas and New Year of up to 10 people.

Several officials have now questioned those holiday exceptions.

Gerald Gass, head of the association of German hospitals (DKG), warned of possible shortages in intensive care units, in comments to business daily Handelsblatt.

### World Will Be Safer...

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“Backed by the U.S., the Zionist regime is seeking to normalize its relations with certain Muslim countries. Muslim governments and communities must stand against the path taken by the US and the Zionist regime and introduce the normalization of ties to the international community as a disagreeable act,” Qalibaf said.

Qalibaf warned, “There will be no suitable security in the region as long as the terrorist regime occupying Jerusalem al-Quds exists.”

Elsewhere in his remarks, Iran’s top parliamentarian underlined the importance of unity in the Islamic Ummah, saying, “Reliance of Muslim countries on people, Islam and resistance against the enemies will be the key to their success.”

He also highlighted the effective role played by top Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in maintaining regional security.



## Hovland Wins Mayakoba Classic

**O**SLO (Dispatches) - Norway's Viktor Hovland sank a 10-foot birdie putt on the last hole Sunday to win the Mayakoba Classic by one stroke over American Aaron Wise. It was the second PGA Tour title for the 23-year-old from Oslo, who also rolled in a birdie on the 72nd hole to win February's Puerto Rico Open. "I don't feel comfortable in these situations at all. I was shaking there at the end," Hovland said. "I knew I had to make a birdie on 18 and it just went in."

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## British Open to Be Held at Royal Liverpool in 2023

**L**ONDON (Reuters) - The 151st British Open Championship will be played at Royal Liverpool in 2023 and the 2024 tournament will be at Royal Troon, golf's governing body the R&A said on Monday. The 149th Open Championship was scheduled to be held at Royal St George's from July 16-19 this year before it was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The event will take place at the same venue next year.

# Iniesta Helps Vissel Kobe To Reach ACL Quarters

**D**OHA (Dispatches) - Andres Iniesta and Daigo Nishi struck either side of the break as Vissel Kobe edged out Shanghai SIPG 2-0 to reach the quarter-finals of the Asian Champions League on Monday. The Japanese side flew to Doha with mixed feelings, having broken new ground in the domestic top flight by winning the Emperor's Cup and the Super Cup early in the year but also suffering five straight morale-shattering defeats in the J1 league in November. But they would have much to look forward to after Monday's spirited show put them just three wins short of the continental title, a possibility they wouldn't have probably given much thought to when they set out for their very first appearance in the competition. "We are very happy that we played very well and the players stuck to the instructions. This victory is not just for us, but for all the fans back in Japan who sent us their messages of support," said Vissel Kobe coach Atsuhiko Miura. The only thing he was worried about was the possibility of Iniesta missing the next match after he had to substituted in the 65th minute with a thigh injury. "We have a problem with Andres Iniesta's injury. We have to wait and see how serious the injury is," added Miura. Vissel Kobe lagged marginally when it came to ball possession but were more incisive with their forays keeping the Shanghai SIPG defence busy for long spells of time. Spain and Barcelona legend Iniesta, who had scored his first goal in the tournament to help Vissel Kobe reach the round of 16 with a 3-1 win over Guangzhou Evergrande on November 25, was again in his element on Monday.



Playing behind lone striker Douglas, the 36-year-old produced trademark passes besides enjoying taking occasional potshots at the Shanghai SIPG goal, keeping goalkeeper Chen Wei on his toes. But Wei couldn't come to his team's rescue in the 31th minute when Iniesta pounced on a perfect pass from Hotaru Yamaguchi just outside the box and dribbled his way up before placing a low drive between three defenders, the ball streaking under the keeper's body and into the goal. Shanghai SIPG had a fine chance to draw level five minutes later from a free-kick but Oscar's shot from just outside the box went marginally wide to the left. Vissel Kobe doubled their advantage five minutes after the break, Nishi lunging forward to make contact with a Kyogo Furuhashi cross from the left and leaving Chen flummoxed. Iniesta had another dash at the goal from 35 yards in the 65th minute before he was substituted. Shanghai SIPG coach Vitor Pereira again blamed the busy schedule for his team's lacklustre showing. "Today my players were trying their best but it was all too slow because it is impossible to do it with this physical condition," he said. "They did not have the energy to continue playing at the same level. This is not our normal game because we couldn't play in our preferred style. "It is impossible to play seven games in 21 days and keep going at the same level."

## Perez Takes First F1 Win at Sakhir Grand Prix



**M**ANAMA (Dispatches) - Sergio Perez took full advantage of his rivals' misfortunes on Sunday as he battled from last position to claim his first Formula One victory in a chaotic Sakhir Grand Prix. Racing Point's Perez could be out of work next season but recovered from a first-lap crash in Bahrain that dropped him to the back of the field to earn his maiden win in his 190th race. The 30-year-old was helped by a shock Mercedes pit-stop tyres bungle and then a late puncture for stand-in star George Russell, who dazzled as substitute for world champion Lewis Hamilton. Perez became the first Mexican victor in F1 since Pedro Rodriguez in 1970, ending a series of races dominated by Mercedes for whom Valtteri Bottas finished eighth and Russell ninth. "I'm speechless," said an emotional Perez, who wept through most of his victory lap after taking the flag. "I hope I'm not dreaming... Ten years it has took me and I don't know what to say. "After that first lap, the race was gone — but I didn't give up. In the end, my pace was good enough to hold off George."

## Bundesliga 2020/21 Revenues to Drop by One Billion Euros

**B**ERLIN (Reuters) - The Bundesliga's 2020/21 season will see a drop in turnover of about one billion euros (\$1.21 billion) if fans have to stay away throughout the campaign, some 20% below the last regular season in 2018/2019, the German Football League (DFL) has said. DFL chief Christian Seifert told a news conference on Monday that the previous 2019/20 season had seen a fall in turnover of about six percent or 250 million euros after the COVID-19 pandemic struck midway through the campaign. But the 2020/2021 season will see a much higher drop in turnover, making the fall last term — when Bayern Munich retained the Bundesliga title ahead of rivals Borussia Dortmund — seem like a "gentle breeze", he added. "The overall loss of fans for the entire season will be about 650 million euros compared to 2018/19," Seifert said. He added that another 250 million would be lost in terms of money spent on Bundesliga players in the transfer market, while additional revenues from sponsors would also be cut. "A total turnover loss of one billion or about 20 percent," he said of the outlook for turnover in 2020/21. He said the overall loss from March 2020 to the summer of 2022 — a period of just over two years — could be as much as two billion euros. The DFL is in charge of the country's top two divisions.

## Leclerc Given Grid Penalty For Causing Crash

**M**ANAMA (AFP) - Charles Leclerc was handed a three-place grid penalty for the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix after being ruled to have caused the first-lap crash in the dramatic Sakhir Grand Prix. The Ferrari driver collided with eventual race winner Sergio Perez's Racing Point when he misjudged his braking at Turn Four. He lost control and skewed off the track into the barriers, causing Red Bull's Max Verstappen to take evasive action, which resulted in him going through a gravel trap and into the barriers with Leclerc.

# Odermatt Lands First Giant Slalom Win



**R**OME (Dispatches) - Marco Odermatt gave Switzerland their first World Cup giant slalom win since 2011 on Monday as he swooped through the gates for a crushing win on the snowy slopes of Santa Caterina in the Italian Alps. The event should have taken place on Sunday but relentless snow delayed the action until Monday when the 23-year-old Odermatt made another statement about his form.

After a second place at Soelden and a third place at Santa Caterina on Saturday, Odermatt tops the giant slalom rankings after three races. Switzerland's last World Cup giant slalom win came in March 2011 when the then recent Vancouver Olympic giant slalom champion Carlo Janka won at Kranjska Gora. Odermatt set the pace Monday, flying through the 48 gates fastest on the first run before Saturday's winner the Croat Filip Zubcic gave him a scare on the second descent. The Swiss eventually prevailed 0.73sec ahead of American Tommy Ford by 0.73sec on the hard-packed piste. Zubcic was third just 0.02sec adrift after producing the fastest run of the day to jump from 21st to 3rd.

## Qatar World Cup Venue To Open With 50% COVID-Recovered Fans

**D**OHA (Dispatches) - Qatar will launch its latest completed World Cup stadium with a domestic fixture at which half of tickets will be reserved for fans who have recovered from coronavirus, the country's FA said Monday. The Al-Rayyan Venue, the third new stadium to be completed ahead of 2022, will host the domestic Emir Cup final on December 18 and will welcome around half of its 40,000 capacity. "Anyone who enters the stadium must return either a negative Covid-19 test or a positive Covid-19 antibodies test," Abdul Wahab al-Musleh, Qatar's deputy chief medical officer, said in a statement issued by the QFA. "About 50 percent of the available seats will be allocated to people who have previously contracted the virus." Fans will be required to undergo tests at one of three locations where their ticket application will be linked to their national identity cards and phone number. Fans will then be eligible for a non-transferable ticket once they receive the required test result. Once inside, fans will be required to wear a mask, show their contact tracing app, and stay in their allocated seat. "This is the first time Qatar has hosted a match on this scale under such exceptional circumstances," added Musleh. Qatar has slowly been welcoming fans back to stadiums, permitting attendances of up to 30 percent in the top-flight Qatar Stars League. The Emir Cup final will see favourites Al-Sadd, coached by Spain legend Xavi Hernandez, take on minnows Al-Arabi. Al-Rayyan, located 24 kilometres (15 miles) west of the capital Doha, will host seven matches during Qatar 2022 up to and including the round of 16 stage.



## LeBron, Osaka, Mahomes Among SI Sportspersons of the Year

**N**EW YORK (AFP) - NBA champion LeBron James, Super Bowl winner Patrick Mahomes and Japan's Naomi Osaka were among five athletes honored Sunday by Sports Illustrated magazine for their off-field activism. SI's annual Sportsperson of the Year was The Activist Athlete and paid tribute to off-field activities by James, Osaka, Mahomes and his NFL teammate Laurent Duvernay-Tardif and Women's NBA champion Breanna Stewart. The magazine cited "five men and women who in 2020 were champions in every sense of the word: champions on the field, champions for others off it." James sparked the Los Angeles Lakers to the NBA title, capturing the fourth of his career, and became the first three-time winner of the SI sportsperson award after 2012 and 2016, having previously matched the two Sportsperson awards given golfer Tiger Woods in 1996 and 2000. "With his efforts for racial justice, education reform and Black community empowerment as well as his voting rights campaign and varied charitable work, there is no doubt that he sets the standard for the modern socially conscious athlete," SI said of James, who was also awarded the Muhammad Ali Legacy Award for his career dedication to public service. James spoke out on police brutality, racial inequality and championed a voter registration program, More Than A Vote, that helped sign up more than 10,000 poll workers as well as register voters in combating voter suppression. Osaka won her third Grand Slam tennis title at this year's US Open. She took part in Black Lives Matter protests this year following the death of George Floyd and wore black masks during her US Open run, each with the name of an African-American killed by police. Super Bowl Most Valuable Player Mahomes sparked the Kansas City Chiefs to the Super Bowl crown, pushed the NFL to recognize the Black Lives Matter movement and backed the right of NFL players to conduct social protests. Duvernay-Tardif, the starting right offensive guard for the Chiefs but also a doctor, gave up his NFL uniform for doctor's protective personal equipment when the Covid-19 pandemic struck, joining the front line of a battle for people's lives.

