

**Health Ministry Spokeswoman
Sima Sadat Lari Said on Friday
That Some 232 More Iranians
Have Died From the Coronavirus
Disease Over the Past 24 Hours as
The Death Toll Mounted to 51,727**

IRAN NEWS

**Iranian Foreign Ministry Has
Summoned Turkey's Ambassador
To Tehran Derya Örs Over the
Remarks Made by Turkish President
Recep Tayyip Erdogan During His
Visit to the Azerbaijan Republic**

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2 DOMESTIC

**U.S. Hegemony
Over World
Declining Rapidly**
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**U.S. Must Earn Right
To Rejoin Iran Deal by
Fulfilling Obligations**

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says the U.S. is obliged to return to the 2015 nuclear deal, but it should first strive to earn the right to do so by fulfilling its obligations under the UN-endorsed pact that it abandoned over two years ago.

In an interview with the Tehran-based Arman Media Cultural Institute released online on Thursday, Zarif said most experts believe that the Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was "a great achievement" for the Islamic Republic.

Although the U.S. ceased its participation in the JCPOA, it cannot prevent the implementation of the agreement under Article 25 of the UN Charter, he added.

"The United States is obliged to return to the JCPOA, and for the US to become a member of the JCPOA, it must try to meet membership conditions," the top Iranian diplomat said. "We are open to America's return to the JCPOA, but it must earn the right to return to the JCPOA by fulfilling its commitments."

The JCPOA was signed in 2015 between Iran and six world states — namely the U.S., Germany, France, Britain, Russia and China — and ratified in the form of Resolution 2231.

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Iran, Afghanistan Connected By Khaf-Harat Railway



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran and Afghanistan have inaugurated a railway project connecting the Iranian city of Khaf to Herat in the other country.

Present at the ceremony were Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and his Afghan counterpart Ashraf Ghani, who attended the event via videoconference due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The 225-km railroad project includes four phases that are currently under construction. About 78 km of the project, which includes two phases, is on Iran's soil and the rest in Afghanistan.

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3 DOMESTIC

**Renowned Iranian
Scholar Bestowed With
Uzbek "Order of Dostlik"**
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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Human Rights, Cover-Up for The Sin of Rulers of Mankind

Every year the so-called human rights organizations on December 10 which is Human Rights Day observe it somewhat without noting in the past 72 years after adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights what has happened to the mankind, and continue closing their eyes on the tyranny of rulers of wealth, power and hypocrisy.

The proof for the claim is just here which happened on December 9, 2020. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet during her speech outspokenly says she has pinned high hopes on the new U.S. President (Joe Biden) because he has made a series of promising pledges regarding sets of commitments and this hope includes a behavior that during his presidency, Biden would take some actions and effective steps for improving the human rights condition in his country and in the world.

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The power plant of Sahand Sanat Rastak Company was inaugurated by Dr. Ardakanian, Minister of Energy, in the presence of Gorgan Governor Dr. Hadi Haghshenas and representatives and managers of the province. This power plant has a nominal capacity of 26 and a practical capacity of 25 MW.

During the ceremony, Saeed Soltani, CEO of Sahand Rastak Company, said: "This power plant has been designed by local experts." This power plant has been launched in the private sector with an investment of 2600 billion rials. The power capacity of this power plant is 26 MW.

Engineer Soheil Soltani was in charge of this project on behalf of the board of directors of Sahand Sanat Rastak Company. He expressed satisfaction with the results. He also explained the problems of currency supply, money transfer, equipment supply, etc. in this project. He said: the achievement of this power plant is due to the team effort and cooperation of Arian Niroo Mabna Company with the management of Hadi Ramezani

With the Operation of The 26 MW Power Plant SAHAND SANAT ROSTAK CO. Officially Joined the Field of investment in The country's Infrastructure Industries

as the project manager of this power plant. He also announced a part of the company's future plans and said: with the improvement of market conditions, the presence of Sahand Sanat Rastak Company in the field of infrastructure industries will be developed soon.

Ramezani, the project manager of the power plant, said: "This power plant can generate more than 210 million kilowatt hours of electricity annually." It also uses natural gas fuel and is completely environmentally friendly. Gorgan Small Scale Power Plant will be the first power plant with a capacity of 26 MW in Golestan province. By exploiting it, direct employment is provided for more than 50 people. This power plant will be able to supply electricity to more than 5,000 households in the province. The investment made in this power plant is more than 2600 billion Rials. This cost is provided by the private sector. It is expected that with the operation of this power plant, the reliability of electricity supply required by some industries and residential areas of this province will be improved. Therefore, power supply problems are solved during peak hours.

He thanked Sahand Sanat Rastak Company and its managers for investing in the electricity industry. "The electricity industry is the most important infrastructure industry in the country," he said. This 26 MW power plant has the largest capacity in the country's distributed generation industry. In this power plant, special attention is paid to environmental issues, including new methods of reducing noise pollution. Predicting a



complete monitoring system, mechanized oil injection and discharge systems, etc., are among the features that distinguish this power plant from other similar units. Young personnel are present at all levels of investment, management, design, implementation and operation of this power plant. In this power plant, the technical and managerial power and ability of young and specialized forces has been demonstrated.

In the end, Saeed Soltani, CEO of Sahand Sanat Rastak Company, said: "Recently, especially during the last three years, there have been widespread obstacles to the development of these power plants." The investment of this power plant has not been far from problems. However, given the many benefits of these plants, the Ministry of Energy is expected to live up to its obligations to private investors. The Ministry of Energy should adopt more supportive policies regarding this industry in order to remove the

obstacles and problems of private sector investors in this industry.

The construction and operation of the Gorgan small-scale power plant by Sahand Sanat Rostak proves that the government can rely more on the private sector in the face of sanctions. The fruit of this trust will be the development of the country.

According to this report, Engineer Hossein Afzali, CEO of Mazandaran and Golestan Regional Electricity Company, was present at the ceremony. He also explained some of the unique features of this power plant. He also thanked for the investment. He expressed hope that the company's presence in the country's infrastructure industry will continue.

In the end, Dr. Ardakanian, Minister of Energy, said: "Setting up a small-scale power plant in Gorgan by investors of Sahand Sanat Rastak Company is a valuable work." He expressed hope that other private sector companies in the country would take the right step in this direction. This path is productive and protects national interests.



No One Can Talk About Our Beloved Azarbaijan

TEHRAN (MNA) –Foreign Minister referred to the remarks made by the Turkish President and noted that no one can talk about beloved Azerbaijan.

In a tweet on Friday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote, “Pres. Erdogan was not informed that what he ill-recited in Baku refers to the forcible separation of areas north of Aras from Iranian motherland. Didn’t he realize that he was undermining the sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan? No one can talk about OUR beloved Azerbaijan.”

U.S. Hegemony Over World Declining Rapidly

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Special assistant to Majlis Speaker for international affairs said that China and Russia are making constructive efforts to counter US unilateral sanctions, adding that the era of U.S. hegemony over the world is rapidly declining.

In a meeting with the Russian Ambassador to Tehran Levan Jagarian, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian noted that Tehran and Moscow are taking strong steps in the practical direction of strategic relations.

He stated that parliamentary, political, and economic relations between the two countries are growing and the development of cultural relations is a good basis for comprehensive cooperation.

Amir-Abdollahian went on to say that the law passed by Iran’s parliament, dubbed “Strategic Action to Lift Sanctions”, has set the final opportunity for the parties to return to their commitments.

He said in the meeting that fortunately Tehran and Moscow are taking strong steps in the practical direction of strategic relations, adding that parliamentary, political and economic relations between the two countries are growing and the development of cultural relations is a good basis for strengthening cooperation.



He noted: “In addition to the hostile behavior of the United States, three European countries (France, Germany and Britain) have not also adhered to their commitments in the face of the Iranian people and in practice have not protected their obligations in the nuclear deal, in this regard, their recent statement is the repetition of their non-compliance.

During the meeting, Levan Jagarian, called the relations between Tehran and Moscow strategic and said: “US action in imposing inhumane sanctions against countries has further destroyed the credibility of the White House.”

He stated: “Political and parliamentary relations between Iran and Russia have a reassuring process and we are trying to develop it as much as possible.”

Noting that the political and parliamentary relations between Iran and Russia have a reassuring trend, the Russian ambassador added that the Iran-Russia cooperation in the region has become a constructive model for other countries.

Iran to Procure Coronavirus Vaccines Despite Cruel U.S. Sanctions



TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran’s first vice president says the country will provide the vaccines needed to immunize people against coronavirus despite the United States’ cruel sanctions.

Es’haq Jahangiri underlined one of the key priorities of the country at this juncture is to procure vaccine from internationally recognized companies.

“Despite the United States’ pressure and cruel sanctions, the government has utilized all potential and resources available to meet people’s needs and will spare no effort in that regard,” said the top official.

He appreciated the ongoing efforts and sacrifices made by doctors and medical personnel since the outbreak of COVID-19, expressing hope the vaccine needed by the country will be procured and made available to people in the shortest possible time and with the coordination of the health ministry.

The first vice president instructed the Central Bank of Iran, the Budget and Plan Organization and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to adopt the necessary measures, in coordination with the health ministry, to provide the required financial resources and hold the necessary consultations to provide the coronavirus vaccine.

He also touched upon the potential of domestic companies and scientists to produce medication and vaccine.

“The pharmaceutical industry in Iran is one of the most successful industrial fields which can not only meet domestic needs, but can also bring in a considerable amounts of revenue,” he added.

Leader Offers Condolences on Demise of Ayatollah Yazdi

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has offered condolences on the passing of prominent Iranian cleric Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, a member of the Assembly of Experts and the Society of Seminary Teachers of Qom.

Yazdi, who was born in Isfahan in 1931, died on Wednesday at the age of 89 due to illnesses of the digestive system. His body was laid to rest in the holy city of Qom.

Ayatollah Yazdi formerly headed Iran’s Judiciary for a decade, between 1989 and 1999.

He also served as a member of the Guardian Council for 21 years until early November, when he resigned from his post due to deteriorating health.

The senior clergyman was a student of the late founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, and accompanied him in the fight against oppression, corruption, and arrogance during the US-backed Pahlavi dynasty.

He was the author of many books in religious and jurisprudential sciences.

Ayatollah Khamenei issued a message offering condolences to Ayatollah Yazdi’s family, students, and admirers as well as the Qom Seminary, religious authorities, and clerics.

Ayatollah Yazdi’s “revolutionary background and involvement in the fight against the tyrannical [Pahlavi] regime, along with his continuous presence in all the stages of the Revolution and engagement in major responsibilities for the country’s governance... in addition to his academic and jurisprudential endeavors, made a complete, influential man out of this esteemed scholar,” read the message.

“Firm belief in the foundations of the Revolution, perseverance on this path, and religious and revolutionary ardor were the other manifest characteristics of this honorable figure,” the Leader said.

Tehran, Ankara Emphasize Strengthening Joint Security

TEHRAN (MNA) – Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey stressed the need to activate the joint security working group.

Iran’s Deputy Minister of Interior for Security and Disciplinary Affairs Hossein Zolfaghari met and held talks with Muhterem Ince Turkish Deputy Minister of Interior on Thu.

In this bilateral talk, Zolfaghari hailed the positive stance of the Turkish government in condemning the assassination of Iran’s prominent nuclear scientist ‘Dr. Mohsen Fakhrizadeh’.

Unfortunately, today, the root cause of all insecurities and troubles in the region stems from the desperate and malicious actions of the United States and Zionist regime, he added.

Zolfaghari called on the Turkish side to concentrate on controlling and dealing with arms smugglers that have targeted regional security with their malicious objectives.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Iranian deputy interior ministry pointed to the issue of the contract made for transferring convicts to prison between the two countries and added, “Given the interactions made between justice ministries of the two countries as well as the condition of coronavirus global pandemic, Ministry of Interior of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, is ready to use all available facilities and capacities to expedite the transfer of detainees in prisons of each party within the framework of rules and regulations.”

After organizing virtual meetings, the 5th round of Iran-Turkey Joint Security Working Group will be held online in the future, he added.

Muhterem Ince Turkish Deputy Minister of Interior, for his part, said that activation of joint security working group between Iran and Turkey will expedite the exchange of information in other fields of cooperation.

Iran Reminds IAEA About The Body’s Sole Role

TEHRAN (MNA) – An Iranian envoy has urged the International Atomic Energy Organization to focus on its ‘monitoring’ responsibilities and stay away from offering analysis.

“@iaeaorg sole role is to monitor and verify the voluntary nuclear-related measures as detailed in the JCPOA and to provide regular updates in this regard,” Iran’s Permanent Ambassador to Vienna-based International Organizations Kazem Gharibabadi tweeted on Friday.

“Any assessment or analysis is out of the mandate of the Agency,” he added.

The tweet came as the head of the IAEA Rafael Grossi had earlier called on Iran to not implement the decision to increase nuclear activities.

Iran should not follow through on threats to increase uranium enrichment and throw out his inspectors, he told Sky News. “If implemented, these measures would be an even further deviation from the commitments that Iran entered into when it joined the agreement.”

Iran has reduced its commitments to the 2015-signed JCPOA in a transparent and reversible mood in response to other parties’ failure to safeguard Iran’s economic interest under the deal.

Recently, the Iranian Parliament ratified a law that further obliges the Iranian government and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran to boost the nuclear industry and reconsider ties with the IAEA in case the JCPOA signatories continue their lack of commitments to the deal.

Exports to 15 Neighboring States Up by 50%

ISFAHAN (IP) – Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade says in the last eight months, the exports of the Islamic Republic of Iran to 15 neighboring countries has increased by 50 percent.

In a meeting with business leaders in Isfahan province, central Iran, on Thursday evening Alireza Razm Hosseini added: “In the coming months and until the end of the year, we will see an increase in exports.”

He added: “Business leaders want to curb monopoly rents and emphasize the need for imports versus exports.”

The Minister of Industry, Mines, and Trade described the exporters as economic Mujahideen who contribute significantly to the country’s economy.

Number of COVID-19 Red Cities Declined to 34

TEHRAN (IP) - Health Minister said that on November 21, the country had 160 red cities, 208 orange cities, and 80 yellow cities with struggling with COVID-19.

Saeed Namaki, in a live TV program about the fourth step of the national mobilization to manage and control the Covid-19 pandemic in a district and family-oriented manner, called the Martyr Soleimani project, added: These red spots decreased on December 1 and much less on December 10.

“On December 1, we had 64 red cities, 279 orange cities, and 105 yellow cities. On December 10, we reached 34 red cities, 260 orange cities, and 154 cities with yellow corona status,” he added.

He said: “We appreciate those who cooperate in establishing this district-based project. The recommendation is to increase the level of cooperation and participation and to complement the real health ambassadors in this course. We had great achievements, and if we go back in time and look at the number of deaths of nearly 500 people a day, it was embarrassing for us. Even the death of a citizen is sad for us everywhere in the world. Today we even saw more than 290 families grieving.

The Minister of Health stated: “The first achievement of this plan is to reduce the number of hospital admissions, and on average, about 30% of the beds used to provide services to corona patients are less than before, and this is an opportunity for our colleagues in hospitals to take a rest.”

He noted: “With the efforts of healthcare staff, laboratory sciences, and the health system, the number of corona tests will increase to a minimum of 70,000 per day and a maximum of 100,000 and 120,000 in the coming days.”

Namaki added: “We will experience more diagnostics and less critically ill patients will go to hospitals due to early diagnosis. Today, according to international estimates, we should have experienced the death of more than 1,100 people a day.

The Minister of Health stated: “Our biggest anxiety right now is the discussion of normalization. We have no phenomenon more effective than distancing and following health protocols to control the disease and get rid of the clutches of death caused by COVID- 19.”

Namaki said: Most Turkmen-settled villages in Golestan and Mazandaran villages, especially in the highlands, are affected by the disease. In Gilan, unfortunately, new troubles have been created for us, and the air of the green chain in the north of the country has unfortunately been polluted by COVID- 19.

Iran, Austria Cooperate on Search and Rescue Training

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran’s National Disaster Management Organization (NDMO) announced the cooperation of Austria in the field of training Search and Rescue teams known as SAR.

During the 5th round of Iran-EU meeting with the aim of cooperation on Thursday, Ali Bakhtiari, NDMO Director-General for public and international relations stressed reinforcing the readiness capacity through providing essential equipment, and facilities for the time of any disasters, especially in the field of rescue operations.

Bakhtiari also announced that Iran and Austria have a joint training plan.

“In this regard, two teams containing 180 members, each has been provided with the necessary training on search and rescue operations,” he stated.

Bakhtiari noted that Iran is one of the most vulnerable countries to natural disasters due to its geographical location and climatic conditions.

He asserted that it is essential that the issue of cooperation between Iran and the European Union be placed on the permanent agenda of cooperation between the two sides, and that institutional and human capacity building be done through training and seminars.

World Urged to Be Vigilant Against ISIL Re-Emergence

TEHRAN (MNA) –Foreign Ministry has called on the international community to keep on the fight against ISIL terrorism.

In a statement on Friday, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh congratulated the third anniversary of defeating ISIL terrorists to the government and nation of Iraq.

This victory, he continued, was the result of the ‘firm determination’ and unified efforts of Iraqi government, nation, and security forces that were receiving support from Iraqi Grand Marja Ayatollah Sistani.

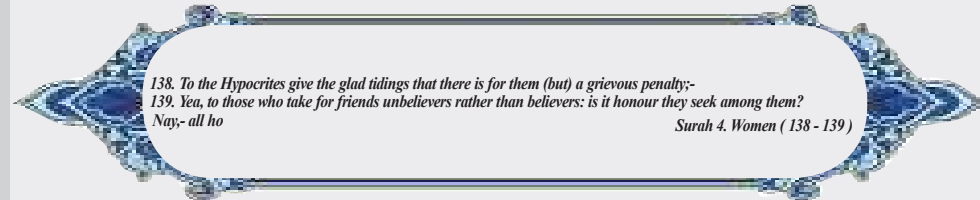
Pointing to Iran’s support for Iraq in the fight against terrorism, Khatibzadeh said “The Iranian government and nation have always stood by the Iraqi government and nation and it will spare no effort to help increase unity, security, stability, and development of Iraq.” “We witnessed how the blood of the two countries’ martyrs got blended in this sacred battle,” he said, adding that the empathy between the two nations hit its climax in the assassination of General Ghasem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis who were the leaders of the fight against terrorism and extremism.

“The ISIL military force conceded a defeat, but still Takfiri, anti-human, terroristic thoughts and covert and overt support for it in the region and beyond continues,” the spokesman said. “It is necessary for the international community to be vigilant against the spread of ISIL’s thoughts and its regaining of power.”



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:58
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:11
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:35
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:05



Renowned Iranian Scholar Bestowed With Uzbek “Order of Dostlik”

IRAN NEWS CULTURAL DESK

TEHRAN – Renowned Iranian scholar Dr. Hossein Mohammadzadeh Sedigh in a ceremony held at Uzbekistan Embassy in Tehran was bestowed with Uzbekistan state award “Order of Dostlik (Friendship).”

In the ceremony and in presence of Head of ECO Mr. HadiSoleimanpour, President of the ECO Cultural Institute Mr. BakhtiSarvar, head of Department for the Central Asia of Iran Foreign Ministry Mr. Yadegari, distinguished diplomats and guests, Uzbekistan Ambassador to Tehran Mr. Bakhodir B. Abdullaev presented the “Order of Dostlik” to Dr. Sedigh.

On the occasion of 29th independence anniversary, President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev honored Dr. Sedigh with the medal because of his contribution to Uzbek language and literature and cementing cultural relation and friendship between Iran and Uzbekistan.

Addressing the ceremony, Uzbek Ambassador Mr. Abdullaev expressed his gratitude to the distinguished guests in the ceremony and hailed Dr. Sedigh for his endeavors and contribution to the literature and especially Uzbekistan literature and working on one of the greatest poets and writers of all times of Uzbekistan Mir AlishirNava’i.

He also pointed to Mr. Sedigh’s efforts on the science of Nava’i’ology by writing over 300 books and hundreds of theses and researches on Nava’i.

The ambassador added that Dr. Sedigh with his initiatives could collect, compile and publish Persian works and letters of Poet Nava’i after editing them.

The 73-year-old Iranian scholar, who is retiree of TarbiatModarres University, has three famous books and he is also one of the greatest experts on works of Nava’i.



Addressing the ceremony, Dr. Sedigh thanked President of Uzbekistan Sh.M. Mirziyoyev for this honor and medal and said he was very delighted to see that his scientific and literary research has led to such a felicitous occasion.

He also congratulated citizens of both Iran and Uzbekistan for their friendly relation. He added that common features of Persian and Uzbek languages and the closeness and existence of the two over the centuries is another field of connection and integration of these two nations. He said Poet AlishirNava’I was a peace seeking poet, adding that he also chants peace and freedom.

Ali-ShirNava’i (9 February 1441 – 3 January 1501) was a Uzbek poet, writer, politician, linguist, HanafiMaturidi mystic and painter who was the greatest representative of Chagatai literature (old Uzbek).

Because of his distinguished Chagatai language (old Uzbek Language) poetry, Nava’i is considered by many throughout the Turkic-speaking world to be the founder of early Turkic literature. Many places and institutions in Central Asia are named after him.

Nava’i is considered the national poet of Uzbekistan in Uzbek culture. The province of Navoi is named in his honor, as well as many other landmarks such as streets and boulevards. It is an ongoing trend for Uzbek authors and poets to take inspiration from his works.

Iranians Can Enjoy Visa Free Travel to Oman



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iranian citizens who wish to travel to Oman can stay in the country for up to 10 days without the need for an entry visa.

According to the Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce, Oman revoked visa regime for Iranians for ten-day visit to this sultanate. The move is in line with the government’s policy to boost tourism.

Iran is one of 103 countries whose citizens are exempt from visas to enter the Sultanate for ten-day tourist visit.

Other Asian countries included on this list are India, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Lebanon, Bhutan, Jordan, Tajikistan, Macau, and Brunei.

The Omani government has not announced when this visa exemption and circular will come into effect but it had been earlier said that this circular will be operationalized from the beginning of 2021.

This type of tourism visa is free and will not be extended.

Iran-Ankara Economic Ties Run With No Problem



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Chairman of Iran-Turkey Business Council says any country has its own customs laws and regulations and recommends economic activists to have a check-list in order that their goods do not face delay or damage at the border checkpoint customs.

Osman Aksoy pointed to the continuation of border checkpoint customs activities of Iran and Turkey, adding that every country has its own customs regulations and traders should be familiar with it in order to avoid any delay or damage for the release or transit of their goods.

He urged Iranian officials and managers of companies to be well aware of problems and regulations and if some problem happens despite completing their necessary documents, the council will do its best to resolve it.

Aksoy pointed to the closure of borders between Iran and Turkey on February 23, adding that at that time companies were unable to send their goods but since June 4, borders reopened. He also said that U.S. sanctions were intensified from May 18, 2018, and since major part of Iran’s exports are under sanctions, small space for trade with Iran has left open. He reiterated that production, textile, mining and construction and the whole Iran banking system have been targeted by the U.S. sanctions.

He went on to say that currently agro products, medical equipment, detergents and respiratory machines are exempted from sanctions and Turkish producers can export them to Iran but according to the U.S. sanctions, the Turkish side should be assured that its product is obtained by ordinary citizens and Iran would not re-export it to another country.

Aksoy also pointed to high potentials for economic cooperation between Iran and Turkey, saying that Iran is a favorable medicine market and if both countries can reach an agreement, Turkey can export considerable amount of medicine to Iran. He also pointed to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on bilateral relations, saying that besides sanctions, the pandemic has also had its impacts on Iran-Turkey economic relations.

6th Meeting of Iran-Austria Energy Working Group Held

TEHRAN (IP) - The sixth meeting of the Iran-Austria Energy Working Group under the responsibility of the Iranian Ministry of Petroleum was held on Wednesday online.

The meeting of the Iran-Austria Energy Working Group was held with emphasis on renewable energies 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.

Stefan Schultz, Austrian Ambassador to Tehran, and Abbas Bagherpour Ardekani, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Vienna, addressed the meeting, Shana reported. Special guests from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the International Solar Alliance (ISA) were also present in the video call.

Stressing the impact of the U.S. sanction on trade between the two countries, Schultz underlined the term sanctions was misleading. It conveyed acceptance of the illegal dimensions of the wrongdoing against the Iranian nation by imposing unilateral sanctions on Tehran by the U.S.

He also said, “We don’t know when the COVID-19 pandemic ends. We don’t know how it will end. At present, we can only speculate about the long-term political and economic impacts of the pandemic. It’s a unique situation... Economic operators can make employment and income from our citizens, and they generate the necessary tech space to fund state expenditures... This year, Iran has been faced with the double challenge of COVID-19 and the toughest sanctions ever imposed on any country.”

“So many of us use the term sanction misleadingly. It implies an admission of wrongdoing by an entity against another when you look at it from an abstract perspective. Therefore, I prefer the term ‘trade blockade’ as it ignored the loss of legal justification, and it describes the negative impact it has on Iran and its people. As we are painfully aware, because of a lack of transaction channels, the trade blockade extends to pharmaceuticals and schools. Despite all odds, Iran has done remarkably well, thanks to its economic operators and its economic government. And I congratulate you on that. I’m often asked the question from my colleagues in Vienna, how the supply situation is, and whether there’s any



shortage of boots toothpaste or washing powder, and my obvious answer is always no. In fact, so many domestically produced new consumer products are not sold at competitive prices,” Stefan Schultz noted.

“Although substitution can have negative effects on long term development, it does increase employment and the demand for local goods,” he went on to add.

Elsewhere in the meeting, Abbas Bagherpour Ardekani delivered a speech.

He expressed confidence that the discussions would come up with a range of results or outcomes to shape the future of joint plans and measures between Iran and Austria.

“I also hope that this current situation that is globally overshadowed by COVID-19 will be eased and the normal daily life all around the world, including Iranians and Austrians, will be restored,” he added.

The official also said, “We are glad that within the framework of the roadmap for economic relationships between the two countries, this working group is one of the most active joint ones that has played an important role in finding common areas on both sides for working together.

He said the role and functions of the joint working groups in the constructive interaction and developing cooperation between the governmental institutions and business enterprises of both countries are undoubted of great importance. The 5th meeting of the Iran-Austria Energy Working Group was held in Vienna from 14 to 17 January 2019.

Iranian Airline Resumes Tehran-Ankara Flights

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) revealed the issuance of flight license for Iran’s National Flag Carrier (IranAir) to resume Tehran-Ankara flight amid the pandemic.

Following the spread of the coronavirus global pandemic, COVID-19, air travels reduced significantly throughout the world, ICAO added.

Now, with the reduction of restrictions imposed on countries to battle COVID-19, IranAir, which had suspended its flight to Ankara due to coronavirus, will resume a weekly flight en route Tehran-Ankara and vice versa with consulting and receiving the license from the Iranian Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). The flight will be resumed by fully observing of health protocols and guidelines between the two countries.

IranAir Cancels Madrid Flight

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran’s flag carrier Homa, known internationally as IranAir, says it cancelled a flight to the Spanish capital Madrid after the airline was notified that it will not be provided with handling services in the destination airport.

Homa’s PR office said in a Wednesday statement that flight to Madrid planned for earlier in the day local time had been cancelled after the handling services company in the Spanish capital said it would no longer process flights by the Iranian airline.

There was no mention of the name of the company that handles flights by Homa at Madrid airport.

However, Swissport, a Swiss-based company that offers such services in nine airports in Spain, may have decided to stop services to Homa under pressure from the United States which maintains a harsh regime of sanctions against Iran. Iranian flights to Europe have been subject to growing restrictions in destination airports across the continent in recent months as the spread of the coronavirus pandemic have led to more cancellations amid stricter rules.

Iranian aviation sources say the US government of President Donald Trump has ramped up its pressure on authorities in Europe to limit the number of flights from Iran amid the pandemic.

Homa and Mahan Air, Iran’s largest commercial airline, have been able to resume flights to Europe amid intensive diplomatic efforts by Iran to restore the aviation services.

Homa offered an official apology to passengers for the cancelled flight on Wednesday, saying it would pursue the case until the route to Madrid is restored.

It said passengers could either receive full rebates or use flights to other European destinations without paying extra costs related to new flights.

Gov’t to Present Four Intangible Heritage Cases to Be Registered on UNESCO’s List

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran is to present four cases for registration to the 15th meeting of the Intangible Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Mohammad Hassan Talebian said the meeting will be held online.

“Based on a decision by UNESCO’s Intangible Heritage Committee, the session will be held online due to the coronavirus outbreak,” he said.

He noted the four cases for international registration that his ministry is to present to the virtual meeting include the miniature art, visiting the Saint Thaddeus Church, the art of making and playing the Persian musical instrument of Oud and the Persian Mehregan festival which used to be celebrated to honor friendship, affection and love.

“Given the limited quota of UNESCO, these four cases have been jointly drawn up with neighboring countries, so that the potential of the shared quota with other countries can be utilized for international registration of the nation’s intangible heritage,” he said. The deputy minister said the committee assessing the proposed cases for international registration has, in its draft decision, agreed to register the miniature art and visiting the Saint Thaddeus Church on the world heritage list, and suggested the two cases of the Persian musical instrument of Oud and the Persian Mehregan festival be referred to the next meeting of UNESCO’s Intangible Heritage Committee.

Macron Gives Sisi France's Highest Award on Paris Visit

PARIS (Dispatches) - President Emmanuel Macron gave his Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah al-Sisi France's highest award on his state visit to Paris this week, a presidential official said Thursday, adding to controversy over the hugely contentious trip.

Activists who had warned Macron not to roll out the red carpet to Sisi were already enraged by the French leader's refusal to condition deepening defence and trade ties with Egypt on its respect for human rights.

Macron decorated Sisi with the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour during the visit, said a French presidential official, insisting that the gesture was an unavoidable part of protocol on a state visit.



6.2-Magnitude Earthquake Strikes Off Taiwan

TAIOEI (Dispatches) - A 6.2-magnitude earthquake struck off Taiwan on Thursday, the U.S. Geological Survey said, but while residents in the capital Taipei reported buildings violently shaking there were no immediate reports of damage.

The quake struck off Yilan City on the island's east coast at a depth of 74 kilometres (45 miles) at 9:19 pm local time (1319 GMT), according to the USGS.

Taipei residents reported shaking buildings, with the quake felt across the island.

"My building shook violently and I took my son and fled our home. It's deathly terrifying," wrote one social media user in Taipei.



Israel, Morocco Agree to Normalize Ties in Latest U.S.-Brokered Deal



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Israel and Morocco agreed on Thursday to normalise relations in a deal brokered with U.S. help, making Morocco the fourth Arab country to set aside hostilities with Israel in the past four months.

As part of the agreement, U.S. President Donald Trump changed longstanding U.S. policy and recognized Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara.

The Western Sahara is a desert region where a decades-old territorial dispute has pitted Morocco against the Algeria-backed Polisario Front, a breakaway movement that seeks to establish an independent state in the territory.

Trump sealed the agreement in a phone call with Morocco's King Mohammed VI on Thursday, the White House said.

"Another HISTORIC breakthrough today! Our two GREAT friends Israel and the Kingdom of Morocco have agreed to full diplomatic relations – a massive breakthrough for peace in the Middle East!" Trump tweeted.

Morocco is the fourth country since August to strike a deal aimed at normalizing relations with Israel. The others were the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan. Much of the momentum behind the deal-making has been to present a united front against Iran and roll back its regional influence.

Palestinians have been critical of the normalization deals, saying Arab countries have set back the cause of peace by abandoning a longstanding demand that Israel give up land for a Palestinian state before it can receive recognition.

With Trump due to leave office on January 20, the Morocco deal could be among the last his team, led by White House senior adviser Jared Kushner and U.S. envoy Avi Berkowitz, will negotiate before giving way to President-elect Joe Biden's incoming administration.

Kushner told reporters on a conference call it was inevitable that Saudi Arabia would eventually strike a similar deal with Israel.

Under the agreement, Morocco will establish full diplomatic relations and resume official contacts with Israel, grant flights over its territory and also direct flights to and from Israel for all Israelis.

"They are going to reopen their liaison offices in Rabat and Tel Aviv immediately with the intention to open embassies. And they are going to promote economic cooperation between Israeli and Moroccan companies," Kushner told Reuters.

Trump's agreement to change U.S. policy toward the Western Sahara was the linchpin for getting Morocco's agreement and a major shift away from a mostly neutral stance.

In Rabat, Morocco's royal court said Washington will open a consulate in Western Sahara as part of Morocco's deal with Israel.

A White House proclamation said the United States believes that an independent Sahrawi State is "not a realistic option for resolving the conflict and that genuine autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty is the only feasible solution".

Erdogan Says Armenia Needs New Leaders

BAKU (Reuters) - Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan on Thursday renewed a call for a change of leadership in Armenia, while offering the country the chance of joining a regional cooperation group alongside Azerbaijan.

Erdogan made the comments in Baku, where he reviewed a military parade marking Armenia's defeat by Azerbaijan in a war in the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. Erdogan, who provided military and diplomatic backing to Azerbaijan during the fighting, offered indirect support for opponents of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who is under pressure at home to resign over his handling of the conflict, which ended last month.

"We wish for the Armenian people to rid itself of the burden of leaders who console them with the lies of the past and trap them into poverty," said Erdogan. He had discussed with his Azeri counterpart forming the cooperation initiative alongside Russia, Iran and Georgia. Armenia could also participate and see its border with Turkey reopened if it took positive steps, Erdogan told a news conference.

Armenia and Turkey signed a landmark peace accord in 2009 to restore ties and open their shared border after a century of hostility stemming from the World War One mass killing of Armenians by Ottoman forces. The deal was never ratified and ties have remained tense.

The Karabakh fighting was brought to a halt after Russian peacekeeping troops deployed under a deal that locked in territorial gains by Azerbaijan, a close ally of Turkey.

Karabakh is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan, but is populated and, until recently, was fully controlled by ethnic Armenians after a bloody war in the 1990s which saw them seize other outlying regions belonging to Azerbaijan too.

Erdogan, who reviewed the parade in Baku with Aliyev, said there was also now a need to hold ethnic Armenian forces accountable for what he said were their war crimes and destruction of villages, cities and mosques.

Armenian forces deny such accusations. They say Azeri forces and foreign mercenaries are the ones responsible for large-scale cultural destruction and atrocities. Baku denies that.

Hunter Biden Under Investigation for Tax Affairs

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President-elect Joe Biden's son Hunter Biden, a focus of attacks from President Donald Trump and his Republican allies during the campaign for the White House, said on Wednesday the U.S. Attorney's Office in Delaware is investigating his tax affairs.

"I take this matter very seriously but I am confident that a professional and objective review of these matters will demonstrate that I handled my affairs legally and appropriately, including with the benefit of professional tax advisors," Hunter Biden said in a statement.

He said he learned of the investigation on Tuesday when prosecutors informed his lawyer of the probe. The transition team for President-elect Joe Biden on Wednesday released a statement saying Biden "is deeply proud of his son, who has fought through difficult challenges, including the vicious personal attacks of recent months, only to emerge stronger."

CNN reported that investigators have been examining multiple financial issues, including whether Hunter Biden and his associates violated tax and money laundering laws in business dealings in foreign countries, principally China, according to two people briefed on the probe. The investigation began as early as 2018, predating the arrival of William Barr as attorney general, two people briefed on the investigation told CNN.

Reuters could not confirm the report. The U.S. Attorney's Office declined to comment, and Hunter Biden's attorney could not immediately be reached for comment.

During the campaign, Trump and Republicans questioned potential conflicts of interest from Hunter Biden's position on the board of the Ukrainian energy company Burisma at the time his father was vice president to Democratic President Barack Obama.

Trump was impeached by the Democratic majority U.S. House of Representatives but acquitted by the Senate in February on charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress stemming from his efforts to pressure Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden.

U.S. Senators Fail to Block Trump Sale of F-35 Jets to UAE

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Democrats failed Wednesday to block the United States from selling top-of-the-line fighter-jets to the United Arab Emirates, with most senators dismissing fears that President Donald Trump was setting off a dangerous arms race.

In one of the largest arms deals of its four-year term, the outgoing administration has approved \$23 billion in stealth-capable F-35 jets, unarmed drones and other weapons to the Persian Gulf ally after it agreed to recognize Israel, a major cause for Trump.

Splitting mostly on party lines, opponents failed to convince a threshold of 50 senators in two procedural votes that Trump was acting hastily before President-elect Joe Biden takes over next month to bolster a nation that was part of Saudi Arabia's devastating offensive in Yemen.

Republican Senator Roy Blunt said that selling weapons to the UAE supported US jobs and provided "reinforcement of our friends who see common enemies and are working directly to move their country and their region in a much better direction."

Trump had already threatened to veto the resolutions if they passed, meaning both the Senate and House of Representatives needed two-thirds majorities to override him.

The White House in a statement said that the

weapons would enable the UAE to "deter increasing Iranian aggressive behavior and threats issued in the wake of that peace deal."

Robert Menendez, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, agreed that Iran posed risks but said: "We have yet to understand exactly what military threat the F-35s or armed drones will be addressing vis-a-vis Iran."

He noted that Qatar -- a fellow US ally which is under a blockade by the UAE and Saudi Arabia -- has already been pushing for its own F-35s.

"Do we really think that we can sell this just to the UAE and not have those other countries come knocking on our door and starting a very sophisticated arms race in the tinderbox of the world?" Menendez asked on the Senate floor.

Menendez also voiced concern both over the discovery of Emirati arms shipments to war-ravaged Libya, which is under a UN arms embargo, and on signs the United Arab Emirates has sought military ties with China.

The two Democratic senators from Arizona, Kyrsten Sinema and Mark Kelly, both joined Republicans on the drone sales, which involve Raytheon, a major employer in their state, and Sinema also rejected the bid to stop the F-35s.



Thai Protesters Say Royal Insult Law Must Go

BANGKOK (Reuters) - Thai protesters called on Thursday for the abolition of the lese majeste law which bans criticism of the monarchy and has been used recently against the leaders of months of protests demanding royal reforms and the removal of the government.

Section 112 of the Thai criminal code sets jail terms of three to 15 years for anyone convicted of defaming, insulting or threatening King Maha Vajiralongkorn and his closest family.

"If our country were truly democratic, we would be able to talk about monarchy reforms or criticise the institution," Panusaya "Rung" Sithijirawattanakul, one of the protest leaders, said at a public event focused on the lese majeste law.

"Many wouldn't have to seek asylum, be jailed, flee for their lives, or die just because they talked about the monarchy...No one should have to face this just by talking about other human beings who fancy themselves as gods."

The Palace did not comment and has not done so since the start of the protests. The government did not respond immediately to a request for comment.

Panusaya said she and 24 others had now been summoned to acknowledge lese majeste charges over comments made at protests since July.

Over 1,000 protesters against the lese majeste law gathered on Thursday at a venue commemorating a Thai student-led uprising in 1973 that helped end a military government at the time.

Before the recent charges, the law had not been used since 2018. Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha had said this was at the request of the king. Protesters also seek the removal of Prayuth, a former junta leader.

A hashtag that translates as #Abolish112 was trending on Thai-language Twitter on Thursday.

The protests have become the biggest challenge to the monarchy in decades, breaking taboos with open criticism of an institution that the constitution says must be revered.

Protesters want the king to be made clearly accountable under the constitution. They also seek to reverse changes that gave him control of the royal fortune and some army units.





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Parsian

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25th Anniversary of Turkmenistan's Permanent Neutrality

On December 12, 1995, the UN General Assembly approved a special resolution on "Turkmenistan's Permanent Neutrality". For the first time in the history of the world, this resolution gave Turkmenistan an international legal level. Since then, Turkmenistan's neutrality has been recognized as a positive tool to solve important issues of the present age and to build fruitful cooperation in strengthening friendly relations and good neighborliness between governments and people. In Turkmenistan, adherence to the principles of neutrality is highly important to international cooperation, especially its development in domestic and foreign policy. Currently, Turkmenistan has diplomatic relations with 147 countries and is a member of 47 international organizations. Currently, Turkmenistan has participated in 150 conventions, treaties and other multilateral international documents and has established warm trade and economic relations with many countries around the world. Therefore, the role of neutrality has flourished for the Turkmenistan government today and has become a solid foundation for development, as evidenced by the unanimous adoption of a new resolution by the UN General Assembly in 2015. Accordingly, Turkmenistan's degree of neutrality was enhanced by its support and recognition of its crucial role in the region and the world. In addition, the UN General Assembly, on the initiative of Turkmenistan, declared December 12 a "World Day of Neutrality".

Nowadays, Turkmenistan's neutrality has become an important condition for regional security. The fundamental principles of neutrality are in line with the centralized strategic principles of the United Nations to transform the Central Asian region into a region of peace and cooperation and to make it a powerful tool for continental stability. Peacefulness, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, respect for their sovereignty, non-participation in international military organizations and treaties, equal rights and mutually beneficial cooperation relations are important areas of Turkmenistan's policy of neutrality. Turkmenistan has been described as a responsible long-term partner of the United Nations, which plays an active role in international efforts to strengthen peace, security and cooperation in Central Asia.

In the present era, this practice is significant in the region. Turkmenistan is

ready to be a reliable UN partner in key areas such as peaceful settlement of the situation in Afghanistan, support for regional disarmament, finding a balanced solution to water and energy issues, ensuring environmental welfare and dealing with modern dangers and threats.

The opening of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia in Ashgabat in 2007 marked a new milestone in Turkmenistan's fruitful cooperation with the United Nations. The mission of this center is to help to stabilize the region and strengthen effective relations between the two parties.

Cooperation with the United Nations allows Turkmenistan to present its level of neutrality as an important condition for stability and security in the region. The announcement of the adoption of the "Year of International Peace and Trust" resolution in Turkmenistan in 2021 in order to expand the experience of the Turkmenistan government in this field reaffirms its importance.

The respected President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, has taken important new steps to further enhance the importance of neutrality, in particular the establishment of a "Group of Neutral Friends" for peace and security. This year marks the 25th anniversary of Turkmenistan's acquisition of permanent legal neutrality. With the action of the esteemed President of Turkmenistan, naming each year based on the timing and important events have now become a genuine tradition. Accordingly, the year 2020 has been declared "Turkmenistan - the homeland of neutrality".

Extensive events will be held in Turkmenistan and abroad in honor of the 25th glorious anniversary of Turkmenistan's Permanent Neutrality and the proclamation of "Turkmenistan - Homeland of Neutrality" in 2020. At the beginning of the glorious anniversary in the field of foreign policy, the conference "Turkmenistan and International Organizations: Cooperation for Peace and Development" was held with the presence of the President of Turkmenistan. Then, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of neutrality and the proclamation of "Turkmenistan - the homeland of neutrality" in 2020, successive events were held in Ashgabat at the governmental and international levels. Coinciding with the High-Level International Conference on "Neutrality Policy and its Role in Ensuring International Peace, Security and Sustainable Development" at the 25th Anniversary of Turkmenistan's Permanent Neutrality on December 12 in Ashgabat with the 75th Anniversary of the glorious foundation of the United Nations has profound meaning.

Turkmenistan-Iran relations

Following the principles of neutrality, Turkmenistan's foreign policy attaches considerable importance to good neighborly and friendly relations with the countries of the world, particularly with neighboring countries. Living with respect for the relations and good neighborliness of our ancestors is one of the main principles of our government's foreign policy. In this respect, it is gratifying that the cooperation between Turkmenistan and the

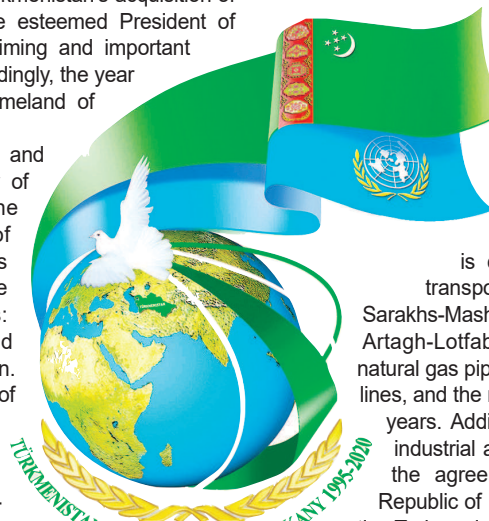
Islamic Republic of Iran is reaching new levels. The history of Turkmen-Iranian fraternal relations with a thousand-year history is a valid basis for mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries. Today, with the continuation of the ancient Silk Road trade relations, the basis of these relations, including cooperation in political, commercial and economic sectors, fuel and energy, transportation and communications, can be regarded as promising fields. In this regard, Turkmen-Iranian relations are exemplary.

The traditional friendly relations between Turkmenistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran are based on the principles of mutual respect and equality. Turkmenistan and Iran established diplomatic relations on February 18, 1992. For the past 30 years, relations between the two countries have been continuously established within the framework of reputable international organizations. It should be noted that Turkmenistan and Iran have similar views on regional and global events. Furthermore, Iran was the first country to uphold Turkmenistan's neutral rights. In particular, at the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) meeting in Islamabad, Pakistan in 1995, President Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani reaffirmed his support for Turkmenistan's international neutrality, which strengthened relations between the two countries.

These important events in the history of relations between the two countries are the continuation of fruitful joint actions that cover diverse areas of cooperation. It also an indicator of the mutual closeness of views and approaches in cooperation with governments and highly important regional and international political issues. An excellent example

is cooperation in political, trade and economic fields, transport, energy and other fields. In particular, Tajan-Sarakhs-Mashhad and Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway lines, Artagh-Lotfabad, Karpjeh-Kordkoy and Dolatabad-Khangaran natural gas pipelines, Balkanabad-Aliabad and Mari-Mashhad power lines, and the reservoir "Friendship" were jointly established over the years. Additionally, Iranian companies have participated in 100 industrial and road construction projects in Turkmenistan. Under the agreements, activists in Turkmenistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran are working to vastly expand trade and economic ties. Turkmenistan's cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran in political and economic fields has been further developed during the years of independence and neutrality. In this regard, it should be noted that the Joint Economic Cooperation Group between Turkmenistan and Iran and the Turkmen-Iranian trade negotiations play a crucial role in the development of trade and economic relations. At the same time, Turkmenistan and Iran effectively cooperate with each other to support their initiatives to develop regional and international relations in order to find harmonious solutions to important issues of the time within the framework of reputable international organizations, including the United Nations and specialized agencies.

We are confident that the cooperation between the two countries of Turkmenistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran will continue with mutual benefit in order to strengthen the interests of the two brotherly nations in the future. Embassy of Turkmenistan in the Islamic Republic of Iran



Hungary Declares Victory in EU Budget Row



BUDAPEST (Reuters) - Hungary's foreign minister declared victory on Wednesday in a row over linking European Union funds to rule-of-law standards, as Budapest and Warsaw appeared to be edging toward an agreement to unblock an EU financial package.

Poland and Hungary have been blocking the 1.8 trillion euro (\$2.18 trillion) 2021-2027 EU budget and coronavirus recovery fund drawn up for the 27 member states because their nationalistic governments oppose a clause linking the release of funds to rule-of-law standards.

But on Wednesday a compromise appeared to be close. "We have just received news that access to EU funds due for Hungary cannot be linked to political or ideological conditions," Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto said in a Facebook video on Wednesday. "We can declare victory. We have been successful because we have fought."

Earlier in the day a Polish official said the countries had provisionally accepted an EU budget proposal from the bloc's German presidency and were awaiting further approval from the Netherlands and other sceptical member states.

The issue is to be discussed on Thursday at an EU summit. A senior EU diplomat said ambassadors of member governments were positive on Wednesday in their first review. "An in-depth analysis in EU capitals is now beginning and the final decision will be taken by the European Council," the diplomat said, referring to the meeting of all EU government leaders on Thursday.

Under the deal, the rule of law regulation making access to EU money conditional on respecting the rule of law would remain unchanged, the diplomat said.

But Warsaw and Budapest would receive assurances from EU leaders in an explanatory declaration that the regulation would be applied objectively and could be tested before the EU's top court before implementation, the diplomat said.

UK Economy Still 7.9% Below Pre-Pandemic Level



LONDON (Dispatches) - GDP growth dropped to a "snail's pace" as Britain's recovery from the coronavirus recession - its steepest on record - stalled.

The UK economy grew by just 0.4% in October as the recovery from the coronavirus crisis slowed even before latest lockdown measures.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) showed GDP expanded for the sixth month in a row but remained 7.9% below its February pre-pandemic level.

Britain experienced its steepest recession on record earlier this year as coronavirus restrictions crushed economic activity.

It is widely expected to go into reverse again in the current fourth quarter after rules were tightened again. Britain's fiscal watchdog expects a recovery in 2021 but has warned this will be held back if the Brexit transition period ends without a deal with the EU.

The pace of growth in October was down from 1.1% in September and was the weakest it has been since the economy started its recovery from the slump.

GDP is expected to have shrunk again in November pulling the economy into a double-dip downturn.

In response to the latest figures, chancellor Rishi Sunak said: "I know people are worried about the winter months, but we will continue to support people through our Plan For Jobs to ensure nobody is left without hope or opportunity."

The ONS said October's data came against a "backdrop of further national measures" introduced in response to a second wave of COVID-19.

Growth in the services sector - which represents four-fifths of economic output - ground to a near-standstill at 0.2% as restrictions including a 10pm curfew on pubs and restaurants took effect. However manufacturing and construction proved more resilient, growing by 1.7% and 1%.

Jonathan Athow, ONS deputy national statistician for economic statistics, said it meant that "the economy overall grew only modestly".

ADB Expects Indian Economy to Contract At Slower Pace of 8%



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - The Asian Development Bank on Thursday projected the Indian economy to contract at a slower pace of 8% against its earlier estimate of 9% in FY21 on the back of faster recovery in Asia's third largest economy.

"The earlier South Asia forecast for 6.8% contraction is upgraded to 6.1% in line with an improved projection for India, as recovery accelerates, from 9.0% contraction to 8.0%. Growth will return in 2021, at 7.2% in South Asia and 8.0% in India," ADB said in its supplement to its flagship Asian Development Outlook.

Having contracted by 23.9% in June quarter, the Indian economy "began to normalize after containment measures started in ease in June", with economic contraction in September quarter narrowing to 7.5%, better than expected, ADB said.

ADB now projects China's economy to grow at 2.1% in 2020 from its earlier estimate of 1.8% growth factoring in consistent fiscal and monetary support by the government.

"The outlook for developing Asia is showing improvement. Growth projections have been upgraded for the People's Republic of China (PRC) and India, the region's two largest economies," said ADB Chief Economist Yasuyuki Sawada. "A prolonged pandemic remains the primary risk, but recent developments on the vaccine front are tempering this. Safe, effective, and timely vaccine delivery in developing economies will be critical to support the reopening of economies and the recovery of growth in the region."

However, ADB revised its inflation forecast for FY21 to 5.8% from its earlier estimate of 4.5%. "In India, supply chain disruption brought food inflation to an average of 9.1% in the first 7 months of FY2020, pushing headline inflation to 6.9% in the same period. Indian inflation is expected to ease in the coming months, and the 4.0% Update projection for FY22 is maintained (at 4%)," it added.

Turkey's Current Account Deficit at \$62m in October



ANKARA (Reuters) - Turkey's current account is expected post a relatively small deficit of \$62 million in October, a Reuters poll showed on Wednesday, as exports stood at an all-time high.

In the poll of 12 economists, forecasts for October ranged between a deficit of \$600 million and a surplus of \$550 million. The median estimate forecast a \$62 million deficit.

Turkey's foreign trade deficit, a main component of the current account, climbed 34.4% year-on-year in October to \$2.37 billion according to the general trade system, data from the country's statistics institute showed.

The relatively strong performance of the current account in October is due to exports standing at a record high level, and a drop in imports compared to previous months, said Daglar Ozkan, economist at Is Yatirim.

"Imports weren't as high as they were in September, the reduction of gold imports contributed to this. Therefore, we will see the one of the best monthly performances this year of the current account in October," he said, adding that the deficit would likely increase again in November.

For the whole year, the median response of 11 economists was for a current account deficit of \$35 billion, unchanged from last month's survey, with forecasts ranging between \$32 billion and \$36 billion.

Turkey's long history of current account deficits - which topped \$52 billion in 2018 - has again been worrying investors after the lira touched record lows and the central bank ate into its foreign exchange reserves.

Ankara expects a deficit of \$24.4 billion, or 3.5% of GDP this year. Without the downturn in tourism due to the coronavirus pandemic and surging demand for gold, Turkey would have posted a surplus of \$12.4 billion, according to government estimates.

The current account is expected to recover in 2021 and could end the year with a deficit around \$20 billion or less, said Ozkan, and a slowdown in credit growth would lead to a first quarter contraction in imports. An expected recovery in tourism starting in spring would also support the current account.

No Restrictions on Steel Products Export

ISFAHAN (IP) - Minister for Industry, Mines, and Trade said that there are no restrictions on the export of steel products in Iran.

Alireza Razm-Hosseini after visiting Mobarakeh Steel Company on Thursday, told reporters that there is no concern for exporting steel products, and according to the law, all-steel products must be offered on the stock exchange, and the surplus of that must be exported.

“The country’s steel industry has shown that we can help lift sanctions and supply raw materials to other factories. Also, good measures have been taken in this regard during this period,” he added.

The Minister of Industry, Mines, and Trade also pointed out that steel production was 500,000 tons before Iran’s Islamic Revolution. Today, it has reached 28 million tons, and in 1404, it will reach 55 million tons.



World Economy Will Be Worse Than Expected in Short Term

By: UN Secretary-General António Guterres

As the world marks the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the landmark Paris Agreement on climate change, a promising movement for carbon neutrality is taking shape. By next month, countries representing more than 65 per cent of harmful greenhouse gasses and more than 70 per cent of the world economy will have committed to achieve net zero emissions by the middle of the century.

At the same time, the main climate indicators are worsening. While the Covid-19 pandemic has temporarily reduced emissions, carbon dioxide levels are still at record highs – and rising. The past decade was the hottest on record; Arctic sea ice in October was the lowest ever, and apocalyptic fires, floods, droughts and storms are increasingly the new normal. Biodiversity is collapsing, deserts are spreading, oceans are warming and choking with plastic waste. Science tells us that unless we cut fossil fuel production by 6 per cent every year between now and 2030, things will get worse. Instead, the word is on track for a 2 per cent annual rise.

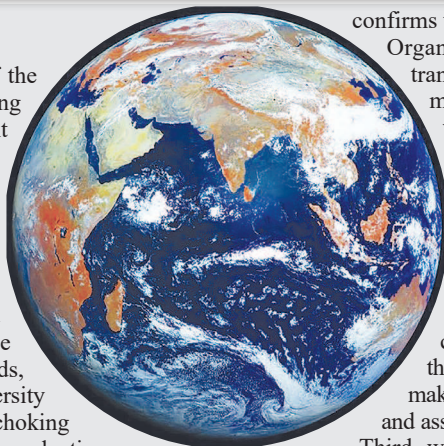
Pandemic recovery gives us an unexpected yet vital opportunity to attack climate change, fix our global environment, re-engineer economies and re-imagine our future. Here is what we must do:

First, we need build a truly global coalition for carbon neutrality by 2050.

The European Union has committed to do so. The United Kingdom, Japan, the Republic of Korea and more than 110 countries have done the same. So, too, has the incoming United States administration. China has pledged to get there before 2060.

Every country, city, financial institution and company should adopt plans for net zero -- and act now to get on the right path to that goal, which means cutting global emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 compared with 2010 levels. In advance of next November’s UN Climate Conference in Glasgow, Governments are obligated by the Paris Agreement to be ever more ambitious every five years and submit strengthened commitments known as Nationally Determined Contributions, and these NDCs must show true ambition for carbon neutrality.

Technology is on our side. It costs more to simply run most of today’s coal plants than it does to build new renewable plants from scratch. Economic analysis



confirms the wisdom of this path. According to the International Labour Organization, despite inevitable job losses, the clean energy transition will create 18 million net new jobs by 2030. But we must recognize the human costs of decarbonization, and support workers with social protection, re-skilling and up-skilling so that the transition is just.

Second, we need to align global finance with the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals, the world’s blueprint for a better future.

It is time to put a price on carbon; end fossil fuel subsidies and finance; stop building new coal power plants; shift the tax burden from income to carbon, from taxpayers to polluters; make climate-related financial risk disclosures mandatory; and integrate the goal of carbon neutrality into all economic and fiscal decision-making. Banks must align their lending with the net zero objective, and asset owners and managers must decarbonize their portfolios.

Third, we must secure a breakthrough on adaptation and resilience to help those already facing dire impacts of climate change.

That’s not happening enough today: adaptation represents only 20 per cent of climate finance. This hinders our efforts to reduce disaster risk. It also isn’t smart; every \$1 invested in adaptation measures could yield almost \$4 in benefits. Adaptation and resilience are especially urgent for small island developing states, for which climate change is an existential threat.

Next year gives us a wealth of opportunities to address our planetary emergencies, through major United Nations conferences and other efforts on biodiversity, oceans, transport, energy, cities and food systems. One of our best allies is nature itself: nature-based solutions could provide one-third of the net reductions in greenhouse gas emissions required to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. Indigenous knowledge can help to point the way. And as humankind devises strategies for preserving the environment and building a green economy, we need more women decision-makers at the table.

COVID and climate have brought us to a threshold. We cannot go back to the old normal of inequality and fragility; instead we must step towards a safer, more sustainable path. This is a complex policy test and an urgent moral test. With decisions today setting our course for decades to come, we must make pandemic recovery and climate action two sides of the same coin.

Paris Enjoys Brexit Bonus With Estimated 4,735 Extra Finance Jobs

PARIS (Reuters) - Brexit has led to 4,735 financial sector jobs shifting to France since Britain voted to leave the European Union in 2016, French lobby group Paris Europlace estimates.

European capitals have been jostling to attract business from London in the wake of the Brexit referendum, especially among banks, asset managers and other financial services firms.

Paris Europlace said the jobs came from teams relocating to France or investment decisions favouring the country and linked to Brexit. It listed JPMorgan and Japan’s Nomura among those that had shifted teams, but also French banks BNP Paribas and Societe Generale, which have big operations in Britain.

Iran, Afghanistan...

FROM PAGE 1

Khaf-Herat, which is part of the Iran-Afghanistan rail corridor, started in the fiscal year of 2007-2008 and connects Iran’s eastern city of Khaf to Afghanistan’s western city of Ghoryan.

Completion of the project will affect transit facilities in Afghanistan and solve many investors’ and merchants’ problems in the country.

Implementation of the project will also show the importance of Iran’s position once again as it makes a boom in regional trade - exports and imports. The railway project will also contribute to the development of tourism.

Addressing the ceremony, President Rouhani said that the two nations have always had a close relationship and that the Khaf-Herat railway project will further strengthen this bond.

“Today is the day of compassion, mercy and also day of breakthrough for the two great nations of Iran and Afghanistan. The two nations from the same root, history, culture and from the same region who have maintained their brotherhood and neighborliness in the long run of history.”

Afghan President Ghani, for his part, welcomed the “historic” project, hailing it as a step towards further development of the two nations’ economies.

Iran’s Minister of Roads and Urban Development also said that Khaf-Herat Railway enjoys high capacity of transporting six million tons of cargo annually.

Speaking in the inaugural ceremony of Khaf-Herat Railway project, which was held online, Mohammad Eslami reiterated that this railway has the capacity of transporting six million tons of cargo and also one million passengers annually.

This inauguration is a unique interaction and coordinated cooperation between the two countries of Iran and Afghanistan, which has been launched based on friendship, he added.

Turning to the motto of the two nations with “One Culture and History”, Eslami stated, “In this field, we can always expand and develop friendship and cooperation bonds.”

As long as 225 km, 140 km of Khaf-Herat Railway will be inaugurated today while the remaining 85 km would be completed with better cooperation, he emphasized.

He said that the inauguration of this railway could provide a large share of transit and exchanges of goods between Iranian and Afghan traders, noting that this year more than 10 million tons of transit cargo have been exchanged from southern, northern ports, East-West and North-South corridors.

The Minister of Roads and Urban Development Eslami said that Khaf-Herat Railway would account for a large share of trade between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has described the project as a boost to regional trade and popular exchanges.

“The Khaf-Herat railway’s significance is not only for Iran & Afghanistan, but for the greater region. As a gateway that’ll boost trade and people-to-people exchanges, it will also contribute to regional stability & development. Turning our frontiers into bridges is a priority,” the chief diplomat tweeted on Wednesday.

U.S. Must Earn...

FROM PAGE 1

Elsewhere in his remarks, Zarif stressed that Iran has remained committed to all of its obligations under the JCPOA, and that so far, no one has said that the country has withdrawn from the deal.

“We are not pessimistic about the future. The United States violated the Iranian people’s rights, but it has not been able to do anything. America is a loser in this matter, but were not a winner either because the people have been under pressure. This game can turn into a win-win game,” he said.

Zarif further referred to abortive attempts by the US and Israel to portray Iran as a security threat since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The reason for Israeli and American concerns about the signing of the JCPOA was that the deal eliminated those security threat claims as well as six Security Council resolutions without being implemented against Iran, he said.

China’s Foreign Coal Push Risks Global Climate Goals



BEIJING (AFP) - China’s plan to fund dozens of foreign coal plants from Zimbabwe to Indonesia is set to produce more emissions than major developed nations, threatening global efforts to fight climate change, environmentalists have warned.

Under the Paris climate deal signed in 2015, China positioned itself as a leader on climate change, and in September President Xi Jinping pledged the country would become carbon neutral by 2060.

But Chinese state-owned firms are investing billions in coal power abroad, which are not counted in the domestic carbon neutral calculations, and which environmentalists say put at risk the Paris accord’s goal of keeping global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius.

“New plants that would potentially be operating for many years beyond 2030 are fundamentally incompatible with global efforts to contain climate change,” said Christine Shearer, head of coal research at the Global Energy Monitor.

The new carbon-belching power stations already under construction will produce 19 gigawatts of power and emit 115 million tons each year, data from Boston University’s Global Development Policy Center showed.

China has nearly three-times more in the pipeline abroad, meaning its overseas plants would emit more than the current emissions of major economies such as Britain, Turkey and Italy, according to figures in British Petroleum’s annual review of global energy.

Each of the dozens of plants are expected to have a lifespan of decades.

If completed and operated for 30 years, these plants would emit the equivalent of almost three years of emissions from all coal-fired power plants in China, according to Lauri Myllyvirta, lead Asia analyst with Helsinki-based Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air.

China is making the overseas coal play as part of its trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative, a plan to fund infrastructure projects and increase its sway overseas.

Xi has promised to “pursue open, green and clean co-operation” under the Belt and Road plan, yet Chinese banks have continued their financing of coal projects regardless. Between 2000 and 2018, 23.1 percent of the \$251 billion invested by China’s two biggest policy banks on overseas energy projects was spent on coal projects, according to Boston University’s database on China’s global energy financing.

Human Rights...

FROM PAGE 1

Theoretically and not practically, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. On this occasion and in the 72nd anniversary of adopting this declaration, Human Rights Day is to hold a one-year campaign in order to mark the 72th universal declaration of human rights .This is a historical document which announces unalienable rights that all enjoy it as a human regardless of race, color, religion, sex, language, political or other beliefs, nationality, wealth, birth or anything else.

Everywhere it is read or heard so that without materialization of human rights, one cannot pin hopes on sustainable development. Human rights is the main core of sustainable development objectives in all part of the world, and in the absence of human dignity, there is no possibility for achieving sustainable development either physically or conceptually.

The climate of discrimination in the world today has defamed the human rights declaration because it was supposed that sustainable peace and equal human rights would be observed for all mankind in the world but in this press conference, Bachelet has just pointed to few pledges given by the U.S. President-elect Biden like expansion of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals protections, an increase of the number of refugees to be resettled, end of family separation, end to the construction of the border wall, protection for child arrivals, abortion, eradicating racism, healthcare, banning torture and an overhaul of the asylum system,” and she has said she is optimistic over materialization of pledges of new U.S. President.

These short remarks of Bachelet indicate how much the amount of implementation and expansion of human rights in the world and even in the U.S. as the cradle of liberty has been. One of the interesting things is that U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday and in a statement on the occasion of Human Rights Day noted, “The U.S. on the Human Rights Day respects all rights and freedoms stipulated in the 1948 Universal Human Rights Declaration.” He has said this day has special reverberation for the Americans because the U.S. has been the first country which has been founded based on this idea that all human beings are created equally and their Creator has given them equal rights.

I put Pompeo’s remarks beside Bachelet’s remarks who expects U.S. President-elect to take important actions, and fully explain that human rights issue has become a cover-up for sins of people like Pompeo who have not imagined clearly in practice any right for major part of the people in the world. There is sea of distance between the human rights that the U.S. and its supporters has materialized since adaptation of the declaration 72 years ago with the Human rights Islam has presented to the world.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation member states adopted the text of their declaration on human rights where in its preamble has been stipulated, “With belief in Almighty Allah, God of the world people and creator of universe and giver of blessings, that God who has created man in the best way possible and has given him dignity and has made him as His successor on the earth, that God who has handed over the task of developing and correcting the earth and has handed over the divine tasks to him and whatever is in the skies and on the earth all have been put in his possession, and with confirming the message of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that Almighty has sent him for guidance and His genuine religion and has made him a blessing for the world people and freedom of slaves and demolisher of all taghuts)Taghut is Islamic terminology denoting a focus of worship other than God) and arrogances, the Prophet who has announced equality for all humanity and has not set any priority for superiority of one over the other except in their taqva (The term meaning “to keep away from sins and to obey God’s orders) and has removed all distances and reluctance among people, the people whom God has created them from one soul, and with considering the genuine tawhid (Tawhid is the indivisible oneness concept of monotheism in Islam) belief that Islam’s structure has been laid on it , a belief that has called on the mankind to worship nobody but God and to consider no one as His partner and not to replace God with anyone, a belief that has been set on the genuine responsible liberty of mankind and his dignity and has announced freedom of man from the slavery.”

In the current coronavirus-hit condition, the world has been witnessing slavery of 80m people in that so-called cradle of liberty that Pompeo honors. So one frankly can say that adoption of human rights declaration has guaranteed double standard actions that one has been the source of poverty and misery and the other one has been supporting wealth, force, power and modern feudalism on humankind.



Kim Top Contender in U.S. Women's Open

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Kim Sei-young hopes to become the world No. 1 with a win at the U.S. Women's Open, which begins on Thursday, but with nine of the top 10 golfers playing in Houston, Texas, she faces a tough fight in the final major of 2020. After picking up her maiden major title at the Women's PGA Championship in October, second-ranked Kim is among the favourites in the tightly packed field at Champions Golf Club, where competitors will play on two courses: Cypress Creek and Jackrabbit.

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World Indoor Championships In China Postponed

LONDON (Reuters) - The World Athletics Indoor Championships in Nanjing, China have been pushed back again to March 2023 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the sport's global governing body said on Thursday. The event was initially scheduled for March 13-15 this year but was postponed for 12 months over fears related to the spread of the novel coronavirus in China. Organisers have now agreed to host the Nanjing event a year after the 2022 championships in Belgrade, World Athletics added.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

SATURDAY DECEMBER 12, 2020

Real Madrid, Atletico Into Champions League Last 16

MADRID (Dispatches) - Karim Benzema sent Real Madrid through to the last 16 of the Champions League on Wednesday alongside their rivals Atletico, while Neymar scored a hat-trick as Paris Saint-Germain beat Istanbul Basaksehir in a match that had been delayed for 24 hours over a racism row.

Real are Europe's most decorated club with 13 European Cups but they needed to beat Borussia Muenchengladbach in Madrid to be sure of making it through the group stage of the Champions League for a 24th straight year.

Benzema was their hero, easing the pressure on coach Zinedine Zidane with two fine back-post headers in the first half securing a 2-0 win in a game played behind closed doors at the Alfredo di Stefano Stadium.

"Each match is a final and I think that if we always play how we did today, no team can hurt us," warned Benzema, who has played in four Champions League final wins with Real in the last seven seasons.

The Frenchman also hit the bar in the second half and in the end it was a result that suited both teams, with a 0-0 draw between Inter Milan and Shakhtar Donetsk allowing Real to top Group B and Gladbach, former European Cup runners-up, to go through as runners-up.

Players from the German club gathered around smartphones and laptops after full time in Madrid to follow events in Milan, where a winner for either team would have knocked Gladbach out.

They celebrated wildly when their qualification was confirmed.

"Moments like that live long in the memory. It was absolutely incredible and the joy was uncontainable," said Gladbach midfielder Christoph Kramer.

Shakhtar go into the Europa League while Inter finish bottom of their group, failing to reach the last 16 for a third season running.

Meanwhile Atletico needed to beat Red Bull Salzburg in Austria to qualify as runners-up in Group A behind Bayern Munich, and did so with Mario Hermoso and Yannick Carrasco scoring in a 2-0 victory.

Salzburg now go into the Europa League while reigning European champions Bayern completed the group stage unbeaten as Niklas Suele and Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting gave them a 2-0 win over Lokomotiv Moscow.

The other team to clinch qualification on



Wednesday was Atalanta, whose 1-0 win away to Ajax secured second place in Group D behind Liverpool and a last-16 spot for the second year running.

Luis Muriel scored a late winner for Atalanta in Amsterdam after Ryan Gravenberch was sent off for the hosts, who drop into the Europa League.

Already through, Liverpool were able to give a chance to several younger players in their 1-1 draw with Midtjylland in Denmark, where Mohamed Salah put the 2019 winners ahead early on but Alexander Scholz's penalty gave the hosts an honourable draw.

PSG had wrapped up their qualification for the last 16 on Tuesday thanks to Manchester United's defeat at RB Leipzig, despite their own game being suspended after an unprecedented walkout.

Both sets of players refused to continue after a row erupted over an alleged racist remark by the fourth official aimed at Basaksehir's assistant coach, Pierre Webo.

With a new set of officials, the game restarted in the 14th minute on Wednesday and an irresistible Neymar scored a hat-trick while also winning a penalty converted by Kylian Mbappe.

That was Mbappe's first Champions League goal in 12 months, and he scored again later on after Mehmet Topal pulled one back. With their 5-1 victory, PSG go through as group winners.

Pep Guardiola's Manchester City made it five wins and a draw in Group D as they eased to a 3-0 victory against Marseille with Ferran Torres and Sergio Aguero getting second-half goals before an Alvaro Gonzalez own goal.

Also already qualified, Porto beat Olympiakos 2-0 in Piraeus courtesy of Otavio's early penalty and a Matheus Uribe goal. The Greeks, who ended with 10 men, finish third in the section.

The draw for the last 16 is on Monday.

Sociedad, Young Boys Scrape Into Europa League Last 32

LONDON (Reuters) - Real Sociedad and Young Boys squeezed into the last 32 of the Europa League and were joined in the knockout phase by Napoli, Molde, Maccabi Tel-Aviv and Wolfsburg while Tottenham Hotspur secured top spot as group play concluded on Thursday.

Jose Mourinho's Spurs side had already guaranteed progress but second-half goals by Carlos Vinicius and Giovanni Lo Celso earned a 2-0 win over Royal Antwerp as they leapfrogged the Belgians who had also qualified from Group J.

While Tottenham cruised it was a frantic night across the continent as others left it late to stay alive. Real Sociedad's Willian Jose snatched a stoppage-time goal to secure a 1-1 draw at Napoli as the high-flying Liga side got through in second spot behind the Italians in Group F.

They were in danger of heading out as they trailed to Piotr Zielinski's 35th-minute effort for section leaders Napoli but breathed a sigh of relief with Willian Jose's late leveller.

AZ Alkmaar would have finished above Sociedad with a win at bottom club Rijeka but lost 2-1 as Ivan Tomec scored for the Croatian hosts in added time to secure their only group win. For Swiss club Young Boys it was even tighter as they beat visiting Romanians Cluj 2-1 in a dramatic Group A clash. Cluj, who needed a win to leapfrog Young Boys, went ahead in the 84th minute through Gabriel Debeljuh.

But in an astonishing climax Jean-Pierre Nsame's penalty levelled it in stoppage time after keeper Cristian Balgradeanu was red-carded before Nsame was himself sent off in the 95th.

A minute later Gianluca Gaudino slotted a Young Boys winner and Cluj ended with nine men as Damjan Dokovic was dismissed.

Young Boys finished runners-up behind already-qualified AS Roma who lost 3-1 at CSKA Sofia.

Norwegians Molde progressed as they drew 2-2 at Rapid Vienna who could have overtaken them. Captain Wolff Eikrem scored twice for Molde who finished second in Group B behind Arsenal as the London side won 4-2 at Dundalk to finish with maximum points.



the game was restarted on Wednesday, with PSG winning 5-1.

No Place in Football or in Life for Racism

PARIS (Dispatches) - Paris Saint-Germain star Neymar defended the decision of his team and Istanbul Basaksehir to walk off the pitch in this week's Champions League match following alleged racist remarks by an official, as the world's most expensive player stated racism "has no place in football or in life".

"What happened was unacceptable. In the times we live in we cannot accept differences being made like that about color or race," Neymar told French broadcaster RMC Sport after scoring a hat-trick when

"It has no place in football, or in life, or in any sport, so our attitude was perfect."

The match in Paris was halted in the 14th minute on Tuesday as a row erupted amid accusations the Romanian fourth official had used a racist term to describe Basaksehir's Cameroonian assistant coach, Pierre Webo.

With Basaksehir refusing to come back out unless the official was removed, the game was played to a finish 24 hours later with a new refereeing team.

Meanwhile, European football's governing body UEFA has opened an investigation into the unprecedented incidents.

"Sometimes in extreme circumstances these things need to be done to see if the world can change a little," said Neymar, who together with other players took a knee before the restart on Wednesday in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

PSG had already qualified for the last 16 before the restart, but they needed to beat Basaksehir to finish top of their group and Kylian Mbappe scored their other two goals in a one-sided game.

Rossi, Italy's Legendary 1982 World Cup-Winning Footballer, Dies

ROME (Dispatches) - Paolo Rossi, a hero of Italian football who fired the Azzurri to victory in the 1982 World Cup, has died aged 64, prompting an outpouring of grief and tributes.

Rossi's wife Federica Cappelletti announced the death with a post on Instagram alongside a photo of the couple, accompanied by the comment "Forever," followed by a heart.

"There will never be anyone like you, unique, special, after you the absolute nothing....," Cappelletti also wrote on Facebook.

The cause of his death was not revealed but Italian media reported that Rossi had been suffering from "an incurable disease".

Tributes were paid to 'Pablito', the star who was banned for three years for his part in a betting scandal, but returned to win the World Cup in Spain and the Ballon D'Or the same year.

Despite breaking in the early hours, Italian media splashed with the news, while social media lit up with tributes and "Paolo Rossi" was Italy's number one trending search item.

"Football and Italy mourns Paolo Rossi," headlined the Gazzetta dello Sport, as La Stampa called him the "hero of Spain '82".

The news of his passing comes two weeks after the death of Argentina football legend Diego Maradona, winner of the 1986 World Cup.

Rossi won the hearts of Italian fans during the summer of 1982, when his goals dragged Enzo Bearzot's Azzurri to a third world title. Italy started the tournament with three uninspiring draws before they came to life and marched to the title.

But Italy's sporting icon almost missed out on the tournament.

He was caught up in a bribery scandal and banned for three years in 1980, but after continually protesting his innocence was cleared to play after two.



Zidane Dismisses Ferguson Comparison

MADRID (Reuters) - Zinedine Zidane admitted he has no plans for a lengthy stay as Real Madrid's manager after coming through the latest of many challenges in his reign by guiding his side into the Champions League knockout stages on Wednesday.

The coach was backed into a corner after defeats to Alaves and Shakhtar Donetsk but victory over Sevilla in La Liga and a commanding 2-0 win over Borussia Muenchengladbach, which meant Madrid finished top of Champions League Group B, has eased the pressure on him.

Yet he ruled out following in the footsteps of Alex Ferguson, who spent 26 years in charge of Manchester United.

"I will never be Madrid's Ferguson, I'm sure of that," Zidane told a news conference after Madrid booked their place in the Champions League knockouts for the 24th consecutive season. "What I really want is to enjoy what I'm doing, I don't know for how long I will stay here so I don't even think about it."

Zidane, who first took charge of Madrid in 2016 and is in his second spell after returning to the club in 2019 less than a year after resigning, is Madrid's third longest serving coach behind Miguel Munoz and Vicente del Bosque.

With 11 trophies to his name including two La Liga titles and three Champions Leagues, he is the club's second most successful coach behind Munoz, who won 14 honours between 1959 and 1974.

"What I think about is the day-to-day and how lucky I am to be here in this great club with these players," he added.

"But I don't know until when, it's already for a long time now in Spain in Madrid and I want to continue a bit longer."

