

**Health Ministry Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari Announced on Tuesday That Some 223 Iranians Have Died From Coronavirus Disease Over the Past 24 Hours Bringing the Total Deaths to 52,670**

# IRAN NEWS

**The Head of "Committee for Developing Iran's Economic Cooperation with Iraq and Syria" Has Said the United States Was the Loser Due to Washington's Failure To Zero Iran's Oil and Gas Exports**

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**2 DOMESTIC**

**President Receives Seven New Envoys**



> SEE PAGE 2

**3 DOMESTIC**

**National Economy Has Been Politicized**



> SEE PAGE 3

**4 INTERNATIONAL**

**Biden Claims "Democracy Prevailed"**



> SEE PAGE 4

**8 SPORTS**

**Barca to Face PSG In Champions League Last 16**



> SEE PAGE 8

**President Urges U.S. To Ditch Wrong Policy of Sanctions**

*IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK*

TEHRAN - The Iranian president has called on those imposing sanctions on the country to set aside their wrong and failed approach for good and make it history. Speaking in a Tuesday meeting, President Hassan Rouhani also highlighted Iranians' resistance against sanctions. "The Iranian nation's resistance against the pressure of sanctions and the full-scale economic war launched by the Trump administration against Iran revealed important realities to the world and all ill-wishers of Iran," he said. "Trump didn't get to know the potential and realities about the capabilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and acted based on his illusions," he noted. "The White House's failure in confrontation with Iran after two and a half years of a full-fledged economic war coupled with the failure of Trump's international policies is among the reasons behind his defeat in the recent U.S. election," said President Rouhani.

**See Page 7**

**Iran, India, Uzbekistan Meet On Joint Use of Chabahar Port**



*IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK*

TEHRAN - Iran, India, and Uzbekistan held the first-ever meeting of a trilateral working group on the joint use of the strategic Chabahar Port, southeastern Iran. The meeting was held virtually on Monday and co-chaired by Iranian Deputy Transport Minister Shahram Adamnejad, Indian Ports Ministry Secretary Sanjeev Ranjan, and Uzbek Deputy Transport Minister Davron Dexkanov. The Meeting was jointly chaired virtually by Secretary (Shipping), Sanjeev Ranjan, Deputy Minister of Transport of the Republic of Uzbekistan, D. Dehkanov and Deputy Transport Minister of Iran, Shahram Adamnejad. During the meeting, the participants discussed joint use of Chabahar Port for trade and transit purposes and enhanced regional connectivity. All sides also noted the significant role played by Chabahar port for the region to deliver humanitarian assistance during the COVID pandemic. All sides welcomed India's proposal to hold "Chabahar Day" on the sidelines of the International Maritime Summit scheduled to be hosted by India in January 2021. Uzbekistan has been keen to use the Chabahar port as a transit port for the Indian Ocean region and the port can give more options to the landlocked Central Asian region and Eastern part of Russia, according to diplomatic sources familiar with the region. This connectivity will also enhance India's footprints in Afghanistan as Uzbekistan will be connected to Chabahar Port via the landlocked country. Besides Uzbekistan, other Central Asian countries including Kazakhstan have also shown interest in using the port. India seeks to cooperate closely with regional countries on this issue, officials said. Indian presence in Chabahar Port has been immune from US sanctions on Iran and Delhi has been keen to build railway link from Chabahar port to link landlocked Afghanistan. It may be noted that Uzbekistan has built a railway link to Afghanistan to connect to Iranian railway network eyeing use of Chabahar Port as an entry into the Indian Ocean region. Uzbekistan is among two doubly landlocked countries in the world. Tashkent over the past five years buoyed by economic reforms is seeking to increase its Indian Ocean outreach to break away from its landlocked status. In a videoconference on Tuesday, Iranian Deputy of Road Minister at Transport Affairs Shahram Adamnejad and Uzbek Deputy Minister of Transport D Dehkanov discussed the implementation of transit strategies between the two countries to the origin and destination of India and other third countries through the port of Chabahar. Chabahar port is a safe and very suitable port for the transit of goods, said Adamnejad, adding that the neighboring countries and the region can benefit from investing in this port. Referring to the restrictions imposed by Turkmenistan on the entry or transit of goods through this country, he informed of Iran's effective measures in the field of transportation of goods and trucks by vessels from Iran's northern ports in the Caspian Sea.

**See Page 7**

**SPND Budget Increased by 256%**

TEHRAN (MNA) - Minister of Defense announced a 256 percent increase in the budget of the Organization of Defensive Innovation and Research (known by its acronym SPND). "After the assassination of Martyr Fakhri-zadeh, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution said that two important issues should be put on the agenda by all those involved, first, the pursuit of this crime and the definitive punishment of its perpetrators, and second, the pursuit of the martyr's scientific and technical efforts," said Brigadier General Amir Hatami on Tuesday. Stating that the enemy in this incident sought to disrupt the process of scientific movement and the speed of progress of the Islamic Republic in the field of new technologies, he added, "The enemy was well aware that we have made significant progress in emerging and innovative areas, therefore, with this action, it tried to weaken the morale of the people and damage the security and authority of Iran."

**See Page 7**

**ViewPoint**

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

**Ending All Sanctions, Condition for Considering JCPOA**

The wisdom emerged from civility for negotiations with one party of the contract which has disregarded its responsibility and has not fulfilled its obligation in due time rules that in order to substantiate the right of the committed party, first we are better to go to the court and seek our rightfulness from the court, and in case this process is not possible, we should wisely leave the contract through reducing the amount of our commitments based on not giving any pretext to the opposite current. The recent reciprocal action law, which has been recently approved by Majlis and the government inevitably had to accept it, has put in front of us this very content based on rational principle and gradual reduction of reducing obligations and return to the day one with an experience bitter than the snake venom. That the other parties have misused the 11th and 12th governments' convergence and deceived Iran with "JCPOA", of course, it was a great historical experience which will remain forever between Iran and the West. Westerns and above all Germany are after excessive demands. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas recently in an interview with German weekly Der Spiegel has said that Germany is after an alternative for the JCPOA and a broader nuclear deal with Iran because according to his claim, the current agreement is no longer enough. According to Russian news agency Sputnik which has quoted Maas's interview, the German foreign minister has claimed, "A form of 'nuclear agreement plus' is needed, which also lies in our interest. We have clear expectations for Iran: no nuclear weapons, but also no ballistic rocket program that threatens the whole region. Iran must also play another role in the region." He went on to claim that a broader accord is needed as Iran cannot be trusted. Berlin's demand, as one of the European signatories of the JCPOA for restricting the components of power of the Islamic Republic of Iran in line with the U.S., comes while Iranian officials have repeatedly reiterated that the JCPOA is not negotiable any longer. The most interesting part of the interview is where the Western countries, which have not either fulfilled any of their obligations, do not blame the violator, and with irreplaceable rudeness assert that Iran cannot be trusted while they themselves have been the main violators of the JCPOA and Iran has never fallen short in observing its obligations that most Iranians are opposed to them and only Iran government with collusion with the former Majlis Speaker gave in to it, and the country became committed to fulfill them above its obligations and now it is accused of being distrustful.

**See Page 7**

**U.S. Imposes Sanctions on Two Iranian Individuals**

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump has in its final days imposed sanctions on two Iranian individuals allegedly linked to the Islamic Republic's Intelligence Ministry. The U.S. Treasury Department announced on its website on Monday that Washington had blacklisted Mohammad Baseri and Ahmad Khazaei, two senior officials of the Iranian Intelligence Ministry, over accusations of involvement in the possible death of a former FBI agent whom the White House alleges has been imprisoned in the Islamic Republic. The Department claimed that the two Iranian officials "were involved in the abduction, detention, and probable death of Mr. Robert Levinson." The Treasury Department also said in a statement that the sanctions would freeze any US-held assets of the designated individuals and generally bar Americans from doing business with them. Levinson reportedly visited Iran's Kish Island in the south on March 9, 2007. He later went missing and his whereabouts remain unknown. There are different reports about the aim of his trip, with some saying the man, who had become a private detective, was reportedly investigating cigarette counterfeiting in the region. Others said he had been on a business trip.

**See Page 7**

**EU Diplomat Vows to Continue Nuclear Talks With Iran**

BRUSSELS (PressTV) - The European Union will continue nuclear talks with Iran regardless of the recent execution of a counterrevolutionary figure in Iran, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell says. Speaking at a news conference in Berlin, the top EU diplomat added that the meeting of the Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the 2015 multilateral nuclear agreement signed between Iran and major world powers, will be held in Vienna, Austria, this week as planned before. "I don't think we have to change our schedule and our work in order to keep the JCPOA alive. We will continue working for it," he added. The next round of the JCPOA Joint Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday via video-conferencing at the level of deputy foreign ministers and political directors. U.S. President Donald Trump, a hawkish critic of the landmark nuclear deal, unilaterally withdrew Washington from the agreement in May 2018, and unleashed the "toughest ever" sanctions against the Islamic Republic in defiance of global criticism. Following its much-criticized exit, Washington has been attempting to prevent the remaining signatories from abiding by their commitments and thus kill the historic agreement, which is widely viewed as a fruit of international diplomacy. On December 8, Borrell said the United States needs to rejoin the JCPOA, commending the multilateral agreement for perfectly exemplifying a successful diplomatic strategy. "We need to find a way for the US to rejoin the Iran nuclear deal, and for Iran to come back into full compliance. The nuclear deal is still assessed as a landmark of successful diplomacy ... We are proud of it as the biggest success of our diplomatic capacity," Borrell told a GLOBSEC webinar.

**See Page 7**

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# Dual Citizens Not Allowed to Be Presidential Candidates

TEHRAN (MNA) – According to a bill ratified by the Iranian Parliament, candidates with dual citizenship cannot register for taking part in Presidential elections.

In an open session on Tuesday, Iranian MPs approved that Presidential candidates must not have citizenship or residency of other countries.

According to the new legislation, having an Iranian origin, as well as, not having citizenship, residence, or Green Card of other countries is among conditions for registering in the Iranian presidential race.

## President Receives Seven New Envoys

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

**TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani on Tuesday received copies of credentials of the new ambassadors of seven countries to Tehran.**

The new ambassadors of Tunisia, Uganda, Syria, Indonesia, Mexico, Thailand and Japan held separate meetings with Rouhani on Tuesday and officially started their mission by submitting their credentials to the Iranian president.

During the meetings, Rouhani called for all-out efforts to strengthen relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and their respective countries.

During his meeting with the new Tunisian ambassador, Samir al-Mansour, Rouhani appreciating the positive stance of Tunisia toward Iran and its support in the international forums, especially in the face of the oppressive actions and sanctions of the US government.

The President expressed hope that relations between the two countries would develop and deepen in all fields.

He said that the Republic of Tunisia as a Muslim, brother, friend and important country in North Africa can be a gateway for Iran to African countries.

The new Tunisian Ambassador also stressed that his country has a strong will and special attention to develop comprehensive ties with Iran as a friendly, brotherly and Muslim country.

He said Tunisia can serve as a platform for Iran's relations with Europe and Africa.

Rouhani, in his meeting with Uganda's newly-appointed ambassador, Mohammad Tezikoba, described the Tehran-Kampala relations "friendly and developing" and underlined that the Iran is ready to transfer its scientific and technical experiences to Uganda as a friendly country.

In response to the Ugandan envoy's request, Rouhani said Iranian companies can have a more active presence in Uganda.

The Iranian government will encourage domestic companies, especially those active in the fields of industry, science and technology, to participate in development and infrastructure projects of Uganda.

In response to the invitation of the President of Uganda to pay an official visit to Kampala, Rouhani expressed hope that this visit would take place at an appropriate time.

Mohammad Tzikuba said, "Uganda seeks to expand cooperation with Iran in all fields and considering the great scientific and technical progress of Iran, our government wants a more active presence of Iranian companies in Uganda."

In the meeting with Syria's ambassador to Tehran Shafiq Dayoub, President Rouhani said Iran will stand by the Syrian people and government until the final victory over terrorism, the return of refugees and the reconstruction of Syria.

The president described the Iran-Syria relations as strategic, friendly and fraternal throughout history and said, "In recent years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has always supported the Syrian people in defending the truth and fighting terrorism until the final victory."

Rouhani expressed his condolences on the death of the late Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem and appreciated his efforts to strengthen relations between the two countries.

In the framework of the Astana talks, Rouhani said, Tehran will continue its efforts to help fully establish stability and peace in Syria.

Rouhani also received on Tuesday the credentials of Mexico's new ambassador to Tehran, Guillermo Alejandro Ponte.

He expressed Iran's readiness to deepen trade and industrial relations with Mexico. He also underlined the importance of cooperation between companies on both sides.

Referring to the friendly relations between Iran and Mexico and pointing to the opportunities for cooperation between the two countries in all fields, the president expressed hope that Tehran-Mexico City relations would expand further.

The new Mexican ambassador also stressed that Iran is not only a friendly country but also an ally of his country.

"Mexico has made every effort to expand cooperation and improve bilateral relations with Iran," he stressed.

In a meeting with the Indonesian Ambassador to Tehran Ronny Prasetyo Yuliantoro, President Rouhani referred to the will and decision of the Islamic Republic of Iran to increase cooperation and develop economic, cultural, scientific and technological relations with the Republic of Indonesia.

Ambassador Yuliantoro, for his part, pointed to the Indonesian president's emphasis on expanding the two countries' relations in all fields, the need for mutual cooperation and the continued presence of Iranian and Indonesian companies in the two countries, the implementation of joint projects, and using new opportunities for cooperation.

In a meeting with Thailand's ambassador to Iran Worawoot Pongrapapant, Rouhani voiced Iran's readiness to further enhance bilateral ties with Bangkok in different fields.

The President said that 'great capacities' exist for enhancing the level of bilateral ties, hoping for the realization of these potentials during Pongrapapant's term.

The Thai envoy for this part said that his country is determined to cement ties with Iran in fields of mutual interest. Thailand asks for the increased presence of Thai students in Iran to study in various fields, he said, noting that this can play an important role in strengthening the cooperation between the two nations and the two governments.

In a meeting with the newly-appointed Japanese ambassador to Tehran Aikawa Kazutoshi, President Rouhani said that Tehran welcomes expansion of cooperation with Tokyo in different fields.

Rouhani pointed to the need for accelerating the implementation of bilateral agreement, and also for unfreezing the Iranian assets in Japanese banks. "Iran always welcomes the expansion of economic and scientific cooperation with Japan and we hope to see a change in ties in the new atmosphere and an increased presence of Japanese companies for advancing different national plans in the fields of science and technology," he said.

For his part, the Japanese envoy highlighted that Tokyo is determined to increasing cooperation with Tehran in fields of mutual interest.

Iran and Japan have always been good partners, said Kazutoshi, adding that the implementation of prior agreements will create vast opportunities for further cementing of ties.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is determined to continue the path of Shinzo Abe for expanding cooperation with Iran, he said, also voicing Japan's full support for the JCPOA.



## Zarif Condemns U.S. Sanctions on Turkey

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has rapped the U.S. sanctions imposed on Turkey over its purchase of a Russian air defence system, expressing Tehran's support for the Turkish nation and government.



In a post on his Twitter account on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Zarif lashed out at the U.S. government for resorting to sanctions against Turkey.

"U.S. addiction to sanctions and contempt for international law at full display again," Zarif said after U.S. President Donald Trump's administration on Monday imposed sanctions on Turkey over the purchase of Russian-made S-400 missile system.

"We strongly condemn recent U.S. sanctions against Turkey and stand with its people and government," the top Iranian diplomat underlined, concluding his post with the hashtag 'Neighbours First'.

The U.S. argues that Russia's S-400 surface-to-air missile system is incompatible with NATO technology and a threat to the Euro-Atlantic alliance.

## All Equipment in School Students' Research Centres Built Domestically

TEHRAN (IFP) - A senior Iranian official says all the equipment used in school students' research centers in the country is built domestically.

Sorena Sattari, the vice president for science and technology, noted thousands of pieces of equipment have been supplied to such research centers.

"Some 9,000 items of equipment have been supplied to [students'] research centers in the past 8 years," he said in a ceremony to equip dozens of such centers.

"School Students' research centers had already been equipped in the fields of biotechnology, stem cells and aerospace, but today, we are seeing [them being fitted with] new equipment," said the vice president.

"A new ecosystem should emerge in the education domain and new changes should take place," he said.

"Of course, these changes do not happen overnight; rather, the take place through a constant campaign and relentless efforts," he added.

"The training that school students receive should be in line with the needs of society," he explained.

## Foreign Investors Can Apply For 5-Year Residence in Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Interior Ministry Director-General for Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs Mehdi Mahmoudi said on Tuesday that foreign investors can apply for five-year residence in Iran and receive special services.

He said that each investor will get five-year Iranian residency and Iran's neighbors, especially business activists from Afghanistan and Iraq, with regard to this plan, can make investment and benefit from their activities in industrial and economic areas.

Application forms would be available in line with a platform envisaged by the Iranian Foreign Ministry, the Interior Ministry, Iran's department on foreign investment, and the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), Mahmoudi said.

He added that foreign nationals and immigrants residing in Iran would get free of charge medical treatment for coronavirus pandemic.

The Iranian government on Jul 1, 2019 approved a by-law that grants five-year residency to foreign investors in line with the strategy to encourage foreign investment.

The by-law was proposed by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance (MEFA) to give incentives to foreign investors and secure forex revenues for national economy. It was passed by the cabinet, presided by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

Each investor will get five-year Iranian residency if they invest 250,000 euros or equivalent in other currencies, accepted by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), according to the by-law.



## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:00
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:12
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:38
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:08

144. O ye who believe! Take not for friends unbelievers rather than believers: Do ye wish to offer Allah an open proof against yourselves?

145. The Hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire: no helper will thou find for them:- Surah 4. Women (144 - 145)

# National Economy Has Been Politicized

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs Farhad Dejjasand says national economy is grappling with politicization and the only cure for it is the interaction and professional performance with calmness.**

Speaking in the 100th meeting of Government Council of Dialogue With Private Sector, the minister said he definitely believes national economy is caught with politicization and the only solution for it is interaction and professional performance accompanied with calmness.

He added that all should talk in a way that their remarks become solution, adding remarks to please few people are not the solution.

Dejjasand went on to say that he is not to win hearts of the private sector or confront with while it is a serious economic part of the country, adding he believes if the government opens the way for more effective activities of the private sector, then the country will obtain favorable results.

He claimed the current growth of non-oil exports of the country in the Coronavirus era is a proof for the effectiveness of holding these meetings.

He noted that maybe it would become hard to believe this fact that in the coronavirus era the national economic growth has registered a positive one based on the statistics of the Central Bank either with or without oil sales, but it is true.

Dejjasand added that fortunately some job losses which had happened in the first quarter of the year due to the pandemic were recovered later and the unemployment rate declined.



Touching upon some ambiguities regarding the next year budget plan, he pointed to some items in the budget bill and explained, calling for necessity of economizing and reducing expenditures.

He also reiterated that he is opposed to the idea of increasing the tax revenues for the next year government revenues, adding that since there is no specific definition for the new bases of getting taxes or reducing tax exemption, the increase in the tax will mean more pressure on the private sector in the coronavirus era.

He also hailed the performance of the Tax Affairs Organization last year in materializing 102 percent tax revenues and its over 100 percent of this year's revenues without increasing pressure on the weaker layers of the society.

Dejjasand admitted that about 40 percent of the total GDP of the country is exempt from paying tax.

On the current ups and downs in the stock market, he said Securities and Exchange Organization dealt properly with 160 stock market publishers which had violated the rules and some of them were penalized.

He reiterated that the Securities and Exchange Organization is determined to bring back stability to the capital markets by taking proper measures.

## Iran-Pakistan Business Forum to Be Held Next Week



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TCCIMA), and Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) will hold an Iran-Pakistan business forum via webinar on December 22.

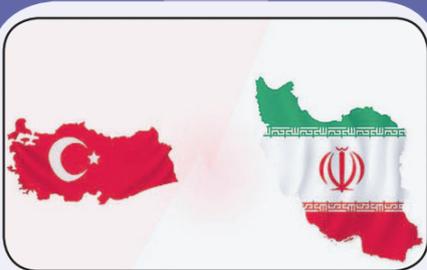
The online forum will cover issues related to bilateral cooperation in the fields of energy, tourism, transportation, food and medicine, agriculture, health, leather and garments.

TCCIMA has also held a webinar on the expansion of trade with Pakistan in collaboration with Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry on December 9.

In the webinar, which was attended by the officials and representatives of the two countries' private sectors, the two sides discussed ways for the expansion of trade ties.

TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari, Head of Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry Tariq Misbah, and TCCIMA Deputy Head for International Affairs Hesamedin Hallaj were among the attendees to this online event.

## Iran Exports to Turkey Down 74% y/y in October



TEHRAN (PressTV) - A study compiled by the Tehran Chamber of Commerce (TCCIM) shows Iran's exports to Turkey suffered a considerable decline in the 10 months to the end of October mainly because a drop in crude and oil product shipments.

Excerpts of the TCCIM analysis published Monday showed that shipments from Iran to Turkey had dropped nearly 74 percent year on year in October to \$795 million.

The report said that the declined exports of crude and other oil products, including petrochemicals, were mainly a result of American sanctions on Iran's energy sector.

Trade restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the coronavirus were also to blame, especially from March onwards when the number of infections reported in Iran began to grow, said the study, cited in a report by the semi-official ISNA news agency.

It said that Iran's October exports to Turkey had remained stable on the previous month and against October 2019 at \$94 million.

Total trade between Iran and Turkey in the 10 months to October declined by \$1.7 billion to nearly \$2.15 billion, showed the TCCIM analysis.

The figures showed that Iran's imports from Turkey also fell by 29 percent year on year in October at \$1.35 billion.

Main exports items from Iran to Turkey over the period were plastic materials, copper, fertilizers, aluminum, mineral fuels and precious stones while imports from Turkey mostly covered boilers, machinery and mechanical equipment, tobacco, paper and cardboard and timber, said TCCIM.

Recent figures released by the Iranian customs office shows Turkey is no longer among the top four export destinations for Iran as it came behind Iraq, China, the United Arab Emirates and Afghanistan in terms of the value of shipments received in the first 10 months of 2020.

Iran had a trade surplus of nearly \$1.1 billion with Turkey in the 10 months to October 2019.

## Tehran Keen on Expanding Persian Languages Courses in Italy

TEHRAN (MNA) - Deputy Director of Iran's CISSC and first secretary of the Cultural and Press Section of the Italian Embassy in Tehran, discussed the expansion of Persian language courses in Italian Universities.

Abdul Hamid Alizadeh, Deputy Director of Center for International Scientific Studies and Collaboration (CISSC), met and held talks with the first secretary of the Cultural and Press Section of the Embassy of Italy in Tehran, Yaroslava Romanova.

In this meeting, the two sides discussed some issues on the status of Persian language and literature courses in four major Italian universities of Rome, Venice, Naples and Italy, the interest of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology on the expansion of Persian



language and literature as well as Iranology courses in Italian universities and Italy.

In this meeting, Alizadeh spoke about Iran's successful experiences with Germany, Austria, and Hungary in terms of joint research projects, exchange of students and researchers as well as other joint cooperation.

Referring to the great capabilities and achievements of Iran in the scientific and technological fields he announced Iran's readiness to host the Iran-Italy Science Day event.

He also expressed hope that the plan for the development and strengthening of scientific cooperation of Iran and Italy will be discussed through holding conferences in the near future.

## Iran Almost Self-Sufficient in Seed Production

TEHRAN (IFP) - Minister of Agriculture Kazem Khavazi says Iran has achieved self-sufficiency in producing nearly all varieties of seeds.

Addressing a conference, Khavazi said the whole agricultural seeds consumed in the country, except the vegetable seeds, are produced by the local experts at the Seed and Plant Improvement Institute and the Dryland Farming Research Institute.

"We can proudly announce that we are above 95 percent self-sufficient in producing seeds," he added.

The minister noted that Iran will become self-sufficient in producing vegetable seeds as well by March 2022 under the patronage of the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, the Headquarters for Executing the Order of Imam Khomeini, and the private sector.

Highlighting the great contribution that the Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Organization makes to the country's agricultural sector, Khavazi said more than 90 percent of the modern farming methods and new agricultural inputs currently utilized in the Iranian farmlands and orchards have been developed by that research organization.

Despite all problems and the pressure of sanctions, Iran's economic growth in the agricultural sector has stood at +4 percent, indicating the great potential of the country's agriculture industry, the minister stated.

## Europeans Still Main Customers of Iranian Caviar

TEHRAN (IP) - During the last eight months, nearly two-thirds of Iran's sturgeon and caviar production has been exported to European countries.

Ruhollah Latifi, the spokesman for Iran's customs, said Monday: "In the past eight months, 1,213 kilograms of Iranian caviar have been exported to 22 countries."

According to Latifi, the total value of Iran's caviar exports in the past eight months has been \$ 624,294.

Latifi said Europeans had bought more than 68%, Asia 30%, the United States more than 1%, and Australia less than 1%.

"During this time, Germany, Belgium, Japan, Britain, the UAE, the Netherlands, and Spain were the main buyers of Iranian delectable, gold-standard caviar, respectively," the spokesman highlighted.

According to the report, other customers of Iranian caviar were Russia, Oman, Hong Kong, Italy, Canada, Qatar, Australia, Kuwait, Switzerland, Thailand, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Sweden, and Cambodia.

## Gas Production in South Pars Phase 11 Postponed

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Extracting gas from the 11th phase of the South Pars field in Iran would begin no sooner than October 2021, namely under the next administration, an official said.

In comments on the sidelines of launch of drilling work on the first well at Phase 11 of the South Pars gas field on Monday, National Iranian Oil Company official Reza Dehqan said production of gas in the new phase is planned to begin in the second half of the next Iranian year (October 2021).

The first extraction platform in Phase 11 will be installed during the first half of next year, he added.

Of the 24 wells to be drilled in the Phase 11 of South Pars, five or six ones will be producing gas in late 2021.

While the oil minister had pledged that his ministry will start gas production at Phase 11 during President Hassan Rouhani's tenure, the extraction will practically begin under the next government, which will take power in summer 2021.

## Dried Fruit, Nuts Exports Grows 99% in 8 Months

TEHRAN (MNA) - Exports of Iranian dried fruit and nuts have grown by 99% in terms of weight and 71% in terms of value in the first 8 months of the current Iranian year 1399 (ending on November 20).

According to the Spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Seyed Rouhollah Latifi, Iran's dried fruits exports in the first 8 months of the previous year were about 67,108 tons at the value of \$485 million. The figure in the current year, 133,680 tons worth \$833 million, registering a growth of 71 percent and 99 percent respectively, the official noted.

Pistachio has brought the country \$795 million in the said time span in the current year, he added.

## U.S. Attorney General Barr Steps Down

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. Attorney General William Barr will step down next week, he said on Monday, shortly after the Electoral College confirmed President Donald Trump's loss to Democratic President-elect Joe Biden.

Barr, who had angered Trump by not supporting his incorrect claims that the Nov. 3 election result had been tainted by widespread fraud, said he would leave office on Dec. 23, a little less than a month before Biden is sworn in on Jan. 20.

Deputy Attorney General Jeff Rosen will take over as acting attorney general after Barr's departure, Trump said.



## Alassane Ouattara Sworn In As Ghana President for Third

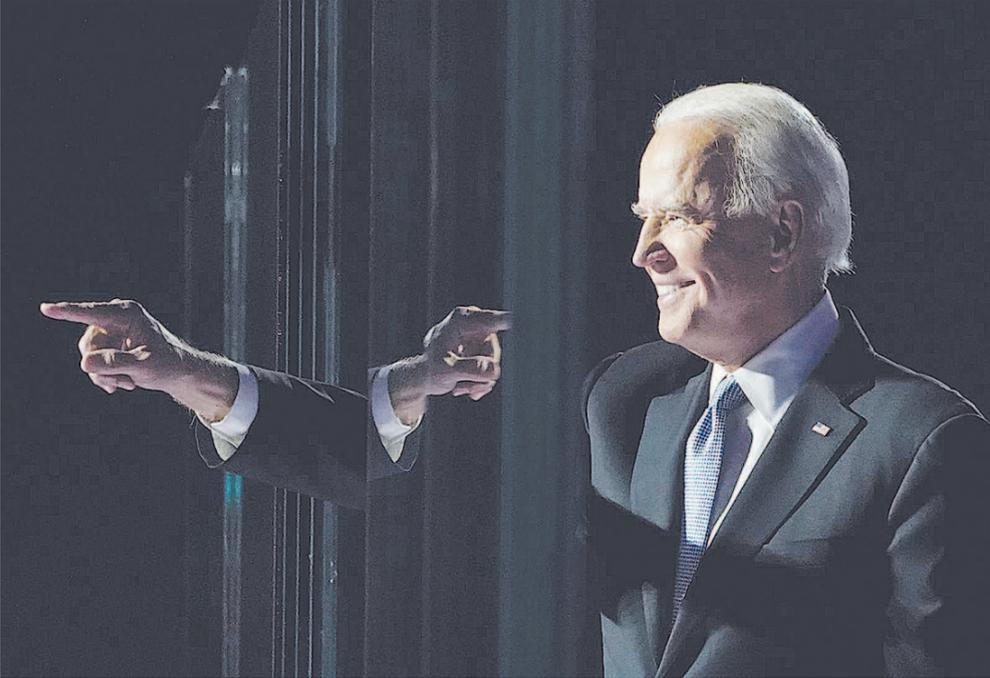
ABIDJAN (Dispatches) - Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara has taken the oath of office for a controversial third term, urging his political opponents to help "defuse tensions" following the deaths of dozens of people in election-related violence and the arrest of opposition figures.

Final results last month showed the 78-year-old winning re-election with more than 94 percent of the October 31 vote, which opposition parties largely boycotted and dismissed as illegal.

Monday's solemn swearing-in ceremony in the commercial capital, Abidjan, was attended by 13 African counterparts but was snubbed by the opposition. Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy was also among those present.



## Biden Claims "Democracy Prevailed"



WILMINGTON (Reuters) - President-elect Joe Biden delivered a forceful rebuke on Monday to President Donald Trump's attacks on the legitimacy of his victory, hours after winning the state-by-state Electoral College vote that officially determines the U.S. presidency.

"In this battle for the soul of America, democracy prevailed," Biden said in a prime-time speech from his hometown of Wilmington, Delaware. "Now it's time to turn the page, as we've done throughout our history - to unite, to heal."

Monday's vote, typically a formality, assumed outsized significance in light of Trump's extraordinary effort to subvert the process due to what he has falsely alleged was widespread voter fraud in the Nov. 3 election.

California, the most-populous U.S. state, put Biden over the 270 votes needed to win the Electoral College when its 55 electors unanimously cast ballots for him and his running mate, Kamala Harris. Biden and Harris - the first woman, first Black person and first Asian American to become vice president-elect - will be sworn in on Jan. 20.

In a roughly 13-minute speech, Biden, the Democratic former vice president, called for unity while voicing confidence that the country's democratic institutions had held in the face of Trump's attempts to reverse the election outcome. "The flame of democracy was lit in this nation a long time ago," Biden said. "We now know that not even a pandemic or an abuse of power can extinguish that flame."

Biden emphasized that Trump and his allies filed "dozens and dozens" of legal challenges to the vote totals without success, including a Texas lawsuit that asked the U.S. Supreme Court to invalidate four states' results. The court, including three Trump appointees, rejected the bid with no dissents last week.

He also noted that his 306-232 margin in the Electoral College was the same as Trump's 2016 victory, which the Republican described as a "landslide."

Under a complicated system dating back to the 1780s, a candidate becomes U.S. president not by winning the popular vote but through the Electoral College system, which allots electoral votes to the 50 states and the District of Columbia based on congressional representation. (Here's a graphic on how the Electoral College works: [tmsnr.rs/3lUKcgv](https://tmsnr.rs/3lUKcgv))

In 2016, Trump defeated Democrat Hillary Clinton despite losing the national popular vote by nearly 3 million ballots. Biden won the popular vote in November by more than 7 million votes.

Electors are typically party loyalists who are unlikely to break ranks, and few observers had expected Monday's vote to alter the election's outcome. With Trump's legal challenges floundering, the president's dim hopes of clinging to power rest in persuading Congress not to certify the Electoral College vote in a special Jan. 6 session - an effort all but certain to fail.

## ICC Prosecutor Rejects Uighur Genocide Complaint Against China

THE HAGUE (Dispatches) - International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutors have rejected calls by exiled Uighurs to investigate China for alleged genocide and crimes against humanity, in a blow to the Muslim-minority group in Xinjiang.

The Uighurs handed a huge dossier of evidence to the court in July accusing China of locking more than one million Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities in re-education camps and of forcibly sterilising women.

But the office of prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said in a report on Monday that it was unable to act because the alleged acts happened on the territory of China, which is not a signatory to The Hague-based ICC.

In its annual report, Bensouda's office said: "This precondition for the exercise of the court's territorial jurisdiction did not appear to be met with respect to the majority of the crimes alleged".

There was also "no basis to proceed at this time"

on separate claims of forced deportations of Uighurs back to China from Tajikistan and Cambodia, the ICC report said.

The Uighurs had argued that even though the alleged deportations did not happen on Chinese soil, the ICC could act because they happened on Tajik and Cambodian territory and both of them are ICC members.

Lawyers for the Uighurs had now asked the court to reconsider "on the basis of new facts or evidence", the ICC prosecutor's report said.

China has called the accusations baseless and says the facilities in the northwestern Xinjiang region are job-training centres aimed at steering people away from hardline views.

According to reports and witness testimonies, more than a million Uighurs are held against their will in different facilities in Xinjiang. Human rights activists and former detainees refer to them as concentration camps.



## Turkey Condemns Unjust U.S. Sanctions, Threatens Response

ANKARA (Reuters) - Turkey condemned U.S. sanctions over its purchase of Russian S-400 missile defenses as a "grave mistake" and threatened to retaliate over a move it said would harm ties between the NATO allies.

Washington imposed the long-anticipated sanctions on Turkey's top defense procurement and development body, its chairman and three other employees. Analysts said the targeted move would mostly spare the broader Turkish economy.

Turkey's Foreign Ministry called the decision "inexplicable" given that Washington repeatedly rejected Ankara's offer to form a joint working group to allay U.S. concerns that the S-400s threatened NATO defenses.

"We call on the United States to revise the unjust sanctions (and) to turn back from this grave mistake as soon as possible," it said. "Turkey is ready to tackle the issue through dialogue and diplomacy in a manner worthy of the spirit of alliance."



## Afghan President Calls for Peace Talks to Be Moved Home

KABUL (Dispatches) - The next round of negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government should be held at home, President Ashraf Ghani said Monday, backing calls to move the talks from Qatar.

The warring sides have been engaged in direct talks since September at a luxury hotel in Doha, where the Taliban have their political office.

Negotiators from both sides on Saturday announced a pause in the talks until January 5, with the government delegation expected to return to Kabul this week to consult senior officials.

"We would prefer the second round of peace talks to take place inside Afghanistan," Ghani told a cabinet meeting, his spokesman Sediq Sediqqi tweeted.

"The Afghan government is prepared to negotiate anywhere inside Afghanistan .... under a tent or out in the cold."

"It is not appropriate to insist on holding talks in luxurious hotels. It is necessary that the people see how the talks happen, which issues are focussed on and why."

Officials at Afghanistan's National Security Council have also called for talks to be moved home.

The insurgents and Kabul side both said they had exchanged "preliminary lists of agenda items" to be covered when talks restart.

The negotiations had, until recently, been bogged down by disputes on the basic framework of discussions and religious interpretations.

But earlier this month both sides announced they were ready to proceed after a period of concerted diplomatic effort that saw outgoing United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visit both teams.

The talks follow a landmark troop withdrawal deal signed in February by the Taliban and Washington, which will see all foreign troops pulled out by next year.

Despite the talks, there has been a surge of violence in Afghanistan in recent months.

## S. Korea Bans Sending Leaflets Into North



SEOUL (AFP) - South Korea banned sending anti-Pyongyang leaflets into the North, in a move rights activists condemned as a violation of free speech and a "misguided strategy" to please the North Korean regime.

Activist groups have long sent flyers critical of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un over human rights abuses and his nuclear ambitions across the Demilitarized Zone that divides the peninsula, either flying them by hot air balloon or floating them across rivers.

The leaflets have infuriated Pyongyang, which issued a series of vitriolic condemnations earlier this year demanding Seoul take action and upped the pressure by blowing up an inter-Korean liaison office on its side of the border.

The leader's sister and key adviser Kim Yo Jong called the defector activists behind the campaign "human scum hardly worth their value as human beings".

South Korea's parliament passed a law criminalizing sending leaflets, USB drives -- a favored method of distributing information and entertainment -- or money to the North with all 187 MPs in attendance approving the bill.

President Moon Jae-in has long championed engagement with the North and his Democratic party has an absolute majority in the 300-member assembly, while all members of the conservative opposition People Power Party boycotted the vote.

Under the measure, those convicted of sending leaflets face a maximum penalty of three years in prison or a fine of 30 million won (\$28,000).

Park Sang-hak, the chairman of Fighters for a Free North Korea, one of the leaflet-sending groups, was defiant and vowed to continue their activities.

"I do not accept this as a rightful law and will continue doing what I've been doing: delivering a message of freedom to 25 million people across the border," he told AFP.

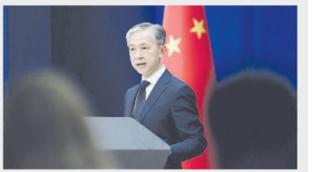


## China Urges U.S. to Stop Cracking Down on Foreign Firms

BEIJING (Reuters) - China on Monday urged the United States to stop abusing state power to crack down on foreign companies, after Nasdaq said it will remove four Chinese companies' shares from indexes in response to a U.S. order.

China will continue to uphold legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies, the foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a regular news briefing.

Nasdaq said on Friday it will remove shares of four Chinese construction and manufacturing companies from the indexes on Dec. 21. The move came in response to a U.S. order restricting purchase of their shares.



## EU Sees Narrow Path to Brexit Deal After Deadline Ditched

BRUSSELS (AFP) - Chief EU negotiator Michel Barnier on Monday signaled there was a "narrow path" to a post-Brexit trade deal with Britain, as key sticking points remain after both sides abandoned a supposed make-or-break deadline.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen pledged on Sunday to "go the extra mile" as they side-stepped a self-imposed cut-off point to end talks if there was no progress towards a pact.

Johnson has insisted it remains "most likely" that Britain will crash out of the globe's largest single market on World Trade Organization (WTO) terms by year's end as the two sides spar over regulating future standards and fishing.

But von der Leyen said on Monday: "There is movement. That is good". "We are on the very last mile to go. But it is an essential one," she told a conference organised by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. An EU diplomat said following a briefing from Barnier that "there might now be a narrow path to an agreement visible -- negotiators can clear the remaining hurdles in the next few days".

"There has been some progress in the negotiations over the last few days, but -- sometimes substantial -- gaps still need to be bridged in important areas like fisheries, governance and level playing field," the diplomat said.

An EU source said there had been "fragile" progress.

The source said London had now accepted there should be a mechanism to regulate any future divergences in standards, although the EU was insisting it should be "muscular" to allow it to strike quickly in case the UK tried to undercut it.

More serious blockages remain "on all fronts" on the issue of fishing rights, the source said.

"If there is progress on fishing then we could have an agreement in the coming days," the official said.

Johnson's official spokesman did not say whether there had been any progress and insisted no deal remains a "possible outcome".

Barnier was meeting Monday in Brussels with British counterpart David Frost for the latest round of talks aimed at thrashing out a deal before Britain leaves the EU single market on December 31. Barnier said on Twitter that "the next few days are important" if a deal can be found and insisted the two sides had a "responsibility to give the talks every chance of success".

Von der Leyen and Johnson have not set a new deadline as the definitive end date looms in just 18 days and there are fears there may be an accidental no-deal if talks go right to the wire.

Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin, whose country stands to be hit hard by a no-deal, told RTE that the "real end deadline is New Year's Eve, although I think both sides are very possessed of the need to try and get outcomes to these negotiations in the next number of days".

France's Europe Minister Clement Beaune said he did not expect the negotiations to go "beyond the coming week" as any deal would still need to be signed off by the 27 EU member states and the European and British parliaments.

But German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas pressed for both sides to continue talking "as long as an agreement is possible".

Key log-jams remain on a raft of thorny issues and a second EU diplomat said there were "serious difficulties" on fishing rights, with London adamant it wants to assert full rights over its territorial waters. Britain insists it will not be tied in perpetuity to rules it claims would be set by Brussels.

"Any deal that we get with the EU has to respect the fact that we are a sovereign country, we are an independent country and that's the basis on which we will do a deal if there's a deal to be done," Business Secretary Alok Sharma told journalists.

"Of course we are continuing to talk, that's what people expect. Where there is life there is hope."

## Turkey's Industrial Output Rises in October

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's calendar-adjusted industrial production rose 10.2% in October on a yearly basis, the country's statistical authority said on Monday.

The manufacturing index saw the highest year-on-year rise among industrial subsectors, with 11%, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) said in a statement.

The electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply index went up 5.5%, while the mining and quarrying index rose 0.4% during the same period. The term "calendar-adjusted" is used to refer to data without the calendar and holiday-originated effects. A group of seven economists, surveyed by Anadolu Agency on Wednesday, projected that the industrial production index would rise 8% in October annually.

On a monthly basis, the country's industrial output also improved in October, indicating a rise of 1.1%.

Among all subsectors of the seasonal and calendar-adjusted industrial sector, manufacturing was the only subsector to see a month-on-month recovery in October, rising by 1.4%.

The electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply index dropped by 2.5% from September.



The mining and quarrying index fell slightly by 0.6% in the same period. Commenting on the figure, the industry and technology minister said Turkey performed the strongest outlook among other countries of which October data announced.

"In the upcoming period, we expect a slowdown in industrial production due to the second wave of the pandemic and the decline in credit growth," Mustafa Varank wrote on Twitter.

The country targets to expand value-added production through accelerating technological and digital transformation, he underlined.

"In order to achieve these goals, we will strengthen financial stability by further improving predictability with a strong coordination in economic management," Varank noted.

## Europe's Banks Have a Way to Go on Sustainability

LONDON (Reuters) - Europe's banks are not integrating climate change and other sustainability concerns into their risk management systems as quickly as regulators expect, a study by BlackRock for the European Union showed on Monday.

In an interim report, BlackRock said it had analysed feedback from the region's lenders and found most were only just starting to reflect environmental, social and governance (ESG) related risks in their internal processes.

A final report, which will be used by Brussels to help develop new regulations, is due by April next year.

"While interviewed banks often state that they have initiatives in place to enhance the integration of ESG risks, the majority have not formalised an ESG risk integration strategy with clear timelines and responsibilities," it said. "With respect to climate risk, many smaller banks stated that they have not yet started its integration into risk management," the report said. It also found that only a minority of regulators provide guidance to banks on ESG risks or reflect it in their oversight processes, such as through climate-related stress tests.

"The majority of supervisors interviewed do not yet have any quantitative indicators in place to monitor and assess the exposure of supervised banks to ESG risks," the report said.

While some banks have begun to launch ESG-related products and make commitments to meet the terms of the Paris Agreement on climate, the report said that in the view of many civil society organisations, efforts by lenders so far fell short.

## G20 Economies See Strong Recovery in Q3

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Though gross domestic product (GDP) in the G20 area bounced back by 8.1% in the third

quarter of 2020, it still remained below the pre-pandemic high, a global economic body said Monday.

However, GDP in the G20 area as a whole remained significantly below the levels of the same quarter a year earlier (minus 2.0%), with only Turkey and China recording positive growth with 5.4% and 4.9%, respectively, while the UK posted the largest fall by 9.6%, showed the latest report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an intergovernmental economic organization with 37 member countries.

"A similar picture emerges when comparing economic activity in Q3 with pre-pandemic levels, as approximated by the cumulative growth rate for the first three quarters of 2020," noted OECD.

India was the country that saw the strongest growth with 21.9%, following a fall of 25.2% in the second quarter, the sharpest drop ever recorded.

GDP also rebounded with double-digit numbers in the third quarter, after double-digit falls in the second quarter, in France by 18.7%, after a contraction of 13.8%.

This is followed by Italy and Turkey with countries' economies seeing 15.9% and 15.6% rises, after posting 13% and 10.8% drops in the Q2, respectively.

The figure also increased in the other major economies such as Canada, Germany, Brazil, and the US with 8.9%, 8.5%, 7.7%, 7.4% rises, respectively.

## WTO Fails to Agree Rules To Stop Overfishing

GENEVA (Reuters) - World Trade Organization negotiators have failed to reach a deal by a year-end deadline to cut subsidies that lead to overfishing, the chairman of the talks told delegates at a closed-door meeting on Monday.

Colombia's Santiago Wills said it had been impossible to reach the U.N. target due to time lost due to the coronavirus

pandemic, two sources at the meeting told Reuters. However, Wills said that a deal had been closer than ever, and that the "tremendous" progress gave him confidence in a future deal.

World leaders committed in 2015 to a series of U.N. targets and one of them mandates the Geneva-based trade watchdog to strike a deal on ending government subsidies worth billions of dollars that contribute to over-fishing by 2020.

China, the European Union, the United States, South Korea and Japan are among the main subsidisers.

The failure is a significant blow to the world's fish stocks, since environmentalists say an ambitious deal could reverse a steep decline, and to the WTO, which faces questions about its ability to strike multilateral agreements.

"It is disappointing," said Remi Parmentier, strategic adviser for Friends of Ocean Action, who has been an environmental advocate at the WTO for two decades.

"They have had 20 years to fix it and on certain issues they are still almost at square one."

The U.N. food agency has said that nearly 90% of marine fish stocks are fully exploited, overexploited or depleted. U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres and Britain's Prince Charles have both urged action at the WTO.

The Pew Charitable Trusts estimates that an ambitious deal could lead to a 12.5% increase in global fish biomass by 2050, based on a model it shared with negotiators.

"If countries reach an agreement on harmful fishing subsidies that keeps loopholes to a minimum, they will achieve a conservation victory that could have a long-lasting, positive impact on our global ocean," said Isabel Jarrett, manager of Pew's project to end harmful fishing subsidies.

Delegates praised bridge-building efforts by Wills, who had shown his commitment to the talks in an unexpected way by tweeting a Valentine's poem to the world's fish: "Oh dear fish/ Protect you we must; You can trust..."

Negotiators had been working on a confidential draft text for months but a November copy seen by Reuters still contained dozens of areas of disagreement.

A major area of contention has been a section outlining carve-outs from the rules for developing countries, submitted by India. One delegate from a wealthy country said these were so broad as to render the agreement meaningless.

Since China is the biggest subsidiser and has in the past resisted pressure to curb its fleets, the talks' success is seen as hinging partly on Beijing's willingness to make concessions.

Some expressed frustration at China's opposition to a provision targeting exploitation of the high seas by industrial fishing fleets.

## Germany's Stricter Lockdown Increases Recession Risks



BERLIN (Reuters) - Germany's decision to tighten a second coronavirus lockdown has increased the risk of another recession in Europe's largest economy, economists said on Monday.

Chancellor Angela Merkel and state leaders agreed on Sunday to shut most stores from Wednesday until at least January 10 to reverse a tide of COVID-19 infections that lighter restrictions introduced on November 2 have failed to tame.

The German economy suffered its worst recession on record as the first wave of coronavirus infections pushed down gross domestic product by 1.7% in the first quarter and by an unprecedented 9.8% in the second quarter.

The economy rebounded by a stronger-than-expected 8.5% in the third quarter, driven by higher consumer spending and booming exports.

Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said on Monday he was hoping that Germany would be able to avoid another recession despite the decision to tighten the national lockdown.

"I hope we can prevent a complete economic standstill in the second wave of the pandemic," Altmaier told public radio Deutschlandfunk on Monday.

But economists from Commerzbank, Berenberg Bank, Deutsche Bank and ING all agreed that this scenario was highly unlikely and that the tighter lockdown was pushing Europe's largest economy towards a second, or 'double dip', recession.

Under the stricter rules, only essential shops such as supermarkets and pharmacies, as well as banks, can remain open from Dec. 16. Hair salons, beauty salons, and tattoo parlours will also have to shut.

The lockdown hits industry too when most shops are forced to close, said Commerzbank chief economist Joerg Kraemer, adding: "Germany should brace for a second recession."

## Iran Among Producers of Remdesivir in the World

SAVEH (IRNA) - Iran is among the four producers of the anti-coronavirus medicine, Remdesivir after the United States, China, and India.

Medicine named Remdesivir produced by an Iranian knowledge-based company can be exported to the foreign market, said Deputy Managing Director of the knowledge-

based company Mohammad Ali Maleki said in the inauguration ceremony of producing Remdesivir Medicine in Saveh County, Markazi province.

The company is ready to mass-produce the drug after approval by the Food and Drug Administration and will be available to the local hospitals following its mass production, he underlined.



## OPEC Revises Down Again 2021 Crude Demand Forecast on Transport

LONDON (ICIS)--Crude oil demand in 2021 is expected to rise by 5.90m bbl/day, down slightly from previous estimates, on the back of woeful transportation, but demand for petrochemicals is set to remain healthy, the producing cartel OPEC said on Monday.

Compared with its November forecast, OPEC's 2021 crude demand estimate was lowered by 350,000 bbl/day, and is now forecast to rise to 96.89m bbl/day.

But that increase in 2021 would leave the crude oil market industry still reeling from the historic hit caused by the pandemic.

Crude oil demand stood close to 100m bbl/day in 2019, but the pandemic wiped out 10% of the market as transport and industry took a hit from lockdown measures implemented globally to contain the spread of the pandemic.

Demand for crude oil is expected to close 2020 at 89.99m bbl/day, a historic fall of 9.77m bbl/day compared with 2019.

OPEC said worse-than-expected economic indicators had prompted it to lower its 2021 crude oil demand estimate.

"This is due to the uncertainty surrounding the impact of Covid-19 and the labour market on the OECD [37 most industrialised nations] transportation fuel outlook for H1 2021," said the producing cartel.

"Petrochemical feedstock and industrial fuels are forecast to gain momentum on the back of improving economic activities."

However, most of the crude oil market's woes will come from the transportation side in 2021, with healthy industrial activity set to prop up demand for the petrochemicals sector.

Even in regions like Europe, where the economy faces an uphill battle to recover pre-pandemic levels, demand for crude oil from petrochemicals is set to be healthy.

Globally, higher capacities in Asia and North America are also expected to demand more crude oil for the production of petrochemicals.

"Feedstocks are expected to gain momentum on the back of recent capacity additions in China and the U.S. All products are estimated to grow year on year following the steep impairment in 2020," said OPEC.

"On the flip side, fuel efficiency gains, the continuation of oil displacement programs and subsidy removals will limit oil demand growth."

In Europe, where petrochemicals production is still heavily dependent on crude oil products, healthy demand for crude oil is expected to be led by liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and to a lesser extent, naphtha.

As a sign of the downstream industries' resilience, OPEC said European demand for LPG in September 2020 had been the second largest monthly year-on-year increase since August 2018.

"Petrochemical demand has been well supported by steady requirements for plastics in the healthcare sector and for packaging materials as online shopping



expands due to the pandemic," said OPEC.

"Expansion in industrial activities in September supported fuel oil and diesel, minimising the year-on-year decline."

The gains coming from petrochemicals will take place globally, according to OPEC, with China's sound recovery also making its mark.

The cartel said that petrochemical feedstock, especially LPG, would perform better in China than other fuels and would be a "key driver for China's oil demand growth in 2021".

According to OPEC, the hit to crude oil demand in the second quarter as lockdowns become generalised was compounded by weaker than expected growth in OECD countries during the third quarter, as transportation fuel did not pick up as expected.

The worse-than-expected figures for the OECD were offset in part by China's booming demand, said OPEC, as well as improving demand from India as the pandemic there stabilised.

The producing cartel expects global GDP to fall by 4.2% in 2020, year on year, and to recover to growth of 4.4% in 2021 as faster-than-expected vaccinations are rolled out.

Among the major economies, OPEC said the 19-country eurozone is expected to take a hit of 7.3% in 2020, and pre-pandemic levels would not be reached at least until 2022 - growth in 2021 is expected at 3.7%.

OPEC is led by Saudi Arabia and composed of 13 members; the other 12 are Algeria, Angola, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, the UAE, and Venezuela.

### Ending All Sanctions...

FROM PAGE 1

U.S. President-Elect Joe Biden, who is on the eve of entering the White House, during his presidential campaign had said that if Iran returned to its full commitment to the JCPOA, he and Washington would return to it, too. On the whole, although he and his advisors several times had stipulated that in case Biden won the election he would return to the JCPOA, they have implicitly and vaguely talked about the necessity of another accord and this issue has been considered as strengthening the current accord.



The U.S. Administration in May 2018 pulled out of the JCPOA accord, and besides reimposing the suspended sanctions under this accord, it imposed new sanctions against Iran. European troika (Germany, UK and France) despite their verbal opposition to the U.S. pullout of the JCPOA did not fulfill their promises to compensate the effects of this exit. The Islamic Republic of Iran in reaction to the passiveness and inactivity of European countries began to reduce its obligations regarding the JCPOA in five steps. The reciprocal action law approved by Majlis has assigned the government to pave the necessary grounds for return of the country to the primary position that the 10th government had laid its grounds.

Mohammad Javad Zarif is the foreign minister of that government that imposed the JCPOA on the country who in his twitter post says, "Iran has proved its bona fides in 15 IAEA reports. Biden Administration should prove its bona fide by complying fully with the UN Resolution 2231 and ceasing the Trump Administration's economic war against Iranians."

Even Zarif in an interview has said, "The U.S. has pulled out of the JCPOA but it has not left the United Nations. The U.S. as a permanent member of the United Nations has responsibilities and obligations and we have a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution that the U.S. as one of the permanent members of the UNSC should observe it. The U.S. has violated the resolution because the Trump Administration was a rebel. Now if Biden Administration wants to be a rebel administration can tie implementation of its obligations to negotiations."

Iranian foreign minister in another part of his tweet stipulated that Iran will not re-negotiate with the U.S. on the JCPOA. (It means all Westerners should fulfil their due obligations and compensate for their delay in fulfilling their obligations).

That Majlis legislators in the framework of reducing nuclear obligations and Iranian president's letter to European states and in response to the hostile actions of the U.S. in collaboration with European states against the Islamic Republic of Iran has approved the law, is considered as a small portion of compensating the past damages resulted by the JCPOA deceptions. Westerners should know that the future does not belong to their aligned government. Neither is this Majlis the previous Majlis nor will the next government be beguiled by them once again.

### Iran, India, Uzbekistan...

FROM PAGE 1

For his part, Dehkanov also praised the facilities and equipment of Chabahar port, saying that considering the operational capabilities, equipment and geostrategic position of Chabahar port, it is suggested that a joint working group be formed with representatives of Iran and Uzbekistan to carefully review the plans and present operational plans of Uzbekistan presence in Shahid Beheshti port of Chabahar.

In this meeting, an official at Ports & Maritime Organization Of Iran Khosrow Saraei also said that located in a strategic area and outside the Strait of Hormuz, Chabahar port has access to deep open waters.

Referring to the developments in Chabahar port and the presence of Indian investors, he added that during the last 22 months, 72 container ships, 20 General Cargo ships, 3 livestock ships and one cargo ship were accepted in Chabahar port, which indicates the prosperity of this port and the increase in the volume of operations.

Stating that Chabahar port has joined the free zone and enjoys the rules and regulations of a free zone, he announced a 50% discount on the transit of goods and a 25-year tax exemption and free transfer of currency abroad as part of the benefits of investing in the port. Referring to the good experience of Indians in attracting goods and ships to the port of Chabahar, Saraei invited Uzbek transport officials to use the facilities provided in Chabahar.

India proposed to hold a "Chabahar Day" on the sidelines of the upcoming Indian-hosted International Maritime Summit and the other participants welcomed it, the Indian foreign ministry said in a press release. The Chabahar Port is strategically located on Iran's energy-rich southeastern coast in the Gulf of Oman and is connected to Afghanistan by a railroad. For India, it is a convenient route to trade with landlocked Central Asian countries bypassing Pakistan.

Uzbekistan's involvement in the project was a proposal put forward by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev at a virtual meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week.

## Jordan Finds Promising Gas Finds Near Iraq Border

AMMAN (Reuters) - Jordan's majority state-owned National Petroleum Company (NPC) has discovered "promising" new quantities of natural gas in the Risha gas field along its eastern border with Iraq, the energy minister said.

Hala Zawati said in a statement the flow of gas from a new well among several drilled this year was "promising" but would become clearer by year-end after final results appear.

Risha, once seen as the energy importer's potential gas lifeline, makes up nearly 5% of the kingdom's consumption of natural gas of around 350 million cubic feet (mcf) per day for power generation, officials say.

"It has shown promising results... the efforts had resulted in the flow of new gas supplies that would raise the productivity of the gas field," Zawati said.

The hunt for gas in the eastern desert area, that British oil major BP abandoned in 2014 after investing over \$240 million, has been stepped up since last year, boosting quantities by at least 70%, Mohammad al Khasawneh, the head of NPC, told Al Mamlaka state-owned television broadcaster.

Jordanian officials had long hoped intensive exploration and drilling at Risha would lead to the discovery of extensive recoverable gas reserves, which will help cut dependence on oil imports to fuel Jordan's power sector and industries. Zawati said an ambitious 10-year energy plan unveiled last year aims to secure nearly half of the country's electricity generation from local energy sources compared to a current 15%.

It was part of the effort to diversify local energy sources by expanding investments in renewable and oil shale to reduce costly foreign fuel imports, she added.

The country, which now imports over 93% of its total energy supplies, is burdened by a 2.5 billion-dinars (\$3.5 bln) annual bill, comprising almost 8% of Jordan's GDP and straining its economy.

## EDB Member States Expected to Start Economic Growth in 2021

BISHKEK (TCA) — The Eurasian Development Bank forecasts an increase in the aggregate GDP of its member countries — Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan — by 3.2% in 2021, after a 3.8% decline in 2020.

The Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) has published its Macroeconomic Forecast for 2020. The countries in the Bank's region of operations have been hit by major social and economic shocks this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Bank forecasts its member states' aggregate GDP to contract by 3.8% in 2020, after a growth of 1.7% the year before. Armenia's GDP is expected to decline by 6.4%, Belarus's 1.5%, Kazakhstan's 3%, the Kyrgyz Republic's 7.5%, and Russia's 4%. In Tajikistan, economic growth will slow down to 4.5% from 7.5% in 2019.

A deeper economic contraction in the region has been avoided, largely due to government support to the population and businesses. The largest anti-crisis packages are being offered in Kazakhstan and Russia (about 8.7 and 4.5% of GDP, respectively), which have substantial fiscal reserves by regional standards. The EDB estimates this should compensate for about 2-3% and 1.3-2.3% of Kazakhstan and Russia's GDP losses this year, respectively. Significant social and economic support

(about 3.7% of GDP) provided to Armenia should mitigate the decline in the country's output by about 1.8-2.2% in 2020. In Belarus, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan, government support is relatively small (around 1.1, 2.4, and 2.5% of GDP, respectively), partly because of limited fiscal reserves.

EDB analysts believe that the pace at which the Bank's member economies will recover from this year's turmoil will largely depend on the future developments around the pandemic. The baseline projection is based on an assumption that COVID-19 will slow down and restrictive measures will be eased globally and in the Bank's countries in the first half of 2021. External demand will start to gradually expand for EDB member states in 2021.

The review notes that the easing of social distancing measures will help to revive consumer and investment activity in the EDB region in 2021. Stronger external demand and growing commodity prices will support exports. Monetary policy is expected to remain soft in most of the Bank's member countries next year. This will be also conducive to economic recovery.

### President...

FROM PAGE 1

"Even though the economic war has inflicted a lot of damage, especially on public livelihoods, the architects of the [anti-Iran] sanctions and warmongers who assumed that Iran's economy would collapse in the short term are leaving the White House. This is while the Iranian nation has proudly emerged victorious in an all-out economic war stronger than ever," Rouhani said.

He thus advised "all those who seek...to defeat Iran through measures like sanctions to abandon their flawed and failed approach and let it become history."

Elsewhere, the president said the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year, which begins on March 21, 2021, has been drafted on the basis of country's economic capacities and the world realities.

### SPND...

FROM PAGE 1

"Our missile issues have caught the eye of the enemies," Hatami noted, adding, "We have strengthened our missile power every day." He highlighted, "Iranian Defense Ministry's Organization of Defensive Innovation and Research will work harder than before." "After the assassination of this martyr, all the employees and managers of the Ministry of Defense are determined to continue Fakhrazadeh's path, and the government, in a worthy action, increased the budget of the Organization of Defensive Innovation and Research by 256 percent," the defense minister said.

### EU...

FROM PAGE 1

The United Kingdom, France and Germany have reaffirmed their support for the JCPOA as a "key achievement" of international diplomacy, welcoming statements by the US president-elect, Joe Biden, concerning a return to the multilateral agreement.

In a statement last week, the three signatories to the JCPOA said they had "worked tirelessly" to preserve the deal, calling it "a key achievement of multilateral diplomacy and the global non-proliferation architecture."

Borrell further pointed to a decision made by EU member states to postpone a major three-day forum on business between Iran and Europe, which was scheduled to kick off on Monday, in the wake of the execution of Rouhollah Zam and said, "The member states of the EU decided not to participate [...] and this meeting has been canceled. This will not take place under current circumstances." Zam was hanged on Saturday after Iran's Supreme Court affirmed his conviction on the basis of spreading corruption on earth among other charges, which bought him a death sentence from the Islamic Revolution Court back in June. He was also convicted of committing offenses against the country's internal and external security, spreading lies, abetting economic disruption, spying for the intelligence services of France and one of the regional states, cooperating with the hostile US government against the Islamic Republic, participating in propaganda activities against the Islamic establishment on behalf of counterrevolutionary groups, fueling violence during the 2017 riots, insulting the sanctities of Islam and acquiring illegitimate wealth.

## Atalanta Skipper Gomez Fuels Exit Speculation

MILAN (AFP) - Atalanta captain Papu Gomez fuelled speculation on Monday over his future with the Serie A club, telling fans: "When I leave you will know the truth".

The 32-year-old reportedly had a bust-up with coach Gian Piero Gasperini at half-time during the Bergamo club's Champions League draw against Midtjylland two weeks ago, and has been left out of their last two league games. "Dear Atalanta fans, I am writing to you here because I have no way of defending myself and talking to you," the 32-year-old Argentine wrote on Instagram.

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## Neymar Gets Reassuring Prognosis After Ankle Injury

PARIS (AFP) - Neymar has received a "reassuring" prognosis after an X-ray on his injured ankle that forced him to be stretchered off in a Ligue 1 match at the weekend, Paris Saint-Germain said Monday.

"The clinical opinion following a left ankle sprain sustained last night, is reassuring," the club said. The announcement is positive news for PSG after a bad night on Sunday in which they lost top spot in Ligue 1 to Lille following a 1-0 home defeat at the hands of Lyon, who leapfrogged the capital club into second place with their win.

# Barca to Face PSG In Champions League Last 16

NYON (Reuters) -Barcelona will face Paris St Germain and former striker Neymar while title holders Bayern Munich are up against Italy's Lazio in the last 16 of the Champions League after UEFA's draw was held on Monday.

The clash of Lionel Messi and Barca with last year's runners-up PSG is a repeat of their remarkable meeting at the same stage in 2017 when Barca overcame a 4-0 first leg loss to beat the French club 6-1 in Spain with Neymar scoring twice for the Catalans.

"We know them (PSG) well, they've got some exceptional players. Paris want to fight for the Champions League, last year they came very close to winning it and they want to go one better this time round, but we've got something to say about that," said Guillermo Amor, Barcelona's Director of Institutional Relations.

Bayern will start as favourites in their tie but will be wary of Simone Inzaghi's Lazio team who have reached this stage for the first time in 20 years.

"Lazio are an uncomfortable opponent, you saw that in the group," said Bayern sports director Hasan Salihamidzic. "It is always uncomfortable against Italian teams."

Premier League champions Liverpool will play last year's semi-finalists RB Leipzig creating a match-up between Germany's most highly rated young coach Julian Nagelsmann of Leipzig with Liverpool's Juergen Klopp, the country's number one coach.

Liverpool are unbeaten in their last ten matches against German teams in all European competitions, a run going back to 2002.

13-times European champions Real Madrid face Serie A club Atalanta, who reached the quarter-finals in their first Champions League campaign last season. Real have won ten of their last eleven games with Italian clubs.

Atletico Madrid will face Chelsea in a game which could include the return of striker Diego Costa to Stamford Bridge.

Manchester City will take on Borussia Muenchengladbach, who are in the last 16 for the first time in the Champions League era.



Italian champions Juventus will face Porto, a game where Cristiano Ronaldo will return to his homeland Portugal.

The two legged ties will be played from Feb. 16.

Meanwhile Manchester United will face La Liga leaders Real Sociedad in the last 32 of the Europa League following Monday's draw in Nyon, after they were dumped out of the Champions League last week.

United dropped down to the Europa League, which they won in 2017, after RB Leipzig knocked them out of the Europe's top competition at the group stage.

But Sociedad represent one of the toughest draws of the first knockout round.

They reclaimed top spot in La Liga on Sunday and made it out of the Europa League group stage thanks to a dramatic late draw at Napoli, combined with AZ Alkmaar's last-gasp defeat at Rijeka.

Gennaro Gattuso's Napoli, who are four points behind leaders AC Milan in Serie A, will face another Spanish side in the shape of Granada, while Milan have been handed a tie with Red Star Belgrade in a clash of former European champions.

New Bundesliga leaders Bayer Leverkusen will take on Swiss side Young Boys, while Ajax face current Ligue 1 leaders Lille after being eliminated from a tough Champions League group that contained Liverpool and Atalanta.

Arsenal have a tricky tie with Benfica after topping their group with six wins from six, while fellow Premier League outfits Tottenham and Leicester will clash with Austria's Wolfsberg and Sparta Prague respectively.

## Ronaldo Becomes First Player to Win 400 Games in Europe's Top Leagues

ROME (Dispatches) - Juventus star Cristiano Ronaldo on Sunday added another feather to his illustrious cap as he completed his 400th win in Europe's top five leagues, a number no other player has reached in the 21st century.

A second-half brace by Ronaldo and a goal from Paulo Dybala saw Juventus claim a 3-1 victory over Genoa at the Stadio Luigi Ferraris.

After a frustrating first half, the Bianconeri finally broke the deadlock through La Joya, before Ronaldo's two penalties meant the team returns to Turin with three points.

The Portuguese forward achieved the feat in his 100th game for the Turin-based club. Ronaldo, of course, starred in the Premier League for Manchester United and then La Liga with Real Madrid before moving across to Italy in 2018.

No other man has managed to finish on the winning side as many times as him in the past 20 years, although Lionel Messi, with 365 wins, may catch him in the coming seasons.

Cristiano's Juventus team-mate Gianluigi Buffon completes the podium, winning no less than 350 times in his illustrious league career that has spanned both Serie A and Ligue 1, with Paris Saint-Germain. (ANI)

## Chiefs, Packers Clinch Division Crowns

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The Kansas Chiefs coughed up an uncharacteristic four turnovers but still beat the Miami Dolphins 33-27 to clinch their fifth straight AFC West division title.

Quarterback Patrick Mahomes received a rude welcome in his first appearance at Miami's Hard Rock Stadium since he earned MVP honors in a Super Bowl win over the San Francisco 49ers in February.

He was intercepted twice and sacked for an NFL-record 30-yard loss in the first quarter as Miami seized an early 10-0 lead.

But the Chiefs scored 30 straight points to seize control and fended off the Dolphins' fourth-quarter rally bid to improve to 12-1.

Miami's defeat gave the Chiefs' main competition for the AFC's top overall seed, Pittsburgh, a boost, securing the Steelers' first post-season berth since 2017.

The Steelers, chasing AFC North division title, took on the Buffalo Bills later Sunday.

Mahomes's three interceptions marked his first multi-interception game in more than two years. But he threw for 393 yards and two touchdowns.

"We won the Super Bowl here and just clinched the AFC West -- it seems every time we leave this stadium we have a hat about something we accomplished," Mahomes said. "The (bad) part, it seems, is like I have half my interceptions at this stadium."

Tyreek Hill scored on a 32-yard run and a 44-yard reception and Travis Kelce had eight catches for 136 yards and a TD.

Mecole Hardman returned a punt 67 yards for a touchdown and Chiefs defender Chris Jones sacked Dolphins rookie quarterback Tua Tagovailoa for a safety.

Tagovailoa passed for 316 yards and two touchdowns to Mike Gesicki, cutting the deficit to six points with less than five minutes to play before Harrison Butker kicked a 46-yard field goal for the Chiefs with just over a minute remaining.

Mahomes kept that drive going with a fourth-and-one pass to Hill.

"This is an explosive team, and they went on a run there," Dolphins coach Brian Flores said. "It was a quick spurt. That's how they're built -- they go on runs."

# Former Liverpool, France Coach Gerard Houllier Dies at 73



PARIS (Reuters) -Former France manager Gerard Houllier, who rebuilt Liverpool from Premier League underachievers into a cup treble winning side in 2001, has died aged 73, his former club said on Monday.

RMC sport and sports daily L'Equipe said Houllier, who also coached Paris St Germain, Olympique Lyonnais and Aston Villa, died after having a heart operation in Paris.

"We are mourning the passing of our treble-winning manager, Gerard Houllier," Liverpool said on Twitter.

"The thoughts of everyone at Liverpool Football Club are with Gerard's family and many friends. Rest in peace, Gerard Houllier 1947-2020."

The French football federation said it extended "its deepest condolences to the family and friends" of Houllier, who had a long association with the national team as a youth coach, an assistant and head coach between 1992 and 1993.

Houllier had a long history of heart problems, dating back to when he was rushed to hospital at halftime of a Premier League game between Liverpool and Leeds United in October 2001.

Former Liverpool striker Michael Owen, who scored two goals to win the 2001 FA Cup final against Arsenal, was among many leading figures in English football to pay tribute to the Frenchman.

Owen wrote on Twitter: "Absolutely heartbroken to hear that my old boss, Gerard Houllier, has sadly passed away. A great manager and a genuinely caring man. #RIPBoss".

## Shiffrin Wins First World Cup Ski Race Since January

PARIS (Dispatches) - Mikaela Shiffrin won her first World Cup event since January on Monday, seeing off reigning champion Federica Brignone and Tessa Worley to win the giant slalom at Courchevel.

Shiffrin finished 0.82sec ahead of Italian Brignone and more than a second in front of France's Worley after the two runs in France.

It was the American's 67th World Cup victory and puts her in third place on the all-time list alongside Austria's Marcel Hirscher.

The 25-year-old is still behind compatriot Lindsey Vonn's 82 World Cup wins and Swede Ingemar Stenmark, who racked up 86 victories.

Shiffrin has had a difficult 2020 which was marked by the sudden death of her father in February, which led to her missing eight races, and the coronavirus pandemic which then stopped her from returning before that campaign's climax.

That allowed Brignone to become the first Italian woman to ever claim the overall World Cup title.

Shiffrin then had to delay her return to the piste until slalom races in Levi, Finland, last month after picking up a back injury in October. She placed second and fifth in those races.

She finished fourth in the first giant slalom at Courchevel on Saturday, before dominating Monday's race, which was originally scheduled to be run on Sunday but was delayed due to heavy snowfall.



## Hamilton Contract Top of The Agenda

LONDON (Reuters) - Seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton is hoping to have his future sorted by Christmas now that the Formula One season is over.

The most successful driver in the history of the sport and his Mercedes team, winner of both titles for an unprecedented seventh year in succession, still have to sit down and put pen to paper.

Hamilton is otherwise out of contract in a few weeks' time.

The issue, even if it looks a foregone conclusion, is the biggest question of several remaining to be answered around the paddock.

"I plan to be here next year. I want to be here next year," said Hamilton, 35, after finishing third in Sunday's Abu Dhabi finale. "Us, as a team, have more to do together and more to achieve both in the sport but even more outside the sport I think. I hope we can begin discussions this week and hopefully get it tied up before Christmas."

The Briton had put off talks while he focused on the championship and then COVID-19 got in the way, with Hamilton testing positive in Bahrain and going into 10 days of quarantine.

Team boss Toto Wolff said there was no concern.

"It is going to happen. There is no reason it shouldn't happen now," he told reporters.

"We'll have this conversation. We always said that we will do it after the title was won and then the virus delayed us for another 10 days, two weeks and now we just have to sit down, maybe virtually or maybe live." Championship runners-up Red Bull must decide who is going to partner Sunday's race winner Max Verstappen next season with Thai racer Alexander Albon the incumbent but Mexican Sergio Perez in the frame.

