

**IRAN NEWS Felicitates Its  
Christian Readers on the  
Occasion of Christmas and Wish  
Them a Very Happy Christmas**

# IRAN NEWS



VOL. XXVI, No. 7125 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

THURSDAY DECEMBER 24, 2020 - DEY 4, 1399

**2 DOMESTIC**

**Speaker Terms  
Neutralization of Sanctions  
A Basic Goal for Iran**

> SEE PAGE 2

**3 DOMESTIC**

**Seoul Needs to Change  
Approach for Resumption  
Of Ties With Tehran**

> SEE PAGE 3

**4 INTERNATIONAL**

**Russia Sanctions EU  
Over Poisoning of  
Delusional Navalny**

> SEE PAGE 4

**8 SPORTS**

**More Misery for  
Arsenal in League Cup  
Exit to Man City**

> SEE PAGE 8

## Iran Prepares to Launch Human Trials of Homegrown COVID-19 Vaccine

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Just hours into the start of a national enrollment program for volunteers, almost 10,000 Iranians signed up to take part in the first phase of the human trials of the homegrown COVID-19 vaccine.

Hassan Jalili, director of the research team in the production of the coronavirus vaccine at the Headquarters for Executing the Order of Imam Khomeini, said on Wednesday that as many as 17,000 people had contacted 4030, the national hotline set up since the first days of coronavirus outbreak in Iran to provide expert consultation and screening, to inquire about the clinical trials and the eligibility requirements.

More than 9,900 volunteers enrolled to participate in the Iranian COVID-19 vaccine trials, he added.

Elaborating on the requirements, Jalili explained that the volunteers should be aged between 18 and 50, of good health and have no history of allergies and coronavirus infection.

"During the first stage, 56 candidates will be selected to receive two shots administered 14 days apart. The results of the first phase will be assessed 28 days later to monitor the vaccine's immune response," he said. **See Page 7**

## Iran Ballistic Missile Program Not Open to Negotiation



TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's ambassador to the United Nations has rejected any negotiation over the Islamic Republic's "legitimate" ballistic missile program.

Majid Takht Ravanchi said at a virtual UN meeting that Iran's defense policy is crystal clear.

"On numerous occasions, we have made our position on the country's defense capabilities completely clear," he noted.

"Under the international law, every country is essentially entitled to develop a conventional missile program, and Iran is not exception," said the official.

"Hence, Iran will not negotiate on its legitimate ballistic missile program," he underlined.

He said Iran pays due regard to its national security.

"As Iran is located in a sensitive region such as the Middle East, we will not allow our security and conventional defense might to be compromised, restricted or undermined," he said.

"Iran won't be intimidated into abandoning its legitimate defense tolls by the bullying policies of certain powers," said Takht Ravanchi.

He said the only source of instability and insecurity in the region is the presence of a large number of American troops in almost all countries neighboring Iran and the ones in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman region.

Another source of instability and insecurity, he said, is the flow into the region of the most sophisticated weapons made by the US and other Western countries.

"The Persian Gulf has been suffering from foreign interference and unfair rivalries for years. Due to the unrestrained inflow of dangerous Western weapons, this region has turned into a powder keg. In order to sell more arms, these countries fuel differences in the region and have adopted the 'divide and rule' policy," he said.

He expressed hope countries in the region will soon welcome Iran's peace initiative known as the Homuz Peace Endeavour (HOPE).

He further noted the 2015 nuclear agreement, officially known as the JCPOA, was the outcome of marathon talks and there is no point putting it on the negotiating table again.

Takht Ravanchi said that under UN Security Council Resolution 2231, the JCPOA was concluded as a comprehensive, long-term and appropriate solution to the Iran nuclear issue in order to establish a new relationship with Iran and facilitate and boost trade and economic cooperation and transactions with Tehran.

"The conclusion of the JCPOA was the result of marathon talks, including difficult tit-for-tat arrangements, and any offer of revising, renegotiating or extending the deal runs counter to UNSC Resolution 2231, and will definitely be not acceptable for Iran," the top official added.

"After withdrawing from the JCPOA on May 8, 2018, the U.S. re-imposed all of its nuclear sanctions, and ever since, has adopted a hostile approach toward the JCPOA and Iran, covertly and overtly bothering Iran's trade partners constantly and extensively," he added.

"With these measures, the U.S. has committed blatant violations of the JCPOA and has systematically and constantly breached its legal obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 2231, the UN Charter and the international law," he explained. **See Page 7**

## Fate Awaiting Trump No Better Than Saddam Hussein's

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Hassan Rouhani has drawn a parallel between the hostile policies of outgoing US President Donald Trump and Iraq's Saddam Hussein for waging wars on the Islamic Republic, saying the American leader will eventually not fare much better than the former Iraqi dictator.

"There were two maniacs who waged wars against the Iranian people; one was Saddam who imposed a military war and the other was Trump who started an economic war on us," President Rouhani told a cabinet meeting in Tehran on Wednesday.

"During the [1980s] imposed war, we defeated the enemy owing to our unity and alliance, and the day Saddam was hanged was a day of victory for the Iranian people. Thanks to the resistance the Iranian nation has put up against the U.S. sanctions, Trump's fate will not be better than Saddam's."

Iran has been under a series of illegal sanctions imposed by the U.S. since 2018, when Trump withdrew Washington from the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and enforced the so-called maximum pressure campaign to target the Iranian nation. **See Page 7**

## Iran Exports to Armenia Decline by 27%

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN- Iran has exported products worth \$233 million to Armenia during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20) which shows 23 percent decline comparing to the same period last year, an official with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced.

Behrouz Hasan Olfat, the director-general of TPO's office of trade with Europe and America, said that the eight-month export shows a 27-percent fall year on year, adding, "But we hope to make up for this in the last quarter of the year."

The official put Iran's worth of the import from Armenia at \$11 million during the first eight months of the present year.

He also referred to the trade data released by Armenia and said Iran-Armenia trade during January-October 2020 stood at nearly \$330 million, of which \$254 million has been the share of Iran's export and \$74 million was the share of Armenia's export. **See Page 7**

## Tehran, Baku to Cooperate on Oil, Gas

TEHRAN (Shana) -- Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Zangeneh hosted a meeting with his Azerbaijani counterpart here in Tehran to discuss oil and energy issues concerning the two neighbors.

Speaking prior to his meeting with Minister of Energy of Azerbaijan Republic Parviz Shahbazov, Mr. Zangeneh said the relations between Iran and Azerbaijan as two neighbors are at an excellent level and, God willing will continue.

"I thank Azerbaijan for its position and active presence in OPEC+," he said.

He further said that, fortunately, OPEC+ measures have worked so far, expressing optimism that the group, comprising members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and their allies, will be able to keep oil prices at a reasonable level.

"I appreciate the export of Iranian gas to Nakhchivan," said Mr. Zangeneh.

For his part, Parviz Shahbazov, Minister of Energy of Azerbaijan Republic, said in the meeting: "There are friendly and close relations between Iran and Azerbaijan, and the presidents of the two countries have held numerous meetings over the past seven years." **See Page 7**

Sokhan Gostar Institute

# IRAN NEWS

PRIVATE ENGLISH  
NEWSPAPER IN IRAN

Advertisement Department  
**021-44253335-39**  
www.irannewsdaily.com  
info@irannewsdaily.com  
@irannewsdaily

## There Is No Positive Alternative to JCPOA

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The European Union ambassador to the UN has lended his full support to the 2015 nuclear agreement that was clinched between Iran and six major countries, saying there is no positive alternative to the accord which has withstood pressure over the past years.

"There is no positive alternative to the JCPOA, which is the fruit of more than 12 years of negotiation, endorsed at the highest level by the international community and enshrined in the UNSC Resolution 2231," Olof Skoog said on Tuesday at a virtual meeting of the Security Council in reference to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the official title given to Iran's deal. The nuclear deal was signed in 2015 between Iran, Germany and five permanent members of the UN Security Council — namely the United States, France, Britain, Russia and China — and was later ratified in the form of UNSC Resolution 2231.

However, in May 2018, President Donald Trump terminated the US participation in the JCPOA and unleashed the so-called maximum pressure campaign, subjecting the Iranian nation to the "toughest ever" sanctions.

Iran moved in May 2019 to scale back its JCPOA commitments as per its rights enshrined in the deal, only after the remaining European signatories kept dragging their feet on the tasks undertaken as part of the deal.

In light of U.S. President-elect Joe Biden signaling a desire to rejoin the JCPOA, Iran has expressed its readiness to reverse the suspension of its obligations only if the US returns to the accord and lifts all sanctions without any preconditions, insisting that the deal is any renegotiation of the deal is off the table.

The EU envoy hailed the JCPOA as "a key component of the global non-proliferation architecture," saying its full implementation by all sides was "crucial for all JCPOA participants and the international community to reap the benefits of this agreement." **See Page 7**

## China, Iran Start Drilling in South Pars

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Drilling operations of the first well of the game-changing but highly-controversial Phase 11 of Iran's supergiant South Pars non-associated natural gas field officially began last week.

Significant gas recovery from the enormous resource will commence in the second half of the next Iranian calendar year that begins on 21 March 2021. The long-stalled Phase 11 development supposedly saw the withdrawal of all Chinese involvement in October 2019.

In reality, though, China is still intimately involved in its development and is looking to further scale up its activities following the inauguration of Joe Biden as U.S. President on 20 January. Along with completing the crucial Goreh-Jask pipeline oil export route by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (ending on 20 March 2021), building out its value-added petrochemicals production to at least 100 million metric tons per year by 2022, and ramping up production from its hugely oil-rich West Karoun cluster of oil fields to at least 1 million barrels per day (bpd) within the next two years, optimizing the natural gas production from its South Pars gas field is a top priority for Iran. **See Page 7**

# Ukrainian Aircraft File Was Politicized

TABRIZ (IP) - The Minister of Roads and Urban Development of Iran stated that the publication of the final and technical report on the Ukrainian plane crash is in its final stages.

Mohammad Eslami, Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development, said in Tabriz on Tuesday about the final report on the Ukrainian plane crash.

Eslami added that the excuses put forward by some countries about how the Ukrainian plane crashed were a political debate and many of them could not be considered.

## Speaker Terms Neutralization of Sanctions A Basic Goal for Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf on Tuesday said that the basis for Iran is the neutralization of sanctions, which even nullifying the embargo will open the way for the lifting of sanctions.

Touching on the recent remark of the Supreme Leader on the issue of lifting and neutralizing sanctions, Qalibaf said that Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei made a very precise and profound point, and he emphasized that "we have two discussions about neutralizing the sanctions, which is the basis for us and will even pave the way for lifting sanctions".

He termed the latest exhibition on achievements held in Iran as an objective example of the issue of sanctions neutralization, adding that it shows how to take



steps in neutralizing the sanctions

In dealing with the coronavirus outbreak, the important measures have been taken from the production of masks to the human vaccine testing phase, he noted.

## Iran Ready to Help Final Settlement of Baku-Yerevan Conflict

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Presidential Office Mahmoud Vaezi on Tuesday expressed joy over termination of military conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, saying that Iran is ready to help resolve permanently and definitively the dispute between the two neighboring countries.

In a meeting with Azerbaijan Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev on Tuesday, he added that Iran has always believed that differences between countries, especially neighbors, should be resolved through negotiation, and that war could in no way replace political solutions.

As Azerbaijan's president has emphasized, Iran considers its border with this country as the border of peace and friendship and has always respected the territorial integrity of all countries and called on other countries to respect each other's territorial integrity, he said.

It is necessary to avoid any action or movement that causes misunderstanding and creates grounds for strained relations with others, Vaezi reiterated.

Noting that Iran has always been interested to enhance ties with Azerbaijan, he said that the two countries should do their best to accelerate implementation of joint projects such as the construction of railways, dams and power plants in order to pave way for the expansion of interactions and relations.

Mustafayev, for his part, hailed bilateral relations, saying that longstanding ties and Iran's supports to Azerbaijan over the past years have always been a source of encouragement for the country's government and nation.

President Aliyev has always considered borders of the two countries as borders of peace and friendship.

Azerbaijan Republic has always respected all countries' territorial integrity, he said, noting that Iran, as a great country and a friendly and brother neighbor has always enjoyed a high position among the people and government of Azerbaijan, and relations with it have been and are a strategic relationship for Azerbaijan.

## Iran, Pakistan's Important Regional Partner

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - Pakistan's Minister for Defense Production says Islamabad considers Tehran as a friend and important regional partner and Pakistan has a strong resolve to further enhance relations with Iran.

Zobaida Jalal expressed these views during a meeting with Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran Syed Mohammad Ali Hosseini at her office in Islamabad on Tuesday.

According to a statement of the ministry of defense production, the minister said "we have a strong resolve to further enhance our ties with Iran. The opening of the crossing at Gabd Ramadan is an important step in this regards".

She added the development will have a good impact on the lives of the people living close to the borders of the two states.



"It will also encourage legal trade and business activities and discourage smuggling and other related illegal businesses," she said.

"Opening of the borders at various points will bring the people of both the countries close to each other and will boost the business and trade

activities," Zobaida Jalal added.

She said that Pishin and four other points have also been identified and these points will be opened soon.

The Iranian ambassador conveyed that the government of Iran and Iranian people are very pleased and consider it as an important step. The Iranian ambassador thanked the Federal Minister for Defense Production Zobaida Jalal for her valuable efforts in this regard.

## Iran, Turkey Policies Key in Sustainable Security in Region

### IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Special assistant to Majlis Speaker on international affairs says encountering cruel sanctions against countries are of the issues fir growth of relations between Iran and Turkey, adding that policies of both countries have played key role in creating sustainable security in the region.

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in meeting with Turkish Ambassador to Tehran Derya Ors called relations with Turkey as a privileged one based on neighborliness and brotherhood.

Reminding of bilateral, regional, and international positions and cooperation, Amir-Abdollahian stated: "Under the current condition of Tehran and Ankara politics, is helping to create lasting security in the region, it has been able to play an important role in creating peace and tranquility."

He underlined the parliamentary relations between Tehran and Ankara, adding that it has important role in bolstering all-out relations between both countries.

Amir-Abdollahian noted that encountering the cruel sanctions against countries is of the issues which will boost relations between both states.

Turkish Ambassador to Tehran Ors, for his part, called the cooperation between the two countries in the region and the international arena to resolve crises a successful experience and added: "Regular and continuous interaction has important effects on strengthening relations between the two countries."

He also said that a review of bilateral relations of Iran and Turkey in years shows the depth of ties between both states.



## Tehran, Kuala Lumpur To Expand Consular, Judicial Cooperation



TEHRAN (IP) - The head of the Iran-Malaysia parliamentary friendship group called for expanding consular and judicial cooperation between the two countries.

Head of Iran-Malaysia Parliamentary Friendship group Mohammad Mehdi Zahedi on Tuesday during a meeting with Dato Rustam Yahya Malaysian Ambassador in Tehran, recalling the importance of parliamentary relations between the two countries and said: Iran-Malaysia Parliamentary Friendship Group is ready to strengthen parliamentary relations between the two nations for the benefit of the two nations.

The head of the Iran-Malaysia Parliamentary Friendship Group, referring to the great potential of the two countries in the field of manufacturing medical, pharmaceutical, scientific and research equipment, added: The development of cooperation in these areas and other issues of mutual interest have a significant role in securing the trade and economic interests of Iran and Malaysia.

Rustam Yahya also said: "Malaysia has a special interest in developing relations with Iran and welcomes the strengthening of talks between the representatives of the two countries' parliaments."

The Malaysian ambassador to Iran also said that trade is an important part of the two countries' cooperation, which has faced challenges with the Corona outbreak, adding: "The two countries must have coherent planning for the post-Corona period."

He also reiterated that Iran and Malaysia enjoy high potential for developing their economic relations which should be operationalized.

## Two-Day Presidential Election Not Allowed

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The law prohibits holding of the presidential election in Iran in two days, Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, the interior minister said the law stipulates that the presidential election in Iran must be held in a single day, not in two days.

He said the Interior Ministry has received many views about holding the election under the coronavirus pandemic and has studied the election process in foreign countries after the COVID-19 outbreak.

A deputy of the ministry had announced in November that the Ministry of Interior has proposed holding the next year's presidential election in two days considering the coronavirus restrictions.

The next presidential election in June 2021 will be held simultaneously with city council and midterm parliamentary and Assembly of Experts elections.

Candidates hoping to run in the next elections are to apply in early April for approval. The final list is to be announced by the Guardian Council in early June.

## COVID-19 Vaccine Purchase Unrelated to FATF Blacklisting

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - A member of Iran's Expediency Council dismissed the notion that the restrictions imposed by the Financial Action Task Force have blocked Tehran's purchase of vaccine for the coronavirus.

The FATF restrictions do not apply to humanitarian items, Expediency Council member Mohammad Javad Iravani said after the recent critical remarks from the administration's spokesperson who has attributed the failure to purchase the coronavirus vaccine to the limitations caused by the FATF.

Iravani criticized those who rush to use the FATF blacklisting as a tool, saying they are not unlikely to link even the price of chicken and egg to the FATF disputes.

At a press conference on Tuesday, administration spokesman Ali Rabiee said the transaction of money for purchasing the coronavirus vaccine from abroad has been impeded because Iran has not joined the FATF.

Rabiee said the fact that Tehran is not a FATF member and has been blacklisted by the international task force has had major negative impacts on financial transactions and fund supplies, even when the sanctions are not the real problem.

The FATF voted on February 21 to keep Iran on its blacklist for what it said failing to comply with international anti-terrorism financing norms.

## EAEU Good Opportunity for Iran

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - President Hassan Rouhani called for closer interaction with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) amid the pressure of sanctions.

Rouhani on Tuesday received a report on the implementation of free trade deals with the Eurasian Economic Union at a meeting of t Iran's Economic Coordination Headquarters.

The president said the figures on trade exchanges with the union during the past year indicate that working with the EAEU has opened the door to a new market for the export of Iranian products.

Among the perfect opportunities that Iran should seize are the economic and trade capacities available in the Eurasian region, he said.

"Iran's presence in the EAEU is much more important than before under the current circumstances of economic war and the coronavirus consequences," the president stressed.

## Iran Capable of Confronting Enemy's Assassination Tech

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's defense chief says the Islamic Republic is capable of overcoming the technological methods deployed by the enemy to carry out targeted killings inside the country.

"We are capable of confronting the technologies that are used by the enemy to carry out assassinations," Brigadier General Amir Hatami said.

However, the enemy will always have some room to maneuver since it is the one choosing the method, time and place of the atrocities, the minister noted.

The adversaries tend to use their methods on a one-off basis and turn to different means for their next move, he added.

Hatami, meanwhile, cited the assassination of Mohsen Fakhrazadeh, a senior Iranian nuclear physicist, near Tehran on November 27, in which the Israeli regime that has targeted many Iranian nuclear scientists in the past, is the prime suspect.

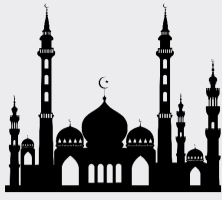
He regretted that while technology is oftentimes used to better human life, this crime manifested the "dark use" of the knowhow.

Spokesman for Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Brigadier General Ramezan Sharif said, "Advanced electronic instruments guided by satellite" equipment had been used to enable the assassination.

The defense minister said that Fakhrazadeh's assassination was a reminder that confronting Iran's scientific advancement was a priority for the enemy.

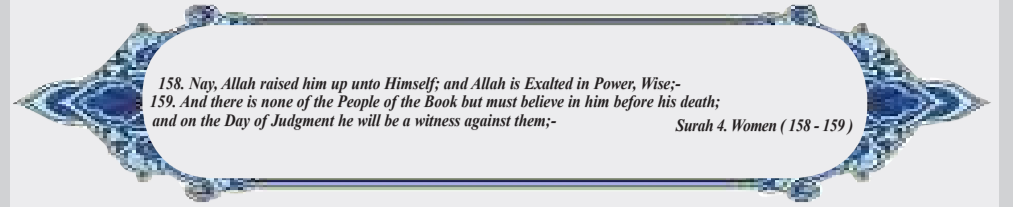
"The enemy's objective is to get the message across to our youth that it won't tolerate our country's independence in science and defense sectors; however, every time an assassination occurs, our youth come forward, more talented and motivated, to follow in the footsteps of these martyrs," he said.





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:04
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:16
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:42
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:12



158. Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise:-  
159. And there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before his death;  
and on the Day of Judgment he will be a witness against them:-  
Surah 4. Women (158 - 159)

## Seoul Needs to Change Approach for Resumption Of Ties With Tehran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - Deputy Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) for International Affairs Mohammad-Reza Karbasi says Iran's market is not like two years ago and if South Korea is eager to resume cooperation with Iran, it should change its approach to Iran's market.**

Iran's newly appointed commercial counsellor to South Korea Mr. Nikbakht met on Tuesday with Karbasi to review economic potentials of Iran for resumption of trade with South Korea. In the meeting, Karbasi pointed to the positive view of Iran to South Korea for years and criticized weak performance of Seoul in the past two years and highlighted dissatisfaction and regret of the government and economic activists of the private sector.

He went on to say that the trend of cooperation between Tehran and Seoul has always been positive and in some of the years the bilateral trade volume reached 16 to 17 billion dollars. Karbasi added that recent evaluation and conducted polls have shown that in the home appliances sector, producers and consumers have lost their interests to the Korean goods which has been due to the inappropriate behavior of Koreans regarding Iran's consumption market which officially has pushed the market to boycott South Korean goods by Iranian consumers while we have not asked for any credit for imports and exports and even not for special support and favor.

In the meeting the issue of Iran's frozen assets in South Korea was raised and Karbasi pointed to Iran's exports to South Korea whose money has not been repatriated to the country and been blocked in South Korean banks and South Korean banks have violated their obligations.

He referred to the in vain efforts of efforts for release of Iran assets and urged the government to resolve the issue through talks with their South Korean counterparts.

Karbasi noted that Iranian companies due to suffering losses and pressures are not unhappy and disappointed and are not ready to cooperate with South Korea any longer, adding that while some other Asian countries which are more economically dependent on the U.S. and Western states have always tried to continue trade and



boost imports and exports with Iran in the toughest time.

He further said that despite considerable trade relation between both states and Iran's consuming market for home appliances, luxurious goods, cars and parts, the South Korean government has not been ready to help Iran to release its assets.

Karbasi added that with election of Joe Biden and in the post-Coronavirus era it is possible the economic ties resume and economic activists will try to expand their cooperation with those countries and governments which have sided with them in the hard times. He said that during the sanctions era, major parts of productions especially in the home appliances has improved and they compete with the world standards and today some important Iranian brands have replaced South Korean brands and this achievement is most welcomed because before this happens, Iran was only consumer of these commodities but today it is itself producer and it boosts job creation and rise of incomes. He claimed now Iran is among the top ten countries in home appliances production.

He added that Iran's market is not like two years ago and if South Koreans are eager to resume trade ties with Iran they should change their approach because they will not any longer be able to flood their goods into our consuming market and they should cooperate in form of the joint cooperation and through the transfer of technology, knowhow and production in Iran for domestic production or export to the countries in the region.

Karbasi said that he has recently heard good news about Iran's frozen assets in South Korea saying that South Korean have announced readiness to pay their debts in the form of providing Iran with its needed goods like foodstuff and medicines.

## Tehran, Baku Agree to Build Power Plant at Khodaafarin Dam

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian energy minister announced that Iran and the Azerbaijan Republic agreed to build a hydroelectric power plant at the Khodaafarin Dam.

“One of the major projects that its executive operations started about 20 years ago was the Khodaafarin Dam on the Aras River border,” said Reza Ardakanian on Wednesday on the sidelines of cabinet session.

“This dam is important and can regulate about 1.6bn cubic meters of water throughout the year,” he added, saying, “In addition to irrigating agricultural land, two hydropower plants with a total capacity of 280 MW can generate electricity.”

Aradakanian noted, “An agreement was signed between the government of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan four years ago to complete the dam and it was approved by Iranian Parliament as well.”

Stating that Iran had some disagreements with the Republic of Azerbaijan over the financial calculations of the Khodaafarin Dam power plant, the energy minister said, “Yesterday, we agreed with the Azerbaijan Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mostafayev on this issue and we will immediately start building hydroelectric power plants at the Khodaafarin Dam.”

## Tehran, Ankara Set to Boost Technological Interactions

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Science and Technology Interaction Center of Iran's Vice-Presidency for Science and Technology is to host the Iran-Turkey online business meeting in a bid to increase mutual technological interactions.

With the cooperation of the Turkish Investment Growth and Development Center, Synergia, this event will be held via virtual B2B meetings in specialized fields of ‘Minerals’, ‘Petrochemical Industries’, and ‘Metals’ on February 3, 2021.

Taking part in the event, the participants will be briefed about “Familiarity with export opportunities to Turkey”, “Interest of Turkish companies in Iranian products”, “Identification of business partners” and “Introduction of how to enter the Turkish market”.

Considering the cultural and religious commonalities of Iran and Turkey, the development of scientific and technological cooperation between the two sides is a necessity. Given Iran's leading position in many scientific fields in West Asia and Turkey's capabilities in the fields of trade and commerce, such bilateral interactions will bring good and technological developments for the two countries.

In January 2020, heading an Iranian knowledge-based and technology delegation, Vice-President for the Science and Technology Sorena Sattari traveled to Turkey with the aim of expanding the international interactions of Iranian knowledge-based companies.

## IRGC Contractor Unveils 2nd Long-Range Crude Tanker

TEHRAN (PressTV)- Iran's elite military force the IRGC has unveiled a second long range crude tanker built by its engineering and construction headquarters, a sign the force keeps expanding its growth capacities in defiance of bans imposed by the United States.

General Saeed Mohammad, the commander of IRGC's Khatam Construction Headquarters, visited a shipyard in Bushehr on the coast of the Persian Gulf to unveil the large vessel on Tuesday. Mohammad said the Aframax tanker, which is capable of carrying 113,000 metric tons of oil (750,000 barrels), has been built by IRGC-affiliated Sadra Company for

delivery to a foreign customer through an engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contract.

He said the ship is the second of its type built by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps for delivery to foreign customers, adding that the two projects had earned the country nearly 120 million euros in hard currency revenues.

The commander said the new oil tanker will start sailing before the end of the current fiscal year in late March.

IRGC's engineering and construction wing has played a major role in Iran's infrastructure development in recent years.

## Tehran, Moscow to Synchronize Electricity Grid Through Azerbaijan

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said on Tuesday that the synchronization program of the Electricity Network of Iran and the Russian Federation is on the agenda through the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Ardakanian said in a joint press conference with Azeri Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev that all three countries (Iran, Russia, and Azerbaijan) have agreed on this issue.

In this regard, Mustafayev also said Azerbaijan cooperates with Iran to synchronize Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia's electricity networks, and the necessary infrastructure has been provided.

Ardakanian called Azerbaijan an important neighbor for Iran and said the two countries cooperate well in electricity and water. Two parties also discuss progress on Khoda-Afarin and Quiz Qala'si Hydroelectric Dam Projects.

He said that an agreement had been reached with Azerbaijan on the extension of energy exchanges and the development of electrical communications is also on the agenda.

## Over 2.7m Tons of Commodities Traded on IME Last Month

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Based on the report released by the Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME)'s public relations, the trading floors of the exchange sold more than 2.77 million tons of various commodities and underlying assets marking 42% growth in volume and 57% surge in value worth of \$1.32b in the Iranian calendar month of Azar (Nov 21 - Dec 21, 2020).

As shown by the figures, the industrial and mineral spot market of the exchange traded 1.178 million tons of basic commodities worth of \$697m of which steel sections accounted for 1.137 million tons among an array of underlying commodities like copper, precious metals concentrates, molybdenum, aluminum, coke, zinc, cast-iron and gold bar.

The petrochemical and oil-related market of the IME saw trades of 1.559 million tons of polymers, chemicals, vacuum bottom and bitumen for which the flagship commodities were vacuum bottom (530,000 toes), bitumen (467,000 tons), polymers (245,000 tons), chemicals (218,000 tons), and Lube cut with a quantity of 144,000 tons.

In the agricultural market of the exchange 320 kilograms of premium saffron changed hands. Meanwhile, the side market of the exchange traded 3350 tons of OTC products and commodities.

## IranAir Resumes Flights to Ankara

TEHRAN (MNA) – Public Relations Department Director of IranAir, country's national flag carrier airline, said that IranAir flights to Ankara airport were resumed after months of hiatus due to the spread of coronavirus, COVID-19.

Hossein Jahani said, “Concurrent with the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic, many airline destinations of the Islamic Republic of Iran, including Ankara and Istanbul, had been suspended.” As of the beginning of the current year (started March 21, 2020) and following a flight permit from Turkish Civil Aviation Organization, only a flight permit was issued for Istanbul flights and IranAir flights to Ankara Airport were still waiting for a permit, he added.

Finally, with the issuance of a permit to continue “IranAir” flights to Ankara Airport, the first flight of the Islamic Republic of Iran Airlines to this airport took place on Wednesday, December 23, after a few months of interruption, he said, adding, “This flight with number 715 will be operated on Wednesdays at 9:45 am from Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKIA) to Ankara.”

This flight leaves Ankara Airport for Imam Khomeini International Airport on the same day at 13:55 (local time), Jahani continued.

## Private Sectors of Iran, Pakistan Ready to Implement FTA

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iranian and Pakistani economic activists in a webinar held jointly by Chambers of Commerce of Tehran and Lahore explored ways of expanding economic cooperation, and both sides announced readiness for implementing the free trade agreement signed by both countries.



Speaking in the webinar, Pakistan Ambassador Rahim Hayat Qureshi said both countries are striving to implement the free trade agreement, and pointed to the opening of the joint border market between both countries this week and stipulated that governments of both countries are trying to launch more joint border markets.

He pointed to the solutions of head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce regarding establishment of a barter trade system between both countries and defended the mechanism and noted that chambers of commerce of both countries can take the helm of this mechanism and devise operational solutions.

He also pointed to the launch of preferential tariff agreements between Iran and Pakistan, saying that the agreement should be fully carried out by both sides. He added that both governments are currently talking on the free trade agreement and it is on the verge of being finalized. Meanwhile addressing the webinar, Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (TCCIMA) Masoud Khansari emphasized efforts of chambers of commerce of both countries for launching the barter trade mechanism and said achieving the free trade agreement is a long stride towards improving the economic relations between Iran and Pakistan.

He also announced the formation of a joint workgroup between private sectors of both states for identifying the obstacles in way of trade between both states and resolving them, and noted that by creating opportunities for joint talks and exchange of views and solutions by the private sectors, achievement of 3-billion-dollar trade will be possible.

Khansari added that strengthening and equipping the infrastructure for the connection of both countries and joint investments for launching industrial parks in the areas near borders are of the solutions for developing bilateral economic relations.

He also pointed to reopening of two border markets in recent days, and said lack of bilateral banking and financial interactions has overshadowed the trade between both states, saying that to resolve this problem and with reliance on barter trade, both countries can expand their economic relation beyond what is now.

Khansari also said using national currencies in trade and establishing joint banks are of the solutions that Iran's private sector and chamber of commerce offer which can solve a major part of problem in bilateral trade.

He also called for bolstering joint cooperation in developing Chabahar Port development, noting that connecting it to Gwadar Port of Pakistan is an essential step for improving economic relations of both countries. He then pointed to the preferential tariff agreement signed between both countries and said it is now time to implement it and even move further. Meanwhile Vice-President of Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mr. Shamsul Islam Khan, for his part, termed smuggling is the major woe in way of trade between both states and noted that both countries can overcome the woe of smuggling by launching the joint border markets.

He also called for establishing joint industrial towns in joint border areas and said it is very crucial in boosting job creation for citizens of both countries and expansion of trade exchanges.

## 2 Women Prison Doctors Among Five Killed in Afghan Bombing

KABUL (AFP) - Two women doctors working at an Afghan prison with hundreds of Taliban inmates were among five people killed Tuesday in a bomb attack, officials said, in the latest of several targeted killings in Kabul.

Deadly violence has rocked Kabul and several provinces across the country in recent months, despite the Taliban and the government engaging in peace talks.

Tuesday's blast happened in the south of the capital as the doctors were on their way to Pul-e-Charkhi prison when a bomb attached to their car exploded, Kabul police spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz said.



## Putin Beefs Up Protections for Former Russian Presidents

MOSCOW (Reuters) - President Vladimir Putin signed laws on Tuesday granting former Russian presidents expanded immunity from prosecution and allowing them to become senators for life in the upper house of parliament once they leave the Kremlin.

The new laws follow sweeping reforms of Russia's political system initiated by Putin this year. Among other things, these allow him to run for two more six-year terms in the Kremlin if he chooses. He would otherwise have had to step down in 2024. The reforms are being parsed for clues as to what Putin, 68, may do at the end of his current term, which is his second consecutive term and his fourth overall.



## Russia Sanctions EU Over Poisoning of Delusional Navalny



MOSCOW (AFP) - Russia said Tuesday it was hitting EU officials with sanctions for their response to the poisoning of opposition figure Alexei Navalny, who the Kremlin said was suffering from "delusions of persecution".

The foreign ministry in Moscow summoned several senior EU diplomats before announcing the new travel bans. In response to "confrontational" sanctions imposed by the bloc in October, Russia "decided to expand the list of representatives of EU member states and institutions who will be denied entry to Russia."

The announcement on Tuesday came a day after Navalny, 44, said in a report he had impersonated an official in the Kremlin's Security Council and extracted an admission of guilt from a toxins expert with the FSB security service.

In a video of the conversation published by Navalny, the alleged FSB agent says agents placed poison in Navalny's underwear this summer.

The anticorruption campaigner was flown for treatment to Germany where labs concluded he was poisoned with Novichok, a Soviet-designed nerve agent. Navalny's video of his conversation with the man named Konstantin Kudryavtsev racked up more than 12 million views in less than 24 hours and social media were abuzz with memes about Navalny's underpants.

The Kremlin on Tuesday described Navalny as a "sick" man who was suffering from "delusions of persecution".

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov denied that Navalny's claims could discredit the FSB, adding the opposition politician also exhibited "traits of megalomania."

"They say he compares himself to Jesus," Peskov added.

Observers said it was hard to predict the fallout from Navalny's revelations.

"This is a political Chernobyl," said prominent commentator Yulia Latynina, referring to the 1986 nuclear disaster in Soviet Ukraine.

"After this the system cannot exist in its current form," she wrote in the opposition newspaper Novaya Gazeta.

Authorities hit back against Navalny's supporters. His top ally Lyubov Sobol spent hours at a police station and was questioned overnight before being released.

Ivan Zhdanov, the head of Navalny's Anti-Corruption Fund, told AFP that they planned to launch a formal complaint with the FSB on Tuesday.

The FSB described the phone call as "fake" and said it would not have been possible without "the support of foreign intelligence services."

Last week Putin rejected reports that the FSB had poisoned Navalny, saying that if the security services had wanted to poison the opposition politician, "they would have taken it to the end."

## Armenia Opposition Stages Protests, Strike Over Karabakh

YEREVAN (Dispatches) - Thousands of protesters rallied in Armenia's capital on Tuesday demanding Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan resign over a controversial peace deal with Azerbaijan as the opposition launched a nationwide strike.

Some 25,000 protesters flooded the centre of Yerevan, according to an AFP correspondent at the scene, chanting "Nikol the traitor" and "Armenia without Nikol".

Demonstrators surrounded the government building and implored riot police protecting it to join the people. Pashinyan sparked fury when he signed the Moscow-brokered accord last month, ending six weeks of war over the ethnic Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh that left more than 6,000 dead.

Armenia agreed to cede three districts to Baku under the deal in addition to four others that Azerbaijani forces won back during the fighting and had been controlled by Armenian separatists since a 1990s war.

The decision unleashed outrage in Armenia, where demonstrators have staged near daily rallies demanding Pashinyan's resignation, with anger growing in recent weeks.

On Tuesday protesters gathered in Yerevan's Republic Square outside the government building, the prosecutor general's office and several other ministries, after a call last week by the opposition to begin a nationwide strike at noon.

"This government no longer represents us. Its decisions are illegal and therefore it must go," a leader of the opposition Dashnaksutyun party, Ishkhan Sagatelyan, told demonstrators.

"We can heal our wounds only if he leaves," 67-year-old pensioner Iveta Serobyan told AFP, referring to Pashinyan.

Dashnaksutyun leader Gegham Manukyan said employees of the Yerevan city metro had joined the strike as well as the trade union of Yerevan State University and more than a dozen business organisations.

He said the strike would continue until Pashinyan steps down.

At around 8 pm (1600 GMT), hundreds of protesters remained in Republic Square, where they said they would spend the night, an AFP correspondent reported.

At least five people, including four doctors working in a prison where hundreds of Taliban are being held, were killed Tuesday in Kabul when a bomb attached to their car exploded.

Last week, U.S. Chief of Staff General Mark Milley traveled to Doha to urge the Taliban to reduce violence in Afghanistan.

The Pentagon had been eager to maintain at least 4,500 troops in Afghanistan in the new year amid the peace talks, but officials say the military is complying with Trump's order. However, Afghanistan is experiencing an upsurge in violence, with the Taliban carrying out almost daily attacks against government forces in recent weeks.

It is not certain that a new Democratic administration will accept the full withdrawal under the terms of the agreement struck between Washington and the Taliban earlier this year in Doha, Qatar.

Miller, who is acting head of the Pentagon until President-elect Joe Biden takes office next month, and Ghani discussed the ongoing talks with the Taliban, which the Defense Department said in a statement were a "historic opportunity" to achieve peace in the war-torn country.

Miller also met with the head of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, General Scott Miller, "to gain his assessment of the overall security situation to include the current counterterrorism and Train, Advise and Assist missions, the level of Taliban violence and the ongoing drawdown of US forces," according to the statement.

Eager to put an end to America's "endless wars," the outgoing Republican President Donald Trump decided to reduce the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan to 2,500 troops by January 15.

The move accelerates a timeline the U.S. agreed on in an earlier deal with the Taliban, which provides for total withdrawal of American forces by May 2021 in exchange for security guarantees. The U.S. military had some 13,000 troops in Afghanistan a year ago and had reduced the level to 4,500 as of November.

The Pentagon had been eager to maintain at least 4,500 troops in Afghanistan in the new year amid the peace talks, but officials say the military is complying with Trump's order. However, Afghanistan is experiencing an upsurge in violence, with the Taliban carrying out almost daily attacks against government forces in recent weeks.

It is not certain that a new Democratic administration will accept the full withdrawal under the terms of the agreement struck between Washington and the Taliban earlier this year in Doha, Qatar.

At least five people, including four doctors working in a prison where hundreds of Taliban are being held, were killed Tuesday in Kabul when a bomb attached to their car exploded.

Last week, U.S. Chief of Staff General Mark Milley traveled to Doha to urge the Taliban to reduce violence in Afghanistan.

## Pollution Deaths in India Rose to 1.67m in 2019

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - Toxic air killed more people in India in 2019 than in 2017, The Lancet said in a report here shared by the government on Tuesday, with 1.67 million deaths accounting for 18% of all fatalities.

India, whose cities top global pollution lists, faces a growing economic as well as human toll from bad air quality, which was linked to 1.24 million, or 12.5% of total deaths in the previous such study for 2017.

The analysis found pollution led to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, respiratory infections, lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, neonatal disorders and cataracts.

Land-locked New Delhi, the world's most polluted capital whose winter skies are often obscured here by its filthy air, recorded the highest per-capita economic hit, the journal said.

The fatalities in 2019 led to a total loss of \$36.8 billion, or 1.36% of India's gross domestic product (GDP), with the poor and populous states of

Uttar Pradesh and Bihar experiencing the highest economic loss as a percentage of their GDP.

Although the death rate due to household air pollution fell 64.2% from 1990 to 2019, that due to ambient particulate matter pollution more than doubled, The Lancet said.

"The improvements in air quality across India during the COVID-19 lockdown period, and its upsurge again with the easing of restrictions, provide interesting pointers to the extent of air pollution reduction that is possible with reduced human activity," it added.

The government said in a statement that India would need to invest more in state-specific pollution control programs if it were to meet its goal of becoming a \$5 trillion economy by 2024, from around \$2.9 trillion now.

India's three main cities, New Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai, were on the list of the world's 20 worst polluted cities, Swiss air quality technology company IQAir reported on Tuesday.

## U.S. Imposes Fresh Sanctions on Syria

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States on Tuesday slapped fresh sanctions on Syria, targeting its central bank and blacklisting several people and entities in a continued effort to cut off funds for President Bashar al-Assad's government.

The latest action, building on sanctions imposed on Syria earlier this year, marked another round in a U.S. campaign to push Assad's government back into U.N.-led negotiations to end the country's nearly decade-long war.

"The United States will continue to seek accountability for those prolonging this conflict," U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement.

Millions of people have fled Syria and millions more have been internally displaced since 2011 civil war.

In a separate statement, the U.S. Treasury Department said the new sanctions add two individuals, nine business entities and the Central Bank of Syria to Washington's Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List.

The U.S. State Department also designated Asma al-Assad, the British-born wife of the Syrian president, accusing her of impeding efforts for a political resolution to the war, and several members of her family, Pompeo said. Asma al-Assad was previously hit with sanctions in June.

Among those blacklisted were Lina Mohammed Nazir al-Kinayeh, one of Assad's key advisers; her husband, Syrian parliamentarian Mohammed Hammam Mohammed Adnan Masouti; several government affiliated businesses; and General Kifah Moulhem, commander of Syria's Military Intelligence organization.

Tuesday's action freezes any U.S. assets of those blacklisted and generally bar Americans from dealing with them. Non-Americans that engage in certain transactions with the targeted people and entities may also be hit with sanctions, the Treasury said.



**Zaferanieh Apt (\$2500)**  
250sq.m, 3bdrs  
S/p, Sauna  
J, balcony  
marble fl  
Fully Furn

**Shanon (adviser)**

**Darrou Villa (\$5000)**  
1000sq.m  
5bdrs, S/p  
S, J, & pkg  
green yard  
Fully Furn

**Parsian**

**Fereshteh Apt (\$3000)**  
270sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, balcony, gym, green yard, F.F

**Farmanieh (\$1800) 180sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, pkg, & F.F**  
**Gheitarieh (\$2200) 240sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, pkg, & F.F**

**Niavaran Apt (\$2100)**  
3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F

**Cell: +989121907875**  
**Shanon\_tari@yahoo.com**  
**Tel : 88510081**  
**Fax : 88506474**

**Vali-e-Asr Office (\$3000)**  
400sq.m, 5bdrs, & pkgs

**IRAN NEWS ADVERTISING**  
**44253401**

**Don't Waste Your Time**

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

**www.DeltaHOME.ir**  
The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

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

**IRAN NEWS**  
PUBLISHER OF NEWSPAPERS  
**ADVERTISING**

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

## China Urges U.S. to Stop Erroneous Actions

BEIJING (Reuters) - China urged the United States on Tuesday to stop what it called erroneous actions after the U.S. ordered restrictions on Chinese and Russian firms with military ties from buying U.S. goods.

The United States has been abusing the concept of national security in order to crack down on foreign companies, foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a news briefing in Beijing. The Trump administration on Monday published a list of Chinese and Russian companies with alleged military ties that restrict them from buying a wide range of U.S. goods and technology.



## U.K. Deficit Hits \$323b With Economy Facing Recession

LONDON (Dispatches) - U.K. government borrowing climbed to a record 240.9 billion pounds (\$323 billion) in the first eight months of the fiscal year, reflecting the damage inflicted on an economy now at risk of falling back into recession.

In November alone, spending exceeded tax revenue by 31.6 billion pounds amid the escalating cost of supporting firms and households through the pandemic, Office for National Statistics figures published Tuesday showed. It leaves Britain facing its largest ever peacetime budget deficit.

Separate figures confirmed the economy rebounded strongly in the third quarter. But a contraction is expected this quarter, and hopes of recovery early next year are fading after the government tightened restrictions to combat a mutated coronavirus and several European countries banned entry from Britain. Meanwhile, deadlocked talks over a Brexit trade deal are heading toward a Dec. 31 cliff edge.

The multiple threats pile pressure on Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak and Bank of England policy makers to step up fiscal and monetary support, with some analysts now predicting the economy will shrink in the first quarter too.

The potential hit means that the budget deficit in the fiscal year as a whole could be larger than the 394 billion pounds -- 19% of GDP -- predicted by the Office for Budget Responsibility last month. That's already the biggest among major industrial nations.

A worse-case virus scenario combined with a no-deal Brexit could see borrowing soar to almost 450 billion pounds in the following year, the fiscal watchdog warned.

Debt climbed to almost 2.1 trillion pounds last month, or just under 100% of GDP, after a 30% surge in spending over the past year. The deficit measured on a cash rather than an accrued basis grew to almost 285 billion pounds since March.

The high level of spending, "is the right thing to do to protect lives and livelihoods during this acute phase of the crisis," Sunak said in a statement after the release. "When our economy recovers, it's right that we take the necessary steps to put the public finances on a more sustainable footing so we are able to respond to future crises in the way we have done this year."

Sunak has signaled that tax increases are coming eventually, but he is under no immediate pressure as the Bank of England's vast bond-buying program is keeping the cost of borrowing close to record lows.

In the short term, further fiscal stimulus appears more likely despite the rollout-out of a vaccine program, with the chancellor last week announcing that wage support for furloughed workers is being extended by a month to the end of April.

The economy grew 16% in the third quarter, slightly more than previously estimated, recovering from a second quarter when the economy was placed under a near-total lockdown. Restrictions were re-imposed this quarter, and GDP is on course to contract by around 11% in 2020, the most since the Great Frost of 1709.

Britons saved less of the incomes in the third quarter as non-essential stores reopened, with the ratio falling to 16.9% from an unprecedented 27.4% in the previous three months. Households have amassed large unspent savings this year, which could help support the economy next year. Government support underpinned real household incomes, which rose 4.9%.

Separate figures showed the current-account deficit widened to 15.7 billion pounds, or 2.9% of GDP, from the second quarter. The increase was driven by a smaller trade surplus. The deficit in investment income narrowed sharply.

## Malaysia's Economic Indicators Show Recovery

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - The country's economic recovery is measured through the encouraging indicators from the retail, tourism and commodity industries.

Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Economy) Arthur Joseph Kurup told the Dewan Negara yesterday that the retail sector is beginning to chart a gradual recovery. He added that the hotel occupancy rate nationwide has increased to 23.4% after the Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) was lifted and cross-state travel was allowed.

He said the crude palm oil (CPO) price reached a level above RM3,000 per ton in November at RM3,422, while the SMR20 rubber price rose to the highest level to 6.33 sen per kg. "The Covid-19 pandemic has affected Malaysia's economic growth this year. The GDP contracted at 2.7% in the third quarter of 2020 (3Q20).

"All of the major sectors of the economy have been affected and posted a contraction, particularly the services sector which was down 4%, production sector down 12.4%, agriculture (0.7%) and mining (6.8%)," Arthur said.

He added that declines were mainly contributed by the implementation of the MCO.

"However, the negative impact on economic growth is temporary and is expected to recover in 2021," he said. Arthur was responding to Senator Datuk Teo Eng Tee @ Teo Kok Chee's query on the current economic situation, and the challenges and measures taken to recover the economy from the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The 2021 budget, which was approved in the Dewan Rakyat, introduces various measures to drive the economic recovery and welfare of the people. "It is a budget of inclusiveness and comprehensive that focuses on three goals: People's welfare, business continuity and economic resilience," Arthur said.

He said for the long-term strategy, the preparation for the 12th Malaysia Plan 2021-2025 is now in the final stage. "The strategies will take into account various efforts to restore and drive segments of the economy that are affected by the pandemic, as well as address the structural issues to ensure inclusive and sustainable growth," he said.



## Features of the Upcoming Parliamentary Elections in Kazakhstan

TEHRAN (Kazakhstan Embassy) - The next elections for members of the Mazhilis (Lower Chamber) of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, elected by party lists, are scheduled for January 10, 2021.

The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan K. Tokayev noted that "before the start of the election campaign, there were taken measures for political modernization, the development of a multi-party system and the expansion of civic participation in the social and political life of the country". According to experts, the 2021 elections will be held in a new way. Firstly, the parliamentary elections will not be held early. Secondly, they will be conducted in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. Thirdly, the upcoming elections will be held in accordance with the new amendments to the electoral legislation.

The Mazhilis consists of 107 members: 98 of them are elected by a proportional electoral system according to party lists, 9 independent non-party members - by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan.

Now the Mazhilis includes representatives of three political parties - Nur Otan, People's Party of Kazakhstan (former Communist Party) and Ak Zhol. In total, six political parties are registered today in Kazakhstan and "Nur Otan" is the ruling party.

According to the Law "On Elections in the Republic of Kazakhstan", a citizen of Kazakhstan at least 25 years old who has permanently resided here for the last 10 years can be a member of the parliament. The President of Kazakhstan in his address to the people of Kazakhstan on the appointment of elections explained the amendments made to the election legislation.

The first is the introduction of the institution of parliamentary opposition. Now, one chairman and two secretaries of the standing committees of the Mazhilis will be elected among the members of the parliamentary opposition.



## German Consumer Morale Falls Further

BERLIN (Reuters) - German consumer morale fell a third month in a row heading into January as a stricter lockdown to contain a surge in coronavirus infections reduced income expectations and increased the propensity to save, a survey showed on Tuesday.

The GfK research institute said its consumer sentiment index, based on a survey of around 2,000 Germans, fell to -7.3 points from a revised -6.8 in the previous month.

This marked the lowest reading since July and came in slightly better than a Reuters forecast of -8.8.

Chancellor Angela Merkel and state leaders imposed a "lockdown lite" from Nov. 2, under which restaurants, bars and entertainment venues were closed while shops remained open.

As the measures failed to push down infection numbers, the government put in place stricter curbs from Dec. 16 which have shuttered most stores as well hair salons and other services.

"At present, the savings indicator is the main factor driving the third decline in a row in the consumer climate," GfK researcher Rolf Buerkl said.

The survey chimes with data that showed a temporary reduction in sales tax, put in place by the government to stimulate domestic demand, has failed to turn anxious savers into big spenders.

As long as new COVID-19 cases remain high there is no improvement in sight which means any recovery can only be expected when infections drop so far that curbs can be loosened again, Buerkl said.

Senior government officials have said they expect the stricter lockdown measures, so far announced until at least Jan. 10, to be extended well into the new year.



## Vietnam's Economy to Grow 6.8% in 2021

HANOI (Dispatches) - Vietnam's prospects appear positive as the economy is projected to grow by about 6.8% in 2021 and, thereafter, stabilize at around 6.5%, according to the latest World Bank's economic update for Vietnam "Taking Stock".

This projection assumes that the COVID-19 crisis will be brought gradually under control, notably through the introduction of an effective vaccine. The report emphasizes that Vietnam might be exposed to fiscal, financial, and social risks that should require greater attention from the authorities.

"Vietnam is standing at a crossroads of post-COVID-19 recovery. It has an opportunity to set itself on a greener, smarter, and more inclusive development path that will bolster resilience to future shocks from both pandemics and climate-related disasters," said Carolyn Turk, World Bank Country Director for Vietnam. "The authorities must tackle the environmental and climate challenges with the same sense of urgency as they have done with COVID-19 because the costs of inaction are already visible and will become increasingly irreversible. The recent tropical storms in Vietnam's central region and rising air pollution in the country's major cities are good illustration of this fragility."

The WB said Vietnam is expected to grow by almost 3% in 2020 while the world economy is expected to contract at least by 4% amidst the biggest global shock of the past decades.

The external sector—the main driver of economic growth in Vietnam over the past decade—has performed exceptionally well since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis.

The country is on the verge of reporting not only its highest merchandise trade surplus ever but also an increase in international reserves. The continued inflows of foreign investment and the steady rise in merchandise exports more than compensated for the losses in foreign exchange earnings from decreased tourism activities and shrinking remittances, according to the report.

The report suggests that foreign investors have continued investing and/or shifting production activities to Vietnam due to the country's good management of the pandemic.

According to the WB, two lessons from the successful management of the COVID-19 crisis could be extended to the environmental agenda.

## Financing Main Source of Stress For Turkish Industry in 2021



ANKARA (Dispatches) - The most important topic on the Turkish industry's agenda in 2021 will be financing, Istanbul Chamber of Industry (ISO) Chairperson Erdal Bahçivan said Tuesday.

"High financing costs and shrinking financial resources, both in terms of maintaining existing businesses and of creating new investments will be one of the most important sources of stress for the industry," he said. The second most important topic is employment, he said, as on the one side there is a high rate of unemployment and then on the other side, there are thousands of industrialists and firms that still cannot find the needed employees.

Commenting on the past year and 2021 expectations, Bahçivan said that it is a great misfortune that the COVID-19 pandemic coincided with the start of Turkey's "rebalancing and recovery." The outbreak caused the existing economic balances to turn upside down in 2020 even though the year started on a positive note. He added that overcoming the initial shock of the pandemic has also provided a little more hope during the second quarter of this year.

The industrial sector has been continuing production while taking precautions even in the most severe days of the pandemic, Bahçivan said. "The sector has very successfully passed the test of maintaining the dynamism of production in all dimensions from logistics to employment, from supply chain to export, at the standards of a normal life."

## IRGC Quds Force Commander Meets With Iraqi Officials

TEHRAN (MNA) – IRGC Quds Force Commander has reportedly held meetings with senior Iraqi officials in Baghdad.

IRGC Quds Force Commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani has met and held talks with senior Iraqi officials in Baghdad, Alalam TV reported.

The report said that both sides conferred on the expansion of bilateral relations.



## Airbus to Be World's Largest Planemaker for Second Year

PARIS (Reuters) - Airbus is set to beat Boeing to be the world's largest jetmaker for the second year in a row, ending 2020 by resuming deliveries of its A380 superjumbo to Emirates, though its final deliveries are likely to have dropped 35% from 2019 due to the pandemic.

There were no immediate reports on Tuesday of deliveries or production being disrupted by travel bans imposed by many countries on Britain, where Airbus makes wings.

No flights have been scheduled over the Christmas break of special Beluga transport planes, which carry aircraft sections under an exemption from most coronavirus travel restrictions.

Barring widespread new travel upheaval, industry sources expect Airbus to deliver 550-560 planes in 2020 after it reached more than 520 this week, with nine days of the year still to go.

But they cautioned deliveries are subject to an unusual number of variables and schedules are not set in stone. Airbus is unlikely to repeat a record surge of more than 100 deliveries in December last year.

An Airbus spokesman declined to comment on specifics, but said Airbus continued to operate normally.

"We continue to deliver at full steam and this will continue over the holidays," he said. Airbus said on Monday it had delivered an A330neo to Uganda Airlines, though fresh doubts have surfaced over similar jets already built for troubled AirAsia X.

After a year-long pause in A380 deliveries to Dubai, Airbus has delivered two A380s to Emirates this month, tracking data shows. It will end the year with three A380 deliveries after Japan's ANA put a newly delivered plane into storage in October. Airbus has halted initial assembly of the four-engined jet and has six left to deliver. Charter firm HiFly last week ended efforts to make profits out of a second-hand aircraft, meaning more A380s are seen likely to follow the ANA jet into storage.

Total Airbus deliveries are expected to fall 35% this year due to the impact on airlines of the pandemic, but Airbus has an insurmountable lead over Boeing, which delivered



118 planes up to the end of November, with the 737 MAX grounded during that period. Between January and November, Airbus delivered 477 jets.

It has delivered 46 of its main category of planes so far in December, according to the Airbus Hamburg Finkenwerder tracking website, lifting total deliveries so far this year beyond 520.

Industry sources say Airbus may reach an informal goal of 560 deliveries in 2020, though each delivery comes with uncertainty and some experts say 550 is a safer estimate. Deliveries have outperformed earlier expectations after deals with cash-strapped airlines.

### Iran Ballistic Missile...

FROM PAGE 1

Moreover, by impudently threatening to punish other governments if they refuse to violate Resolution 2231, the US has both reneged on its commitments under that resolution and practically prevented other state parties from living up to their obligations," he said.

Takht Ravanchi also touched upon Washington's breach of a ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

"The United States has also refused to abide by a quia timet injunction issued by the unanimous vote of judges of the International Court of Justice on October 3, 2018 which obliges the US to remove impediments to the sales of humanitarian supplies to Iran," he said.

"Still, instead of adopting remedial measures authorized under the JCPOA, Iran exercised maximum restraint and strategic patience for one year at the request of the three European countries," he said.

However, he explained, Iran's restraint was met with the United States' so-called "maximum-pressure" policy and ever-increasing illegal sanctions as well as the three European countries' absolute failure to deliver on their commitments.

"Under such circumstances, we had no choice but to take remedial steps in full compliance with paragraphs 26 and 36 of the JCPOA which stipulate that Iran has every right to stop the implementation of its commitments, in whole or in part, if new sanctions are slapped on the country or if previous sanctions are re-imposed," he said.

"So, Iran's measures are in full compliance with our rights and obligations under the JCPOA, and more importantly, they are reversible," said the top official.

Takht Ravanchi underscored that the United States has slapped more than 1,500 sanctions on Iran targeting all of the country's economic sectors and destroying almost all benefits of the JCPOA for Iran.

"Such sanctions, which are expected to increase even until the last minutes of the current US administration is in office, amounts to a full-scale war where weapons have been replaced by an economic tool.

"Based on U.S. officials' comments, the sanctions are aimed at starving Iranian people using food and medicines as a weapon, a practice which is even forbidden during wartime," said Takht Ravanchi.

He said Washington's claim that sanctions do not include humanitarian supplies is a "sheer lie."

### Iran Prepares...

FROM PAGE 1

Jalili hailed the "enormous" and "unparalleled" accomplishments of young Iranian scientists at knowledge-based companies over the past 10 months as part of efforts to produce the Iranian vaccine.

The vaccine was first tested on pigs, rabbits and guinea pigs after the completion of preliminary research work based on the protocols of the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the World Health Organization (WHO), Jalili said.

Later tests on monkeys, he added, produced satisfactory results and no side effects.

Iran started the volunteer registration program for phase one of the human trial on Tuesday.

Authorities have assured the Iranian people those efforts to produce domestic vaccines will by no means impede the import of foreign brands, and that they will do their best to procure COVID-19 vaccines from abroad as well.

Meanwhile President Hassan Rouhani yesterday said there is no concern for manufacturing COVID-19 vaccine, adding that Health Ministry and Central Bank of Iran have spared no efforts for providing vaccine.

Reacting to some media concerns over coronavirus in Iran, Rouhani said that there is no concern in this regard and Iran has taken more positive movements.

He said that over the last few weeks, the third wave of COVID-19 was controlled and death toll reduced 50%.

Elsewhere in his remarks, President Rouhani hailed progress in medical equipment, knowledge-based firms, pharmaceutical sector and training professors, experts and nurses.

### Iran Exports...

FROM PAGE 1

The ten-month trade between the two neighbors shows a 0.6-percent rise year on year, he added.

Iran's preferential trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has had a significant impact on the country's trade relations with Armenia, according to the head of Iran-Armenia Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"The two sides are applying tariff discounts offered based on the agreement and there has been no problem in this regard", Hervik Yarijanian said in January.

### Fate Awaiting Trump...

FROM PAGE 1

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani said the U.S. economic war was meant to bring the Iranian people to their knees and destroy the Islamic establishment, and lauded the nation for refusing to buckle under pressure.

"As pointed out by Leader of the Islamic Revolution [Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei], what is important is that we prevented the economic war from achieving its objectives. A thriving manufacturing sector and the positive economic growth mean the sanctions have failed," he underlined.

The Iranian chief executive counted lessening the impact of the economic war on people's livelihoods and the removal of the oppressive sanctions as the important goals pursued by his administration.

"By breaking the sanctions, we will in fact defeat Zionism, reactionary [states] in the region and the extremists," he said.

### Tehran, Baku to...

FROM PAGE 1

He said: "I thank Iran for its work in OPEC+. As part of this coalition, we were able to resolve the crisis facing the oil market in April 2020."

"The OPEC+ mechanism is a good tool for restoring the market in this situation, but for it to be effective, the coalition must be developed," the Azerbaijani official said.

He also said it is true that action is being taken by OPEC+ members, taking, "but the crisis still remains."

"Azerbaijan needs natural gas for power generation and I hope we can use Iranian gas; I also appreciate the export of Iranian gas to Nakhchivan," Mr. Shahbazov said.

Following the meeting, Bijan Zangeneh said, "We discussed the Tehran-Baku bilateral relations and the developments in the oil market with the Minister of Energy of Azerbaijan."

"Azerbaijan is an active and useful member of OPEC+," he said.

The Iranian Minister of Petroleum went on to add that Iran has close relations with Azerbaijan and that, "we cooperate in the field of oil in OPEC+."

The Minister of Energy of Azerbaijan also appreciated the positions of the Islamic Republic of Iran during the recent problems in his country.

"We hope that the cooperation between the two countries will develop," he said.

### There Is No Positive...

FROM PAGE 1

Skoog also noted that the 27-nation bloc "deeply regrets the decision taken by the United States in May 2018 to withdraw from the JCPOA. The subsequent re-imposition of previously lifted U.S. unilateral sanctions and the decision to discontinue granting nuclear waivers have hampered the full implementation of the deal."

Iran, he added, continued to "fully comply with the nuclear-related provisions for three and a half years, including for 14 months after the United States withdrew from the JCPOA and re-imposed unilateral sanctions. However, it is deeply worrying that Iran continues to decrease its nuclear related JCPOA commitments."

Skoog further appreciated indications from the Iranian leadership that the country was ready to return to full JCPOA implementation.

Highlighting the abortive U.S. attempt to trigger the so-called snapback provision in the nuclear deal, he said Washington had ceased its participation in the JCPOA in May 2018 and had not subsequently attended any of the activities related to the deal.

"The United States can, therefore, not be considered a JCPOA participant State and could not initiate the process of reinstating UN sanctions under the UN Security Council resolution 2231. I also note that the position of the majority of the members of this Council regard the U.S.' attempt to initiate the process of reinstating UN sanctions under the UN Security Council resolution 2231 having no legal basis," the EU ambassador explained.

He also stressed that UNSC Resolution 2231 remains fully in force and that the obligations of sanctions lifting "remain central" to the JCPOA.

"As the Coordinator of the Joint Commission of the JCPOA, I am pleased to note that the Iran nuclear deal with now five years of age has withstood the pressure over the past years. The remaining participants have demonstrated their conviction and steadfast willingness to work diplomatically to preserve the deal," he said.

"It is evident to the European Union that the JCPOA needs to be fully and effectively implemented by all and that ongoing implementation challenges, including on nuclear non-proliferation and sanctions lifting commitments need to be addressed. I am pleased that yesterday's Ministerial meeting confirmed the unity of all participants to continue on this path. I am also very encouraged that all participants acknowledged the prospect of a return of the U.S. to the JCPOA and expressed their readiness to positively address this in a joint effort."

Referring to the coronavirus pandemic, Skoog said the situation in Iran has been partly aggravated by the fact that the country has faced significant difficulties in procuring essential medical and protective equipment and medicines.

He also said that the EU-Iran cooperation on the civil nuclear field under JCPOA Annex III continues, despite COVID-19 challenges.

"The European Union remains fully committed to support efforts to normalize economic and trade relations. In this light, the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) continues to have an important political and economic potential to facilitate legitimate trade with Iran, consistent with international laws and European regulations, as well as to support the needs of the Iranian population," he added.

During Tuesday's meeting, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo called for efforts to preserve the JCPOA.

"The Iranian nuclear issue is an important non-proliferation subject, with consequences for regional and global peace and security," she said.

"In achieving the JCPOA, the concerned countries had shown that their dialog and diplomacy, supported by a united Security Council, could forge a path to resolving this issue. We hope that these countries and the Council can do so again."

### China, Iran Start...

FROM PAGE 1

With an estimated 14.2 trillion cubic meters (Tcm) of gas reserves in place plus 18 billion barrels of gas condensate, South Pars already accounts for around 40 per cent of Iran's total estimated 33.8 tcm of gas reserves – mostly located in the southern Fars, Bushehr, and Hormozgan regions – and about 80 per cent of its gas production. The 3,700-square kilometer (sq.km) South Pars sector of the 9,700-square km basin shared with Qatar (in the form of the 6,000-square km North Dome) is also critical to Iran's overall strategy to sustain natural gas production across the country of at least 1 billion cubic meters per day (Bcm/d), with Phase 11's target production capacity being 57 million cubic meters per day (mcm/d), and to its corollary plans to become a world-leader in the liquefied natural gas (LNG) market.

Given the size and scope of Phase 11, it became a focal point of U.S. attention in the aftermath of its unilateral withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in May 2018 and during the active re-imposition of sanctions toward the end of that year.

"The pressure that the U.S. put on [French oil giant] Total [which at the time of its withdrawal in the middle of 2018 from Phase 11 held a 50.1 per cent stake in the US\$4.8 billion project and had already invested around US\$1 billion] was enormous," a senior Iranian oil and gas industry source told OilPrice.com.

"Its ruthless handling of Total was designed by the U.S. to show the E.U. [European Union] – which was trying to find a way to ignore the new U.S. sanctions – that, regardless of the E.U.'s efforts to avoid going along with the new U.S. restrictions on Iran, it had better do so, or else," he added. "On the eve of the signing of the next wave of financing for SP11, the U.S. Treasury Department telephoned senior bankers at the bank that was organizing the money and told them that if the financing went ahead then the U.S. would instigate a full historic investigation of all of the bank's dealings since 1979 to every country that had been blacklisted by the U.S., and it told the French government the same thing," he underlined.

## Bournemouth's Lerma Denies Biting Allegations

LONDON (Reuters) - Bournemouth midfielder Jefferson Lerma has denied allegations that he bit an opponent during their 1-0 defeat by Sheffield Wednesday last month. The 26-year-old Colombian international was charged with violent conduct by England's Football Association (FA) on Tuesday for the incident that took place in the 83rd minute of the Championship clash at Hillborough. The incident was not spotted by match officials at the time.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

**Switchboard:**  
(+98) (21) 44253448  
**Public Relations Tel:**  
(+98)(21) 44253450  
Editorial Board: 44253449  
**Public Relations Fax:**  
(+98)(21) 44253395  
**Advertising Department:**  
Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234  
**Website:**  
http://www.irannewsdaily.com

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

## Upset Rooney Donates To Children's Helpline

LONDON (Dispatches) - England's record goalscorer Wayne Rooney is donating £75,000 (\$100,000) to a children's helpline as he says it upsets him to think there are young people "dreading Christmas". The 35-year-old former Manchester United striker knows a lot about the concerns and trauma children go through as he has been an ambassador for The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) since 2015.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

THURSDAY DECEMBER 24, 2020

# More Misery for Arsenal in League Cup Exit to Man City

LONDON (Dispatches) Arsenal's miserable season continued as they slumped to a 4-1 home defeat by holders Manchester City in the League Cup quarter-finals on Tuesday. City, who have won the trophy for the last three seasons, went in front after three minutes through Brazilian striker Gabriel Jesus, who nodded home a fine Oleksandr Zinchenko cross. Mikel Arteta's struggling Arsenal side drew level in the 31st minute with a fine diving header from Alexandre Lacazette after an excellent cross from Brazilian Gabriel Martinelli but City took charge after the break. A mistake by Arsenal Icelandic goalkeeper Runar Alex Runarsson gifted the visitors a 2-1 lead in the 54th as he let a relatively harmless Riyad Mahrez free-kick through his arms. Phil Foden added a third, latching onto a ball into the box from Fernandinho and lifting it over the advancing Runarsson. Aymeric Laporte then headed in a Foden cross to wrap up the win for Pep Guardiola's side as they added to the troubles of the Gunners who are languishing in 15th spot in the Premier League, only four points above the relegation zone. Arteta had declared before the game that he wanted to see "fighters" and not "victims" and he said that despite the result he saw the fighting spirit he needs to turn the season around. Arsenal in big trouble after League Cup exit, says Arteta

## FIFA Lodges Criminal Complaint Against Blatter

GENEVA (Dispatches) - FIFA on Tuesday announced it had filed a criminal complaint against former president Sepp Blatter over the finances of its loss-making museum in Zurich. In a statement FIFA said it had "lodged a criminal complaint with Zurich's cantonal prosecutor as evidence of suspected criminal mismanagement by FIFA's former management and companies appointed by them in relation to the (museum) has surfaced." Blatter's lawyer, Lorenz Erni, told AFP "the accusations are unfounded" and vehemently denied wrongdoing. According to FIFA, the museum generated a bill of 500 million Swiss francs (462 million euros) that instead "could and should have been channelled into the development of global football". "We came to the conclusion that we had no choice other than to report the case to state prosecutors, not least because the current management of FIFA also has fiduciary responsibilities to the organisation and we intend to live up to them, even if those before us dismally failed to," said FIFA deputy secretary general Alasdair Bell. The Zurich-based museum, a landmark Blatter project, was opened in February 2016 by current FIFA president Gianni Infantino just after he was elected as the successor to the disgraced Blatter. Blatter was suspended from football for six years over a two million Swiss franc payment to then UEFA boss Michel Platini. FIFA invested 140 million Swiss francs (130.5 million euros, \$138.6 million) in the museum, which is spread over three floors and 3000 m2. However, it lost \$50 million in its first year of operating and attracted an average of 11,000 visitors a month, barely half the target.

Arteta was assistant at Manchester City before he joined Arsenal a year ago and Guardiola defended him from his critics. "What can I say -- in our position as a manager we'll be judged by the results. I can only say I was with him a long period, the most successful period our club had.



"Sometimes in our job we need time. It's time to be patient. He's an outstanding manager, incredible work ethic and puts the club in front of any decisions he has to make," Guardiola said of his fellow Spaniard. Meanwhile championship club Brentford beat Premier League Newcastle United to reach the League Cup semi-finals for the first time with a second-half Josh Dasilva goal earning a 1-0 win on Tuesday. Sergi Canos broke down the left and his low cross was met after a perfectly timed run from Dasilva who volleyed home in the 66th minute. The second-tier team went close to a second when Newcastle keeper Karl Darlow did well to save from Christian Norgaard. Brentford, who narrowly missed out on promotion to the Premier League last season, have never before reached the last four in either of the two major English cup competitions. Despite making six changes to their team and starting top scorer Ivan Toney on the bench, Brentford, who are fourth in the Championship, created the better openings with Saman Ghoddos hitting the bar. Newcastle's best efforts saw Brentford keeper Luke Daniels keep out efforts from former Bournemouth pair Callum Wilson and Ryan Fraser. Steve Bruce's Newcastle side are the fourth top-flight team to be eliminated from the League Cup this season by Brentford following Southampton, West Bromwich Albion and Fulham.

## Hamilton Voted BBC Sports Personality Of the Year



LONDON (Reuters) - Lewis Hamilton was named BBC Sports Personality of the Year on Sunday, rounding off a remarkable year in which he became Formula One world champion for a seventh time. Hamilton, 35, beat off competition from Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson and jockey Hollie Doyle, who finished second and third respectively, to collect British sport's premier annual award for a second time after winning it in 2014. Hamilton won his fourth consecutive world title this year to match Michael Schumacher's record of seven crowns. Premier League champions Liverpool were named Team of the Year and their manager Jurgen Klopp won Coach of the Year. Manchester United and England forward Marcus Rashford won the Expert Special Panel Award for his school meal campaign.

# Djokovic Withdraws From ATP Player Council Elections



LONDON (Reuters) - World number one Novak Djokovic has withdrawn from this month's ATP Player Council elections citing the governing body's new rule that would make it a "conflict of interest" because of his role in the Professional Tennis Players' Association (PTPA). The Serb set up the breakaway PTPA on the eve of the U.S. Open in September and resigned as head of the player council but last month he confirmed that he had been nominated by his fellow professionals for the current elections which he accepted. However, the new ATP rule means he has had to withdraw.

"Unfortunately, given these latest developments I feel it is now necessary to remove myself from the list of candidates," he wrote in a statement here on Twitter posted. "I do not wish to create conflict or uncertainty around the player elections or create any issues that may arise." Djokovic repeated the assertions he made several times this year that the PTPA wanted to co-exist with the sport's governing bodies but the ball was now in their court. "The PTPA has made it clear it does not intend to be combative, it is unclear how the ATP will view the association in the future," Djokovic said. He added that the PTPA was still in the formative stages but he was still keen to advance it to further the interests of all players, especially those in the lower ranks. The decision to form the PTPA blindsided many players with Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal voicing their opposition.

## Ten-Man Juve Crash To First Serie A Defeat of Season

TURIN (Dispatches) - Ten-man Juventus crashed to their first Serie A defeat of the season 3-0 at home against Fiorentina on Tuesday in a nightmare final game before Christmas. The defeat came hours after the champions learned they must play the match against Napoli which was cancelled on October 4 after Napoli decided not to travel to Turin because of coronavirus cases. On Tuesday, Napoli won their appeal to the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) after being handed a 3-0 defeat and a one-point deduction. As a result Juventus, who had started the day with 27 points, finished it with 24. Juventus are fourth, tied on points with Napoli and Roma, and seven points behind leaders AC Milan, who play Lazio. "It's not a problem for us to play the Napoli game, but it seems unfair on the other teams who travelled, and perhaps lost points, with absences due to Covid," said Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo. "I'm more sorry for them than for us." "What happened in the afternoon, however, must not be an excuse for the defeat. We started with the wrong attitude. "When you start like this then you get into trouble, which we did. "Unfortunately, before Christmas it happens that your head is on holidays, we shouldn't have allowed this." The champions got off to a terrible start in their Allianz Stadium with Fiorentina's Franck Ribery setting up Dusan Vlahovic for the opener after just three minutes. The Serb shook off Matthijs de Ligt to slot in past an out-rushing Wojciech Szczesny for his third goal in as many games. Juventus played most of the match a man down after Juan Cuadrado was sent off on 17 minutes for a reckless sliding tackle on Gaetano Castrovilli. The referee's yellow card turned to red after a VAR viewing.



## Rizwan-Inspired Pakistan Stop New Zealand T20 Sweep

NAPIER (AFP) - Mohammad Rizwan celebrated his elevation to the Pakistan Test captaincy in style Tuesday, smashing a career-best 89 to stop New Zealand claiming a series sweep in the third Twenty20 in Napier. Pakistan reached New Zealand's target of 174 with two balls to spare, ending on 177 after Iftikhar Ahmed sealed the win with a six in the final over. But it was Rizwan's 89 from 59 balls, with support from 41-run Mohammad Hafeez, that inspired the victory. It was a hard-fought win for the tourists, who suffered heavy defeats in the two opening matches after a rocky preparation that included Covid-19 quarantine in Christchurch with no training. The win was particularly sweet for Rizwan, who was named on Monday as captain for the first Test against New Zealand starting December 26 after regular skipper Babar Azam was ruled out with a broken thumb. "I never thought I'd be made the captain of Pakistan and I can't explain my happiness," he said after his man-of-the-match T20 performance. Rizwan said the T20 victory was an important morale booster ahead of the two-Test series against the Black Caps. "We want to take momentum from this into the Test match, so this is very important for us," he said. After two losses when batting first, Pakistan changed tactics and opted to bowl when they won the toss, restricting New Zealand to 173 for seven, with Devon Conway top-scoring on 63. Faheem Ashraf was the pick of the Pakistan attack, taking three for 20. The strategy of chasing down New Zealand's total paid off as Rizwan and Hafeez forged a 72-run partnership that laid the foundation for the win. Hafeez, who was stranded on 99 in Hamilton, made 41 from 29 balls including three sixes. Rizwan's innings, the sixth-highest by a Pakistan batsman in T20s, included a booming six that bounced off the roof of a stand and out of the ground, forcing the umpires to select a replacement ball.

