

**Spokeswoman for Iran's Ministry of Health Sima Sadat Lari Announced On Friday That 55 More Iranians Have Died in the past 24 hours due To Contracting COVID-19 as the Death Toll to 56,018**

# IRAN NEWS

**Construction Operations of Four Maritime and Port projects Started In Chabahar Port on Thursday In the Presence of First Vice President Eshagh Jahangiri, Roads Minister Mohammad Eslami**

VOL. XXVI, No. 7138 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SATURDAY JANUARY 9, 2021 - DEY 20, 1399

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## Iran Can Easily Enrich Uranium to 90% Purity

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior official at the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) says the country can easily enrich uranium to levels above 20 percent, even to 90 percent purity, a few days after Iran began 20-percent uranium enrichment at its Fordow nuclear facility.

"[Our] progress has been made in such a way that we can easily enrich uranium to any percentage, even above 40, 60 and 90 percent," Behrouz Kamalvandi, the AEOI's spokesman, said on Thursday, according to Fars news agency.

Iran's government announced on Monday the beginning of a process to enrich uranium to 20 percent, after President Hassan Rouhani ordered the implementation of a new law, dubbed the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions, which was recently passed by the parliament.

Kamalvandi, who was talking to reporters, explained that under the new law, the AEOI is allowed to enrich uranium even above 20 percent if there is a need for that in other areas, adding, "So, we are examining other areas as well."

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## IRGC Unveils Underground Missile Base In Persian Gulf

TEHRAN (AFP) - Chief-Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami has unveiled an underground missile base of the IRGC Navy in the coasts of Persian Gulf.

In his visit to the missile base, General Salami was accompanied by IRGC Navy Commander Brigadier General Alireza Tangsiri.

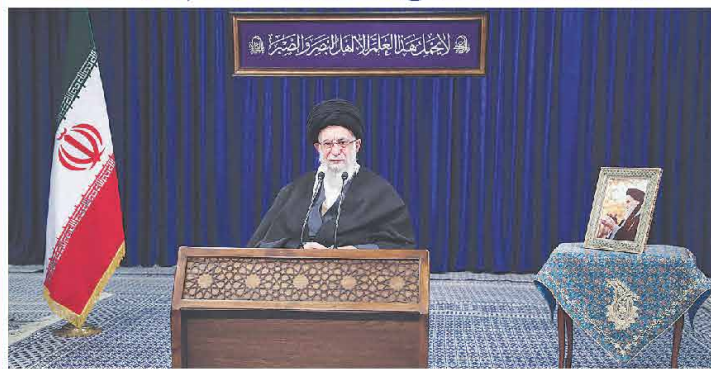
Speaking on the sidelines of the visit to the units and missile systems deployed in the base, General Salami the base is one of the several bases housing the Navy's strategic missiles.

"These missiles have ranges of hundreds of kilometres, enjoy pinpoint accuracy and huge destruction power, and can overcome the enemy's electronic warfare equipment."

He said the IRGC Navy's missiles are among the world's most advanced missiles used in coast-to-sea, air-to-air, air-to-sea, and sea-to-air battles.

He made it clear that the country is going to reinforce its power in order to defend its territorial integrity.

## U.S. No Idol Anymore After Election Fiasco, Human Rights Records



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei says it is weird that some still worship the US as their idol despite the country's election fiasco, paralyzed economy, and human rights records.

"Today we can see what that big idol has turned into. This is their democracy. This is their election fiasco. This is their human rights: they kill a Black person once in every couple of hours or days, and the murderer is not prosecuted. These are 'American values' that today are ridiculed. This is their paralyzed economy. The U.S. economy is truly paralyzed," Ayatollah Khamenei said in televised speech on Friday.

"More weirdly, some still worship America," the Leader added.

The Leader said the result of U.S. presence in Iran [before the 1979 Revolution] was economic and scientific poverty, and corruption.

"Some think if we reconcile and interact with the U.S., [Iran] will turn into a paradise," the Leader added.

Ayatollah Khamenei further noted the Americans admit that their interests are secured by creating instability in the region.

"The U.S. sees its interests in regional instability under the current circumstances, unless it is the dominant power in the region," he added.

"This is what they have admitted. A famous expert of one of these American think tanks clearly said that 'we are not after stability in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon'. The main issue is not whether instability is needed in these countries. Rather it is how to create that instability. Once with Daesh and once with the 2009 sedition (post-election riots in Iran) or the things they do in the region," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

The Leader stressed that Iran stood against the U.S. bid to create instability in the country.

"In 2009, the U.S. wanted to make Iran unstable. But that happened to them in 2020-21. You saw the people who breached the US Congress. The Americans sought to do the same in Iran. They wanted to create chaos and trigger a civil war," Ayatollah Khamenei added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader expressed his opposition to the import of COVID-19 vaccines produced by the U.S. and Britain.

"I have already said it to government officials, and now announce it publicly. The import of American and British vaccines is prohibited," the Leader noted.

"Had the Americans managed to produce a vaccine, they would not have faced such a mess today in their own country. In one day, some 4,000 people died from COVID-19 in the U.S.," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

"I really don't trust them. Sometimes they want to test the vaccine on other nations," the Leader added.

He also noted that he is not optimistic about France as the country was involved in infected blood scandal in early 1990s. The Leader stressed, however, that the Iranian government is allowed to supply the COVID vaccine from other reliable sources.

He also hailed the domestically-developed Iranian coronavirus vaccine, calling it a source of pride and honor, and stressing that this should not be denied. The Leader noted that the human trials of the Iranian vaccine were conducted in one case and they succeeded.

"This should not be denied... The vaccine has gone under human trials. God willing a better version will also be developed in Iran. This is a source of pride and dignity," the Leader noted.

Ayatollah Khamenei further pointed that Iran is in no rush for the US return to the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

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## Qatar Says No Change in Its Ties With Iran

DOHA (Dispatches) - Qatar will not alter its relations with Iran and Turkey in a sign that it has made few concessions after securing a deal with Saudi Arabia and its allies to end a bitter dispute between the rival Persian Gulf states.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, the Qatari foreign minister, told the Financial Times that Doha had agreed to co-operate on counter-terrorism and "transnational security" with Saudi Arabia and three other states that had imposed a regional embargo on Qatar. But he said "bilateral relationships are mainly driven by a sovereign decision of the country... [and] the national interest".

"So there is no effect on our relationship with any other country," he said in an interview.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cited Doha's ties to Iran and Turkey, as well as its support for Islamist movements, as core reasons for their extraordinary decision in 2017 to cut diplomatic and transport links with Qatar. The so-called "quartet" then submitted a list of 13 demands to Doha that included shutting down Al Jazeera, the Qatar-funded satellite TV network, curbing its relations with Iran, closing a Turkish base in the Persian Gulf state, and halting all military co-operation with Ankara.

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## ViewPoint

### Behind-the-Scene of Democracy in the U.S.

Unexpected events in Washington DC speak of a hidden bed that it may seem shocking for the West-oriented people in the world but if we look at it fairly, illustration of democracy with the democracy itself with the sense of yielding to the votes of the majority in most countries especially in the countries which claim of democracy under the shadow of gun and threat more than any other country, is different.

Before the 2020 U.S. presidential election, the English daily The Guardian in an article wrote, "This fact that for the second consecutive term in the U.S. election a candidate to suffer defeat after having won the majority votes is worrisome. This issue is a threat to the public approach to the democracy in the U.S." When U.S. President Donald Trump believes his votes have been stolen and people in his support pour into streets and influenced by their favorite president are ready to target the center of democracy, namely, the Capitol Hill, and storm and occupy it for hours, it proves an essential problem in the democracy in the U.S.

George C. Edwards, the distinguished professor at Texas A&M University believes the Electoral College is an outdated system. He says, "The Electoral College system has been adopted in the U.S. Constitution when no country used to elect its president directly and therefore its founders had no idea for making decision regarding this issue and they were just worried about dictatorship to dominate the election. But today and in the 2020 election, democracy is dominating in most of the countries and with the emergence of software voting system and counting the ballots in one day or even at any moment, as the media say online, there is no need any longer to complicate the system of administering and holding election with such a system. I mean the election system which is used in the U.S. where American people instead of direct voting for president, vote for the people who are representatives of the president which are known as Electoral College or electoral votes. These people are named elector, namely, they elect."

On the whole, there are 538 electoral votes for 50 states in the U.S. plus Columbia District which includes the U.S. capital (Washington DC) and every candidate who wins absolute majority of electoral votes (50% plus 1 votes, 270 electoral votes) becomes president. For example, the State of California has 55 electoral votes and Wyoming has just 3 votes in the Electoral College. In most of the states except two, any candidate who wins the relative majority of votes in any state he or she garners all of the electoral votes of that state.

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## Iran to Begin Commercial Operations at Oilfield Shared With Iraq

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A contractor working for the Iranian Oil Ministry says production from a joint oilfield located at the border with Iraq is to begin soon.

Gholamreza Manouchchri, the CEO of OIEC Group, a major oil and gas contractor company in Iran, said on Wednesday that a development project for the Azar Oilfield, which shares its reserves with the Badra Oilfield in neighboring Iraq, is almost complete.

Manouchchri said the Iranian government will inaugurate a first phase of commercial operations at Azar Oilfield in the near future to produce 65,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude from the oilfield.

He said the government had spent 1.4 billion euros (\$1.72 billion) for the massive project, a bulk of which had come from the country's sovereign wealth fund. Despite being under a series of harsh American sanctions, Iran has accelerated its development programs for oil and gas fields that are shared with neighboring countries.

Iran has been pumping over 250,000 bpd of oil from the Barda reserve which is adjacent to Azar oilfield. The Iraqis have enjoyed the services of Russia's Gazprom Neft for developing the oilfield.

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## Path of Martyr Soleimani Will Continue

KERMAN (IP) - The commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) said that the path of the late commander of the Quds Force of the IRGC and the commanders of the resistance axis will continue, by the young people from all ethnicities and tribes.

In the final session of the commemoration anniversary of the martyrdom of Lt General Qasem Soleimani in his hometown, Kerman, in southern Iran, Major General Hossein Salami, IRGC chief commander, said: "Last year, the most beautiful procession in the history took place in Kerman."

The Commander of IRGC said: "General Soleimani was a role model for everyone."

## U.S. Capitol Riots Show Weakness of Western Democracy

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Hassan Rouhani has reacted to the violent riots in Washington during certification of election results by Congress, saying the development shows Western democracy is "fragile" and "broken."

"We saw that unfortunately populism is deeply rooted in such countries, in spite of their scientific and industrial progress," Rouhani said on Thursday while addressing the inauguration ceremony of three major national projects through video conference.

Four people were killed after supporters of President Donald Trump stormed the Capitol building to protest the ceremonial counting of the electoral votes that will confirm President-elect Joe Biden's victory.

The pro-Trump protesters clashed with police officers and got to the Capitol building on Wednesday afternoon, prompting an evacuation of the House floor by police. Later, Mayor Muriel E. Bowser of Washington imposed a citywide curfew from 6 p.m. on Wednesday until 6 a.m. on Thursday.

"We have seen what damage a populist person has inflicted upon his own country in the last four years, bringing disgrace upon his nation while also inflicting great damage on our region, on Palestine, Syria and Yemen," President Rouhani said, referring to Trump.

He added that when an "unfit person" gains power, he would cause numerous problems for his country.

"I hope this would be a lesson for the whole world and also for the next rulers of the White House," Rouhani noted.

The president advised the incoming Biden administration to compensate for Trump's mistakes and to return to the rule of law.

Last month, Rouhani said Trump was similar to former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in that they both waged wars on the Islamic Republic, predicting that Trump's fate will not be better than Saddam's.



Speaking during the inauguration of several national big projects and innovation factories in different parts of the country via videoconferencing on Thursday, Rouhani stated: "Today, we witnessed the inauguration of two important types of vaccines and other vaccines that will be available in the coming months. This is important for us in terms of food and economic security, as well as in terms of the currency that is consumed."

He inaugurated three national projects and two innovation factories in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari Province in the west of Iran, Razavi Khorasan Province in the northeast, Isfahan Province in the center, and Fars Province in the south of the country on Thursday.

Noting that it costs 200 million euros a year to produce these vaccines, he added: "If there are no other problems, it is an honor for us to stand on our own feet, develop the vaccines and export them. All the vaccines that are developed are produced and developed according to domestic needs and can meet the needs of some countries in the region."

Referring to the importance of innovation factories, Rouhani said: "Innovation factories and technology parks make the country's atmosphere scientific and cause the continuation of the university development throughout the country."

He went on to say: "In the past, a person used to continue his studies until the stages of postgraduate and doctorate, and then the process would stop. Today, with these innovation factories, our education and research will continue, and we will achieve a fruitful and clean economy, and we can make the country scientifically needier."

The president added: "After faith, which is the highest cultural power, perhaps no power is higher than scientific and technological power. This power can play a key and a leading role in the country in all areas of defense, economy, and the country's capability regarding the welfare of the nation."

## Iran to End 20% Uranium Enrichment If U.S. Sanctions Lifted

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's deputy foreign minister for political affairs said the Islamic Republic would end 20 percent uranium enrichment if U.S. sanctions were lifted.

In an exclusive interview with Japan's NHK TV channel broadcast on Thursday, Abbas Araqchi, referred to the effects of U.S. sanctions on Iran over the past four years and stated that the Islamic Republic "will not miss a moment to ensure the lifting of sanctions."

If sanctions are lifted, and Iran benefits from the nuclear deal, the Islamic Republic will return to its nuclear commitments, he noted.

Iran's deputy foreign minister said 20 percent enrichment "could be reversed quickly and easily."

"It is up to them," Araqchi said about the possibility of the US return to the nuclear deal. Iran is waiting to see how Joe Biden's government "wants to get back to its agreement and commitments," the diplomat highlighted.

On May 8, 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from JCPOA and promised to persuade Iran to reach a better agreement by pursuing a "maximum pressure" policy.

Trump's four-year presidency is coming to an end, and he did not benefit from the maximum pressure against Iran.

## Iran's Leader Warns Every Change in Syria Will Change Region

TEHRAN (IP) - Special advisor of Iranian parliament speaker for international affairs says the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei "had warned the officials in a meeting that the change in Syria would change the political geography of the region and advised them to work hard."

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, special advisor of Iranian parliament speaker for international affairs, expressed his condolences on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Lt Gen Qasem Soleimani and his companions on Wednesday evening and said: "For the past 40 years, the Americans and their allies have been trying to establish new political and security arrangements in the region known as the Greater Middle East Initiative but Gen Soleimani and his companions were able to break these arrangements and establish new arrangements."

He said: "Since the beginning of the Islamic Awakening in the region in 2011, we have witnessed the fall of the puppet rulers of the region and this wave continued in a domino effect. Enemies tried to change the situation by reverse engineering. They tried to strengthen the occupying Israeli regime, and let the Islamic countries either fight with ISIS or be engaged in the Shia-Sunni or ethnic divisions, which will result in the division of the countries in the region."

He added: "This disintegration was supposed to start from Iraq and Syria, and even Saudi Arabia, an ally of the United States, was to be disintegrated."

Amir-Abdollahian emphasized: "Soleimani's great work in translating the Leader's vision is to disrupt the U.S. political, security, and regional arrangements and focus on the doctrine of resistance and create maximum hope in the shadow of new political and security arrangements called the Resistance Front or Axis of Resistance."

The former diplomat said that sometimes the Americans suggest that it was the Republicans who targeted Soleimani, and the perpetrators are no longer in the White House. "I declare loudly that the commanders and perpetrators will definitely be punished for their actions, but the U.S. government has a legal and international responsibility and must be held accountable for that heinous act."

## Maximum Pressure of West on Iran Has Failed



KERMANSHAH (IP) - Iran's judiciary chief said that according to Western thinkers and analysts, the maximum pressure of the West and the United States against the Islamic Republic of Iran has failed.

Speaking on Thursday in Kermanshah, western Iran, Sayyed Ebrahim Raisi referred to the enemies' threats and sanctions against Iran, adding: "The maximum pressure of the enemy has been broken, and the United States and the West have reached a deadlock regarding the issue."

The United States has been waging a brutal campaign of economic warfare against Iran, also known as the "maximum pressure" campaign. This sustained wave of sanctions, even amid the deadly coronavirus pandemic, is equal to economic terrorism.

Referring to the situation in the West Asian region, Raisi stated: "Despite all the conspiracies of the U.S. and British-backed forces, Iran plays the leading role in the region, and ensures its security."

Paying tribute to the memory of the martyred Commander of Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani, Raisi stated: "Despite all the efforts made by the enemy, this high-ranking martyr ensured the security of the region, and solved many problems."

On his 19th provincial visit, Raisi arrived in Kermanshah on Thursday.

## Iran, Afghan Provinces Sign Trade Agreement

MASHHAD (IRNA) - The fourth meeting of the Joint Economic Committee of Khorasan Razavi Province and Herat Province of Afghanistan on Thursday ended with the signing of an agreement covering the energy, transportation, customs, production and investment sectors.

Deputy governor-general of Khorasan Razavi province for coordinating economic affairs told the closing ceremony of the meeting that during the two-day committee meeting, four working groups on customs and trade, transportation and transit, energy and fuel, and a production and investment working group held meetings to review issues of priority for the parties which led to the signing of an agreement.

Ali Rasoulani added that both sides agreed to facilitate the exchange of goods in the Dogarun border and ease investment and improve interactions so that healthier and better exchanges could be carried out at a lower cost in the Dogarun border.

Based on the agreements, the working hours of the border crossing will be increased, and a committee will meet on a monthly basis at the Dogarun border to review the existing obstacles and problems, he added.

The two sides also agreed to have financial exchanges with better and easier planning, he said, noting that power transmission lines from Khorasan Razavi to Afghanistan will also increase from 132 KV to 500 KV, which will benefit both parties.

The social deputy of Herat governor also said in the meeting that the resolutions of the agreements of this meeting are defined in 48 clauses and four areas of work, and the result of interactions and talks has been intensified during 2 days of negotiations.

Herat deputy governor-general for social affairs, Mounesh Hassanzadeh told the gathering that the agreement covering four fields is the outcome of talks within two days.

Negotiations at the 4th meeting of the Joint Economic Summit of Khorasan Razavi and Herat were aimed at improving bilateral relations, growing economic relations, and creating investment opportunities, she said.

The 4th meeting of the Joint Economic Summit of Khorasan Razavi and Herat was held in Mashhad from January 7-8.

## South Korean Delegation Only To Discuss Iran Frozen Funds

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Ministry says a South Korean delegation, which has arrived in Tehran, is to negotiate Iran's frozen financial resources, rejecting an earlier report that the visit is related to the seizure of South Korea's tanker by Iran.

"The delegation that has arrived in our country is part of a delegation [that is to be led] by the South Korean deputy foreign minister, which is set to travel to Tehran on Sunday," Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Thursday.

Khatibzadeh explained that the trip is not related to the South Korean tanker that was seized on Monday in the Persian Gulf by Iranian naval forces for repeated violations of maritime environmental law. "The delegation's trip was agreed upon before the seizure of the violating [South] Korean tanker, and its main agenda is to discuss access to Iran's financial resources in [South] Korea," he added.

On Tuesday, South Korea's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Choi Young-sam said a delegation, led by Director-General for African and Middle Eastern Affairs Koh Kyung-sok, would soon leave for Tehran to resolve the issue of the seizure of MT Hankuk Chemi tanker through negotiations.

The upcoming visit comes as Iranian authorities have been pressing South Korea to release between \$6.5 billion and \$9 billion dollars in funds that had been frozen since 2018 when the United States imposed its unilateral sanctions on Iran.

## Iranian Forces Will Determine Time, Place Of Revenge for Fakhri-zadeh's Assassination

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri says the decision regarding the time and place of revenge for the assassination of Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, one of the country's most senior nuclear scientists, lies at the hands of Iranian forces.

Baqeri made the remarks on Thursday during a ceremony, marking 40 days since the martyrdom of Fakhri-zadeh in a coordinated terrorist operation linked to the regime in Israel.

"Both the criminal U.S. and infanticide Zionists were extremely angry and furious with the martyr and chased him," he said, referring to Fakhri-zadeh, who was targeted in a multi-pronged terrorist attack near Tehran on November 27.

Baqeri highlighted the scientist's achievements in the field of defense research against unconventional weapons, the production of X-ray systems to counter smuggling, and the development of coronavirus testing kit and vaccines. He also hailed the formation of the Iranian Defense Ministry's Organization of Defensive Innovation and Research (SPND) as an incredibly valuable work by Fakhri-zadeh.

The Zionists carried out assassination operations in Egypt, Iraq and Iran since the very day when Muslim countries made headways in nuclear physics, the commander said, adding that the US, likewise, killed hundreds of Iraqi scientists through Blackwater and other notorious mercenary contractors.

"According to statements by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, we have two tasks. One is to punish those who ordered and perpetrated this crime. It is underway and the time, place and manner to act upon it lie at the hands of the fighters," Baqeri emphasized. "Revenge is definite, but the time and place will be determined by the revolutionary front."

He further compared the assassination of Fakhri-zadeh with that of top Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, saying they were martyred upon direct orders by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Donald Trump.

## Women Account for 24% of Iran's Gov't Managers

QAZVIN (IRNA) - Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs Masoumeh Ebtekar said on Thursday that about 24 percent of the managers in the higher and middle ranks are women in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Ebtekar made the remarks at the Planning and Development Council of Qazvin province on Thursday. She said that the principle has been based on meritocracy in all women managers' appointments.

"This is a great achievement for the government and the country, and we hope that during the remainder of the government, Qazvin will be able to grow in the field of women's management and we will achieve a 30 percent index at the end of the twelfth government," Ebtekar undefined.

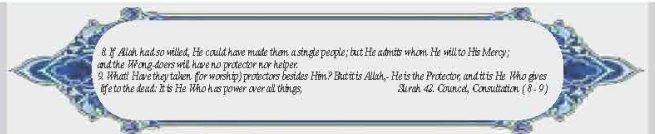
She noted that since the beginning of the Islamic Revolution, during the Iraqi-imposed war against Iran, and in every social arena, it has been the same, and half of the population has been women.





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:11
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:28
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:45
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:14



## Iran Earns Less Than \$20b From Crude Exports in 2020

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN** - Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Governor Abdolnasser Hemmati says the country earned less than \$20 billion from crude exports in 2020 as sanctions imposed by the U.S. continued to affect shipments.

In a Thursday post on his Instagram page, Hemmati said that Iran had a very restricted access to the funds generated from crude exports last year.

However, he said that limited access to the funds, which he said was half the amount of annual revenues derived from oil exports before 2018, had failed to inflict any serious damage to the Iranian economy.

The CBI chief expressed hope that Iran could restore calm to its exchange market in the upcoming months with more exports of oil and an anticipated easing of the U.S. sanctions which many believe would be possible with a new administration in Washington which is set to take office later this month.

Iranian authorities have repeatedly dismissed claims that U.S. sanctions have had a deep impact on the country's economy while reiterating that a change of government in the US would not necessarily lead to better ties between Tehran and Washington.

Various reports have suggested that Iran has managed to find a way round the U.S.



sanctions by increasing its crude exports to levels above one million barrels per day (bpd) from lows of less than 0.5 million bpd seen in early 2019.

However, in his Thursday statement, Hemmati touched upon the certification of Joe Biden as the next U.S. president by the Congress on Wednesday.

Without naming U.S. President Donald Trump, the Iranian top banker described him as the number one enemy of the Iranian nation and said that riots that broke out in Washington a day earlier had marked a closure to Trump's scandalous case.

## Pakistan Among Favorable Markets For Khorasan Steel Co. Products

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN** - Head of Exports Department of Khorasan Steel Company says one of the priorities of the company in recent years has been exports of its products to the neighboring states like Pakistan.

In a meeting held at Mashhad Chamber of Commerce and in presence of a trade delegation from Pakistan and some of economic activists from Khorasan Razavi Province, head of exports department of Khorasan Steel Company Mr. Hamid Reza Shenavaee as the representative of steel industry in eastern country said that one of the priorities of Khorasan Steel Company's products is to export to the neighboring states like Pakistan.

In the meeting where Pakistani trade delegation had asked for using engineering capacities of Iran for construction of Gwadar Port in Pakistan, the economic activists of the province welcomed the expansion of relations between traders and producers of both countries. Shenavaee said Pakistan duo to closeness and neighborhood with Iran is considered as a good market for Iran especially for exports of steel products, and Khorasan Steel Company as the biggest pole in the steel industry in eastern Iran is ready for export of its products to the neighbor state Pakistan.

Meanwhile in the meeting held of permanent coordinating committee of Lahore Chamber of Commerce said that Pakistan is full aware of Iran's capabilities in many industries in the world standards, adding that there are enough capacities in Iran in development, technical services and engineering sectors for construction of Gwadar Port. Muhammad Ahif Khan stipulated that Iran can fulfill its share in construction of Gwadar Port because the capacity for producing high quality products in the steel, cement and construction industries is very high and strong in Iran.

Meanwhile Mr. Shenavaee in the meeting said that Khorasan Steel Company as the third biggest construction steel producer of the country and the first in eastern Iran with annual production capacity of 1.2m tons of steel has good potential for cooperation in this regard.

He then presented some of capabilities and production capacities of the company and the company's facilities for rail and road transportation of its products.



### Health Network

Plaque of Appreciation  
Awarded to Chadormalu Co.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN** - Head of Health and Treatment Network of town of Ardekan Dr. Pour Hashemi accompanied by the president of Ziaeei Hospital met the CEO of Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company Eng. Naser Taghizadeh and awarded him the plaque of appreciation for the company's special attention to the health issues in combating the coronavirus pandemic.

In the meeting, Dr. Pour Hashemi admitted that national medical centers were stunned against the coronavirus pandemic which created huge problems, adding that if there were no assistance from the outside of the common medical system, the medical system could have suffered more hardship. He hailed Chadormalu Company for its humanitarian aids like providing medical centers with oxygen which saved the lives of many COVID-19 infected patients. He then pointed to the importance of education and promotion of health culture in the society and expressed hope the aids of the company would continue.

Then Mr. Taghizadeh hailed the round-the-clock efforts of the medical staff in fight with COVID-19, and said the aids of the company have been the least that it could offer for saving the lives of the people. He added that health of people busy in the production units of the company and citizens of the region is important for the company and to this end it will keep on helping according to its afford.

He noted that the company has plans for improving the environment for citizens that he hopes the company would achieve it with cooperation of the regional officials.



## It was Raised in an Exclusive Interview; Beginning of Abadan Petrochemical Reconstruction Movement With Revival and re-launch of Unit 600



The CEO of Abadan Petrochemical Company said: We try to maintain the honor and position of Petrochemical as a symbol of Abadan city. At present, the reconstruction of the petrochemical has started with the restart of the 600 unit. Certainly the year 1400 will be different, very good and with the growth of this complex.

In an interview with Sobh-e-Efteasad reporter in Abadan, Mohsen Alavi mentioned the beginning of his activity as the first CEO of Abadan Petrochemical since March 2018. He stated: 90% of Abadan Petrochemical income is from the sale of PVC. Other products of this complex do not have much impact on its profits and losses. Due to the fire of unit 600 of this company (PVC production) on July 27, 2018, the company was closed and had no income. It was not possible to ask our troops to go to their homes to be called back. So we had difficult conditions. So we continued to work with the production of peripherals such as propane and DBC until September 2019. He added: «In January 2018, it was decided that Petrochemical would carry out the reconstruction of the 600 unit itself.» For this reason, we formed different teams. But the Nowruz 98 holiday and the flood caused the workshop to be active in the second or third months of 2019. Thus began the reconstruction project of Unit 600. And despite not having the money, the work was done by Tapico paying all the costs of the project. He specified: According to Tapico instructions, the project manager had to be used for the implementation of each project. In July 2019, a contracting company became the project manager (in charge of project management). Despite the 8-month commitment to complete the work, the work was not done. The situation became such that we received facilities to pay the salaries of our employees. The CEO of Abadan Petrochemical Company reminded: According to the circumstances, I received the work from the contractor. With the presentation of a commitment, the reconstruction of Unit 600 by managers and employees began in the second half of

March. During the corona holidays, Eid and Ramadan, we did not stop working and worked around the clock. This project was considered the life of Abadan Petrochemical. However, in this way, we faced many side problems from some known people. Some people became hostile to me. They wanted to question the plans and actions. These issues did not disrupt the project implementation process. We did things with strength. Fortunately, the work was completed on time and after delivery to the exploitation unit, it entered the production cycle. Alavi said: This is an important and valuable event. The petrochemical industry used to be a patient in a coma. After two years, he returned to the production cycle and regained his vital signs. It was hard for even the most optimistic people to imagine the production of PVC in June. Indigenous managers and expert staff proved the phrase «we can» with their efforts. The growing trend of petrochemicals was followed. Since September of this year, although a little, we have reached profitability. He said: Abadan Petrochemicals high debt was a legacy left by the past. We inherit many things. We did not retreat. I will do my job as long as I have a responsibility.

**Petrochemical is the first producer of PVC in the Middle East, with 50 years of history**

He stated: Petrochemical is the second economic enterprise in the city after the refinery with 1,400 workers. Despite its 50-year history, it also has potential. In this complex, grades are produced that none of the other 4 companies, namely Bandar Imam, Ghadir, Arvand and Hegmateneh (recently put into operation) can produce. «The 600 unit was supposed to be officially inaugurated by the president, but for some reason it did not happen,» he said. The unit was restarted without an opening ceremony and will continue to operate. We have no arrears at the moment. According to the activities of this unit, the salaries of the first employees are paid every month. We worked hard to reach the current situation with all the staff. The occurrence of some immorality by some people hurts our hearts. But we continue to move forward with determination.

**Increase capital instead of declaring bankruptcy**

The CEO of Abadan Petrochemical said about the bankruptcy of this company: Petrochemical has not declared bankruptcy but is subject to Article 141. When the loss exceeds 50% of the asset, it is subject to this article. It is also possible to increase its capital, for example, if the company's capital is 550 billion tomans and its loss is 300 billion tomans, it is subject to Article 141, in the face of which, the board of directors must do two things or declare bankruptcy. Or increase

the capital, which fortunately for Abadan Petrochemical as a well-known brand, it was agreed to increase its capital and we are still working, although we are subject to Article 141 due to more losses than our capital. Alavi added: «We have inherited many problems left and the debt of this company was not paid for years.» We will pay the debt to the refinery from August this year. Something that had not happened for about four years. We now pay our fine for buying food from the Abadan refinery on a monthly basis. However, we owe 200 billion tomans to the refinery for buying food in the past. «We have an annual debt to the refinery,» he said. This has been done in correspondence with the Minister. We are consulting to compensate this debt, to do a part in the form of project implementation in the refinery.

**Stabilization of petrochemical feed by installing compressors and construction of gas pressure boosting station in the refinery**

The CEO of Abadan Petrochemical Company continued his remarks: Petrochemical was initially under the Ministry of Oil, which was transferred to the private sector in 1996. At the time under government control, 250 tons of feed were to be delivered daily to the petrochemical plant through the refinery. Over the years, this amount of feed has fallen sharply. At present, with the re-launch of the 600 unit, the refinery provides us with about 130 tons of feed per day. However, we need at least 200 tons of feed per day. Of course, the company's design shows the need for 250 tons per day. Due to the existence of all the relevant infrastructure, but due to the reduction of the amount of feed received from the refinery, we have to work less than our capacity. Alavi reminded: Abadan Petrochemical has a good potential that can be more profitable. So to increase the feed we need, we started a project called «installing a compressor and building a gas booster station in the refinery.» Its implementation has remained undecided since 2014. He said: «In 2014, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the petrochemical and the refinery to implement this project and a compressor was purchased, but for 6 years it was faced with uncertainty in the executive operation.» At present, I hold various meetings every week with the relevant contractor in the field of implementation and timely completion of this project. At present, the compressor has been transferred to the refinery and we are carrying out piping, cabling and its final stages. Explaining what happens after the implementation of this project, the CEO of Abadan Petrochemical Company added: Abadan refinery has a series of gases called sour gas, part of which is converted into flare and the other part is

delivered to the refinery fuel ring, by installing this compressor. In the refinery sweetening unit, sour gases are converted into petrochemical feed (between 50 and 80 tons of feed per day) and added to the current feed and delivered to us, thus stabilizing the petrochemical feed, which is for us it is an advantage while the gas is no longer converted to flare and is also very useful and effective from an environmental point of view. The part that was delivered to the fuel ring (the price of fuel gas is one tenth of the price of feed) is added to the amount of feed delivered and sold. Alavi stated: This project is very important and effective for us. Therefore, we try our best to complete this project by the end of this year or at most one or two months later. The current problem in implementing this project is several pieces. It takes time to build them. Currently, this project has 80% physical progress.

**In order to develop economic activities and create sustainable employment:**

**It is necessary to set up downstream petrochemical industries in Abadan**

The CEO of Abadan Petrochemical Company pointed to the establishment of downstream petrochemical industries in the region. He called these measures the development of economic activities and the creation of productive employment. He continued: «We are consulting with Topico officials to obtain permission to do so, accompanied by one of Abadan's representatives in the Islamic Consultative Assembly.» He said: «The initial approval of the company's board of directors has been obtained by doing this.» We need a credit of 500 billion tomans to implement it. He added: «Considering the existence of the infrastructure for the start of this operation in the region, if the final agreement is obtained and the required funds are provided for implementation, this project can be operational in less than a year.» He specified: in case of launching downstream petrochemical industries in Abadan and producing PVC, jobs will be created. Abadan Petrochemical Company will also find more added value. The CEO of Abadan Petrochemical Company reminded: Due to its proximity to other countries, especially Iraq and access to various transportation routes such as land, sea, air and rail, in case of launching downstream petrochemical industries and product production, in addition to meeting the country's needs it is possible to take appropriate and extensive measures in the field of its export. Alavi Goght: We started this project by getting a consultant. This issue is currently being reviewed and approved by Topico and Shasta. If this section is set up, about 100 to 150 people will be employed.



## Indonesia Frees Cleric Linked to Bali Bombing

JAKARTA (AFP) - A radical cleric linked to the deadly Bali bombings was freed from prison early Friday, Indonesian authorities said, stirring grief and anger among victims nearly 20 years after Indonesia's worst terror attack.

Abu Bakar Bashir, 82, is considered the spiritual leader of militant group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), the Islamist network responsible for the 2002 Bali terror attack that killed more than 200 people, most of them foreign tourists.

The firebrand preacher had completed an unrelated jail term for helping fund militant training in conservative Aceh province. But he has long been suspected of involvement in the holiday island bombings, Indonesia's worst terror attack.



## Tesla CEO Musk World's Wealthiest Person

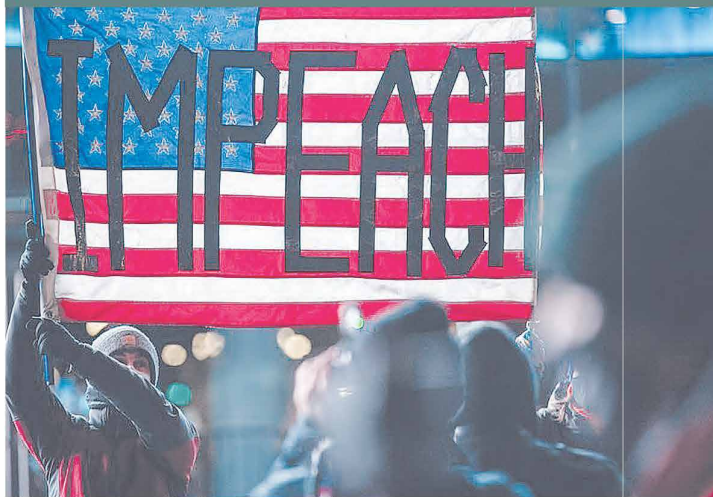
NEW YORK (AFP) - Whether the topic is transforming the automobile or conquering the next frontier of space, Elon Musk has shown a knack for captivating an audience beyond investors and science geeks.

The brash Tesla CEO, now the world's wealthiest person following the electric automaker's meteoric rise, was the quintessential Silicon Valley disruptor - except he no longer lives in California.

The norm-shattering entrepreneur, who has more than 41 million followers on Twitter and a fortune now estimated at more than \$180 billion, announced last month he had relocated to Texas and could not resist one last dig at the West Coast state.



## Democrats Inch Toward Second Trump Impeachment After Capitol Siege



WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Congressional Democrats were moving closer to a historic step on Friday as they weighed impeaching President Donald Trump for a second time, two days after his false claims of election fraud helped encourage a mob that breached the U.S. Capitol.

Top Democratic leaders, including House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, called for immediate impeachment proceedings if Vice President Mike Pence and Trump's Cabinet refused to take steps to remove Trump from power.

"The president's dangerous and seditious acts necessitate his immediate removal from office," they said in a statement on Thursday evening, accusing Trump of inciting an "insurrection."

As calls for his ouster mounted on Thursday, Trump released a video in which he denounced the violence that saw one person shot dead by police and three die from medical emergencies.

The Republican president came the closest yet to conceding his loss in the Nov. 3 presidential election, promising to ensure a smooth transition to a "new administration."

President-elect Joe Biden, a Democrat, is set to be sworn in on Jan. 20.

Trump's words were in stark contrast to his speech on Wednesday, when he exhorted a crowd of thousands to descend upon the Capitol as Congress met to certify Biden's election victory.

Rioters stormed the building, overwhelming police and forcing authorities to transport lawmakers to secure locations for their own safety. A Capitol police officer died from injuries sustained in the assault, the force said late on Thursday, bringing to five the number of related deaths.

With less than two weeks left in Trump's term, it was not clear whether enough time remained to complete the impeachment process. Pelosi has not announced a decision, though she made clear at a news conference that rank-and-file Democrats in her caucus were clamoring for action in the wake of Wednesday's siege.

If impeached in the House, Trump would theoretically face trial in the Republican-controlled Senate, which is scheduled to be in recess until Jan. 19. Aides to Mitch McConnell, the majority leader, have not said what he would do if the House approves articles of impeachment. The Democratic-led House impeached Trump in December 2019 for pressuring the president of Ukraine to investigate Biden, but the Republican-held Senate acquitted him in February 2020. Only two other presidents in history have been impeached, and none has ever been impeached twice.

Democrats will control the Senate after sweeping two runoff elections in Georgia on Tuesday, but the new senators, Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, will not be sworn in until the state certifies the results. The state deadline to do so is Jan. 22, though it could come sooner.

## Kim Vows to Comprehensively Expand Diplomacy at Party Congress

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un explored ways to renew inter-Korean ties and vowed to expand diplomatic relations, state media said on Friday, as he hosted a rare party congress less than two weeks before U.S. President-elect Joe Biden takes office.

The eighth congress of the ruling Workers' Party came amid a prolonged gridlock in negotiations aimed at dismantling North Korea's nuclear and missile programs in return for U.S. sanction relief.

On its third day on Thursday, Kim raised the issue of reshaping South Korean affairs "as required by the prevailing situation and the changed times" and discussed foreign policy, the official KCNA news agency reported, without elaborating. He "declared the general orientation and the policy stand of our party for comprehensively expanding and developing the external relations," KCNA said. Biden will come into office facing the thorny task of engineering a breakthrough in the stalemate, after a second summit between Kim and outgoing U.S. President Donald Trump in 2019 failed to reach agreement.



## Russia Slams U.S.'s Archaic Electoral System

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - High-ranking Russian politicians have suggested an "archaic" United States electoral system that does not meet democratic standards, and the politicization of the media, were to blame for the unrest in Washington, DC and divisions in the country.

Foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Thursday that the storming of the US Capitol by supporters of President Donald Trump a day earlier was "an internal U.S. affair", but that the country's political set-up was to blame.

"The electoral system in the United States is archaic, it does not meet modern democratic standards, creating opportunities for numerous violations, and the American media have become an instrument of political struggle," Zakharova told Russian news agencies.

"This is largely the reason for the split in society now observed in the United States." Under headlines such as "Storm of the Capitol" and "Chaos in Washington", Russian state television showed rolling images of mobs of Trump supporters breaking down barricades and swarming the Congress building, as security forces fired tear gas and police drew guns inside.

The U.S. Congress formally certified President-elect Joe Biden despite the riot, but many in Moscow said the stunning events had exposed the country's democratic failings.

Moscow has long bristled at U.S. criticism of the state of Russian democracy under Putin, accusing Washington of hypocrisy and condescension.

"This [election process in the US] certainly gives no one the right to point the finger at the flaws in other political systems, including in election legislation," Putin said.

The Kremlin has itself been accused of fostering division in the US with a campaign of interference and disinformation, including alleged attempts to disrupt the 2016 election in Trump's favour that prompted an FBI investigation.

## UAE Says No Diplomatic Ties to Qatar Yet

DUBAI (Reuters) - Arab states boycotting Qatar could resume travel and trade links with Doha within a week under a U.S.-backed deal, but restoring diplomatic ties requires more time as parties work to rebuild trust, a United Arab Emirates official said on Thursday.

Persian Gulf powerhouse Saudi Arabia announced the breakthrough in ending a bitter dispute at a summit on Tuesday, with its foreign minister saying Riyadh and its allies would restore all ties with Doha severed in mid-2017.

UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash told a virtual news conference that measures to be implemented within a week of the agreement "include practical measures of airlines, shipping and trade".

However, he said, other issues such as restoring full diplomatic relations would take time given geopolitical issues and political Islamist groups regarded by traditional Arab autocrats as an existential threat.

"Some issues are easier to fix and some others will take a longer time," Gargash said, adding that bilateral working groups would try to move those forward. "We have a very good start ...

but we have issues with rebuilding trust."

Restored air links to the UAE's regional aviation hub will be important for Qatar's hosting of the 2022 World Cup.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt imposed the embargo on Qatar over allegations that it supports terrorism and is cosying up to foe Iran. Doha denies the charges and says the boycott aims to curtail its sovereignty.

Kuwait and the United States have been mediating in the dispute that Washington says hampers efforts to contain Iran, a key issue for Saudi Arabia especially after attacks on its energy installations last year.

The Persian Gulf feud also complicated efforts to stabilize countries reeling from years of turmoil as the parties and their respective allies vied for influence from Libya to Yemen and Sudan.

Since the 2011 "Arab Spring" protests, which aspired to democratic reform but in several countries collapsed into warfare, Egypt and especially the UAE emerged as main foes of the Muslim Brotherhood backed by Qatar and Turkey.



## Bolsonaro Backs Trump Fraud Claim After Unrest

BRASILIA (AFP) - Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro on Thursday backed his ally Donald Trump's claim of fraud in the US presidential election, and warned the chaos that rocked Washington could also hit Brazil's elections next year.

The far-right leader, dubbed the "Tropical Trump," is a staunch supporter of the American president, a stance he maintained even as international condemnation poured in for Trump's role in encouraging the mob that stormed the U.S. Capitol Wednesday.

"What was the problem that caused that whole crisis, basically? Lack of trust in the election," Bolsonaro told supporters outside the presidential palace.

"They maximized mail-in ballots because of this pandemic thing, and there were people who voted three, four times. Dead people voted. It was a free-for-all. No one can deny that."

Election officials, U.S. states and the courts have all dismissed Trump's claims of widespread fraud.

But Bolsonaro has shown determination to stand by Trump to the end.

He was the last leader in the G20 group of nations to acknowledge president-elect Joe Biden's victory, which he did only after the U.S. electoral college officially confirmed the November 3 election result more than a month later. Political analysts say Trump's defeat isolates Bolsonaro, who modeled his own rise to the presidency on the Republican billionaire's, and hurts his chances for re-election in 2022.

As the shocking images of Wednesday's unrest in Washington circulated in Brazil, many commentators speculated the South American country could be headed for a similar situation next year if Bolsonaro loses.

"Trump just gave Bolsonaro his script for 2022," journalist Igor Gielow wrote in leading newspaper Folha de São Paulo.

Bolsonaro only fueled those concerns when he repeated his frequent criticism of Brazil's electronic voting system, which he alleges -- without evidence -- is riddled with fraud. "There's fraud here, too," he said, warning Brazil faced "an even worse problem than the United States" if it did not reintroduce paper ballots, as he has insisted.





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## Biggest Drop in UK New Car Sales Since World War Two

LONDON (Reuters) - British new car sales fell nearly 30% last year in their biggest annual drop since 1943 as lockdowns to curb the spread of the coronavirus hit the sector, an industry body said on Wednesday.

Demand stood at 1.63 million cars in 2020, according to data from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT). It was particularly hard hit by a 97% fall in April, the first full month of a national lockdown.

Dealerships gradually reopened in June on differing dates across the United Kingdom's four nations.



## World Bank Warns Global Recovery Could Erode If Virus Worsens

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The World Bank downgraded its outlook for the global economy, and warned the situation could deteriorate if Covid-19 infections accelerate or the vaccine rollout is delayed.

The coronavirus pandemic also has worsened the risks surrounding the rising debt load in developing nations, and it will take a global effort to avoid a new crisis in those economies, the bank cautioned.

After shrinking 4.3 percent in 2020, the world economy is projected to grow by 4.0 percent this year, two-tenths lower than previously forecast, as more than half of countries were downgraded in the semi-annual Global Economic Prospects report.

China was a bright spot with a surprisingly fast recovery in 2020, but advanced countries which did better last year will fare worse in 2021, the bank said.

The report warns the outlook remains "highly uncertain," and GDP growth could be as low as 1.6 percent this year if the downside risks materialize.

With millions driven into poverty by the coronavirus recession, countries will need to find a way to move beyond direct aid and reinvest investment to stimulate growth, the Washington-based development lender urged.

Policymakers face "formidable challenges... as they try to ensure that this still fragile global recovery gains traction and sets a foundation for robust growth," World Bank President David Malpass said. The expectation for a subdued recovery "assumes that vaccine rollout becomes widespread" and the economic reopening continues, Malpass told reporters.

But even if the pace of growth holds steady, global GDP in 2022 will be 4.4 percent below pre-pandemic levels, the bank said.

And, further out, the "lasting damage to health, education and balance sheets" may lower the global economy's potential output, the report said. Focus on policies to boost investment will be needed to counter "the pandemic's lasting scars," including through investment in green infrastructure which can boost growth while at the same time addressing climate change, the report said.

Malpass said that would include phasing out fossil fuel subsidies and providing incentives for green technologies.

The Chinese economy is expected to expand by nearly eight percent this year, after two percent growth in 2020, while US GDP is projected to gain 3.5 percent - a half point lower than the June forecast. Excluding China, developing nations as a group will see growth of just 3.4 percent, the report said.

The inequality of the downturn and the recovery was "dramatic," and drove a "devastating rise in extreme poverty," Malpass said.

"People at the bottom of the income scale were hardest hit" by the recession, and "unfortunately will likely be the slowest to regain jobs, get health care, vaccinations and adjust to the post-Covid economy," he said.

The pandemic also exacerbated the debt risks of developing nations. "The global community needs to act rapidly and forcefully to make sure the recent debt accumulation does not end with a string of debt crises," said Ayhan Kose, acting World Bank vice president for Equitable Growth and Financial Institutions.

"The developing world cannot afford another lost decade," Malpass said that the situation is a "red alert" with some low-income countries facing deep debt distress, and the more they are forced to pay to service pre-pandemic debt, the less they have for health care and investment.

## India Predicts GDP 7.7% Contraction

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - India's economy is expected to contract 7.7% in the current financial year ending in March, the worst performance in four decades, which is likely to prompt the finance minister to make a push for growth in the budget next month.

The estimate released on Thursday by the Central Statistics Office is broadly in line with the forecasts of private economists, who envisage a contraction of 7-9.5% for the 2020/21 fiscal year, and the central bank, which has revised its estimate to 7.5%.

The government's annual budget for next financial year, due to be presented on Feb. 1, is expected to increase spending on new roads, ports and provide incentives for manufacturers, to propel the economy out of its slump.

The economy contracted by a record 23.9% in the April-June quarter following a national lockdown to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The contraction was reduced to 7.5% in the September quarter.

The government now expects a marginal positive economic growth in the December quarter as most coronavirus restrictions have been lifted, helping consumer demand and investments. The economy grew 4.2% in the fiscal year 2019/2020.

The government expects that the approval of two COVID-19 vaccines will spur consumer confidence as vaccinations are set to begin next week.

With more than 10 million recorded cases of the coronavirus, India is the second worst hit country after United States. It has recorded just over 150,000 deaths.

Nominal GDP growth is expected to contract 4.2% in the current financial year, the government statement said, and will be used by the finance minister to revise fiscal deficit numbers for the current financial year.

India's fiscal deficit for year ending in March is likely to be over 7% of gross domestic product, three sources have told Reuters, as revenue collections suffered during the lockdown and coronavirus restrictions.



## U.S., Japan Set for Recovery in Second Half of 2021

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Economic stimulus approved in the United States and Japan at the end of last year will help to power a recovery in their economies in the second half of 2021, IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath said.

Gopinath told Yahoo Finance in a live interview that the U.S. and Japanese rebounds may prompt upgrades of economic forecasts in some parts of the world. But she said the recovery in some developing countries could be delayed until 2022 by limited availability of coronavirus vaccines.

She repeated earlier remarks that the global economy is starting 2021 in a stronger position than anticipated last year due to a stronger-than-forecast performance in the third and fourth quarters. Gopinath, however, added that the outlook was clouded by a race between the surging COVID-19 pandemic and the worldwide vaccination campaign.

But the combination of a stronger starting point and new stimulus "should power recovery in the second half," Gopinath told Yahoo Finance. "Based on the 2020 better-than-expected numbers, we should see an upgrade in some parts of the world."

That assumes that vaccines will be widely distributed by mid-year in those countries, she said, adding that those with limited access to vaccines will recover more slowly, including many developing economies.

The International Monetary Fund is expected to revise its World Economic Outlook forecasts on Jan. 26. In October, it forecast a 4.4% global GDP contraction for 2020, followed by a rebound to growth of 5.2% for 2021.

## Trump Administration Added Almost \$15b in Gov't Red Tape Last Year

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Trump has long made cutting regulations a signature talking point. In 2017, he even held an event at the White House where he cut a literal red tape before the cameras.

Earlier this year, he bragged his administration had "ended this regulatory assault on the American worker."

The outgoing administration has indeed been the most aggressive one in recent memory at paring back regulations. But in a demonstration of Washington's insatiable appetite for new rules and the temptation to use those rules to bypass Congressional gridlock, the cost of regulations have actually increased in three of the four years Trump was in office, according to new data from a

center-right think tank.

The American Action Forum reports that new regulations costing \$14.7 billion were added in 2020 alone. Another way to measure it: 290 million "paperwork hours" were added on the to-do lists of workers in government and the private sector last year.

The data was compiled by bringing together each of the relevant government agency's own estimate of the impact of any given regulation. "Predominantly, what they're calculating is the estimate of economic impact on the private sector," says Dan Bosh, director of regulatory policy at the American Action Forum, and one of the report authors.

"So most of the costs, but I can't say all, are expected to be borne by the private sector," Bosh says. From 2017 to 2020, the data shows, Washington finalized 1,336 regulations across a range of government agencies with a total cost of \$64.7 billion and almost 330 million paperwork hours. Bosh points to three areas where he's seen notable increases in regulations during the Trump administration.

Immigration has seen an uptick as Trump and his aides have used new rules to make it harder for immigrants to enter and stay in the U.S. National security and defense contracting is a second area that has seen a surge in regulations.

Health care is the third area of increase. Bosh notes that new regulations on transparency and coverage for hospital procedures was "an expensive rule" that cost almost \$34 billion to comply with. Last year, Trump said the changes were a "major victory in our mission to deliver great health care at a price that you can afford."

Meanwhile, the cost of energy and the environmental regulations dropped by \$189.3 billion over the last four years. The Brookings Institution recently counted 74 deregulatory actions the Trump administration took to weaken environmental protections.

A rule change on fuel-efficient vehicles - which rolled back emissions standards for the auto industry - is set to lead to an estimated savings of almost \$200 billion.

## World Food Price Index Rises for Seventh Month Running in December

ROME (Reuters) - World food prices rose for a seventh consecutive month in December, with all the major categories, barring sugar, posting gains last month, the United Nations food agency said on Thursday.

The Food and Agriculture Organization's food price index, which measures monthly changes for a basket of cereals, oilseeds, dairy products, meat and sugar, averaged 107.5 points last month versus 105.2 in November.

The November figure was previously given as 105.0.

For the whole of 2020, the benchmark index averaged 97.9 points, a three-year high and a 3.1% increase from 2019. It was still down more than 25% from its historical peak in 2011. Vegetable oil prices continued recent strong gains, jumping 4.7% month-on-month in December after surging more than 14.0% in November. For the whole of 2020, the index was up 19.1% on 2019. FAO said supply tightness in major palm oil producing countries had pushed prices up, while trade was also impacted by a sharp hike in export duties in Indonesia. Prices for soy oil rose partly because of prolonged strikes in Argentina.

The cereal price index posted a more modest 1.1% rise in December from the month before. For all of 2020 the index averaged 6.6% above 2019 levels. Export prices for wheat, maize, sorghum and rice all rose in December, moving higher in part due to concerns over growing conditions and crop prospects in North and South America as well as Russia, the Rome-based FAO said.

The dairy index climbed 3.2% on the month, however, over the whole of 2020, it averaged some 1.0% less than in 2019.

In December, all components of the index rose due to strong global import demand triggered by concerns over drier and warmer conditions on Oceania's milk production as well as high internal demand in Western Europe.

The meat index pushed up 1.7% last month, while its full-year average was 4.5% below that of 2019. FAO said poultry quotations rebounded in December, partly due to the impact of avian influenza outbreaks in Europe. However, pig meat prices fell slightly, hit by the suspension of German exports to Asian markets following African Swine Fever outbreaks.

Bucking the rises in other indices, average sugar prices dipped by 0.6% in December. For 2020 as a whole, the sub-index posted a most 1.1% gain on 2019 levels. FAO said the relative firmness of latest data reflected a surge in imports by China and increased demand for refined sugar from Indonesia.

## Investment Deal Expected to Bolster European Dealmaking in China



HONG KONG (Reuters) - European companies are expected to hunt for assets in China, mainly in insurance, healthcare and automobile sectors, after the world's second-largest economy and the European Union agreed to an investment deal last month, lawyers and bankers say.

The agreement, which took nearly seven years to reach and commits to more liberalisation of China's market will likely take another year to enter into force. It is not clear if the deal grants more leeway on mergers and acquisitions.

However, bankers believe China inbound dealflow, which for decades has remained small compared with its economic size and market potential due to barriers to entry for foreign capital, will pick up in time.

"The EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) will certainly facilitate the FDI, including M&A, by EU investors into China," said Cherrie Shi, a senior counsel at law firm FenXun Partners, Baker McKenzie's Joint Operation partner.

The deal would provide EU investors with "more certainty and predictability" for their investment, Shi said.

Total M&A value of EU companies into China amounted to \$71 billion for the past three decades, much lower than the \$117 billion recorded over the same period from American companies, data from Refinitiv showed. The deal agreed on Dec. 30 lets European firms operate in China in electric cars, telecom cloud services and certain activities linked to air and maritime transport.

They will also be allowed to fully own units in the automotive sector, many financial services, private hospitals, advertising, real estate and environmental services, such as sewage.

"These are the major growth areas with massive amounts of investments. EU companies are pretty keen to get a piece of the action," said Alan Wang, Partner at law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer.



## Iran, Yemen Emphasize Expansion Of Bilateral Cooperation

SANAA (IP) - Iran's ambassador to Yemen and a member of the country's Supreme Political Council stressed the need to expand bilateral cooperation between Tehran and Sana'a.

Hassan Ilou, told Sultan Al-Samael, a member of Yemen's Supreme Political Council, on Thursday that Iran supports the Yemeni people by transferring its capabilities in all areas and that

relations between Tehran and Sanaa will expand in various fields. General Sultan Al-Samael, the member of the Yemeni Supreme Political Council, called the presence of the Iranian ambassador a sign of Islamic solidarity in breaking the sanctions imposed by the Saudi aggressor coalition on Yemen over the past six years.



## Risks Remain for 2021's Economic Recovery

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - An upbeat consensus on the 2021 global economic outlook is emerging. The vaccine rollout will begin to reach critical mass over the summer, activity will rebound, supported by accommodative financial conditions and fiscal support, with lost output continuing to be recouped into 2022.

The International Monetary Fund's October 'World Economic Outlook' predicted the world economy will grow 5.2% in 2021. Expected advanced economy growth of roughly 4% reflects a 3% increase in the US, with the euro area expanding 5%. China and India lead emerging markets with 8% or greater increases. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's December outlook was less upbeat, especially about the euro area, but otherwise was broadly similar.

The projected shape of the growth trajectory is reasonable. Fiscal support and dissaving may boost the outlook, especially with the US Congress in the hands of the Democratic party. But a range of downside risks could impede the recovery as the world emerges from the pandemic.

1. In advanced economies, the vaccine will take several quarters to rollout. There could be delays and hiccups along the way. The US is already off to a slower than expected start, as are several European nations.

2. The current coronavirus wave will harm economic activity more than previously thought. High frequency data has already softened. Lockdowns in Europe and the enormous spike in cases in the US will hit consumption spending, worsening the outlook, especially for many services such as restaurants, travel and tourism. First quarter gross domestic product declines cannot be ruled out.

3. Labor market scarring may be far more persistent than anticipated, slowing re-employment. Participation rates may remain low. The pandemic has taken a large toll on female labor force participation. Workers who lost jobs may not have the skills for new ones.

4. Advanced economies are asking too much of monetary policy. It's already extraordinarily accommodative. Still, central banks have more ammunition. But while continued easing will maintain loose financial conditions and support asset prices, any added impulse will be small.

5. Fiscal policy stepped up in 2020, but will be more conservative in 2021. The US passed another bill worth almost 5% of GDP. The prospects for further fiscal support have brightened with the Democratic party having the majority in both houses of Congress, but there are still obstacles in the path to robust spending. Some nations in Europe, such as Spain and Italy, feel their fiscal space is constrained, while others may be reluctant to use theirs. Given the increase in debt and deficits in 2020, rightly or wrongly, the political winds will shift towards withdrawing stimulus.

6. Solvency problems could be a problem this year. Large U.S. firms have been able to borrow at low rates on capital markets, but smaller companies are not faring as well and face tightening bank lending standards. Elevated business leverage could result in increased bankruptcies and defaults. European small- and medium-sized enterprises may face similar constraints.



7. China is expected to be a major global growth engine in 2021 but could face downside risks. China has shown relative restraint in its policy support. Monetary policy focused on maintaining a flow of credit instead of quantitative easing or rate cuts. Unfortunately, credit support has often been directed at state-owned enterprises, rather than relatively more dynamic private firms. Authorities have recently allowed several bond defaults, upsetting financial markets. Banks are reportedly already tightening lending standards. Fiscal policy has been especially cautious in contrast with during the global financial crisis. With growth resuming, authorities will continue to exercise macroeconomic restraint, further turning their focus toward leverage curbs.

8. China's rising current account surplus could become a source of tension. It is increasing sharply given the relatively restrained macroeconomic stance, a collapse in tourism outflows, lower oil and commodity bills, and strong personal protective equipment and work-from-home exports. As a result, Chinese GDP growth may exceed domestic activity, absorbing demand from the rest of the world, which may aggravate global protectionist pressures.

9. Other emerging markets are confronting ongoing constraints. Many face lost tourism receipts, declining remittances and lower commodity revenues. While some have undertaken quantitative easing or purchased government debt, their policy space is far more constrained than that in advanced economies. Some, such as Turkey, Argentina, Brazil and Ukraine, face idiosyncratic problems, while Mexico has pursued a conservative policy stance. Many low-income countries face debt distress.

10. Society lacks an understanding of what the 'new normal' will look like. Will employers be slow bringing back labour, instead relying more heavily on automation? Will populism surge in the pandemic's wake and inhibit globalisation? Will Sino-American tensions weaken the outlook? What impact will worsening inequality have?

On balance, a strong recovery is inevitable with vaccines being rolled out and the US passing another fiscal package. But policy-makers should not be complacent. Transitioning out of the pandemic may be slower and more painful than many foresee.

### Behind-the-Scene...

FROM PAGE 1

With such an election system even in the U.S. which has always introduced itself as the pioneer country in terms of democracy, some interesting things happen and because of it, people's votes are ignored in this country like most of the countries claiming the democracy. Almost three weeks before the November 3 U.S. presidential election, The Guardian in an article wrote, "To understand the suppression of voters in the U.S., it only suffices to have a look at the State of Texas. While in most states voters are not asked to explain their reasons for postal voting, in Texas only 65-year and older voters are authorized to cast their ballots by post or some other conditions have been set for the postal voting; like not being allowed to register for online voting."

In other words, any state can have its own style for voting. Some people believe that the election experience with victories of the candidates in the popular voting and ultimately suffering defeats in the electoral votes has been gained in occasions like the defeat of Democrat candidate Hillary Clinton in 2016 election, can be defined as different picture of democracy look in the U.S.

The trend of results of the 2020 presidential election in the U.S. has been so far unpredictable and nobody knew what strange and unimaginable events were to happen. If in the 2016 election all people were assured of victory of Clinton in the popular voting, today there is and will be no such a certainty about Democrat Party candidate Joe Biden despite leading the electoral votes.

So on Wednesday when the joint meeting of the U.S. Congress and Senate convened for counting the votes of electors of the 2020 presidential election presided by Vice-President Mike Pence, it was halted after objection to the result of voting in the State of Arizona. The meeting was held on Wednesday while the loser of the presidential election Mr. Trump had claimed that Pence had this power to change the result of electors in favor of him but Pence before the meeting announced that he lacked unilateral power to alter the results.

So the count of electoral votes of the states started alphabetically and the Republican Congressmen and Senators said they would oppose the results of some swing states. These objections without noticing the democratic effect of public vote have been sort of blackmail.

After the calm restored, a Senator announced that the ballot-boxes of the Electoral College had been taken to a safe and secret place in order that counting the votes could be resumed. Zionist regime's Defense Minister Benny Gantz reacting to the Capitol Hill event said, "I did not believe I would see such pictures in the most powerful democracy in the world."

All of what pictures today, yesterday or in the past years that have been painted about the method of democratic management from distribution of wealth, approach towards poverty and way of behaving the colored-skin and even way of managing the coronavirus pandemic in the U.S. is a genuine behind-the-scene of a simulation that the Westerners could have hidden it from the eyes of the world public through their media power. But today with the assistance of the mass communications which have been created for more dominance on the world, it has been exposed to the world. Pictures, films and reports on bringing down the flag of the U.S. in the Congress shows this reality that the behind-the-scene of democracy in the U.S. is centuries apart with the democracy itself.



## Iran Voices Concern About U.S. Violation Of Detainees' Rights

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's High Council for Human Rights, has issued a statement, voicing extreme concern over the violation of rights of those detained in a protest in the U.S. capital on Thursday.

The statement came few hours after American Police detained tens of angry protesters who stormed the Capitol Building in Washington.

The protesters believe that their votes were stolen in the November 3 Presidential elections.

The statement by Iran's High Council for Human Rights reiterates that freedom of expression and the right to holding peaceful gatherings is a legitimate right that has to be respected and protected by whichever party takes the power in Washington.

The statement said that fair and impartial observers see the UN secretary-general and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' silence on human rights abuses as a green light to human rights abuse and urge them not to sacrifice the rights of the American people for the interests of those in power in the United States anymore.

The fall of the U.S. arrogant regime is a reality that cannot be slowed down even by possessing Atomic bombs and B-52 fighter jets, the statement added.

### Iran to Begin...

FROM PAGE 1

Manouchehri said development projects for Azar oilfield included drilling 19 wells with modern wellhead structures, building oil and gas export pipelines that stretch nearly 320 kilometers from the field, another 61 kilometers of new oil pipelines and a separate line for transferring natural gas to a nearby flare gas unit.

Iran started pilot production from Azar oilfield in March 2016 with an initial output of 15,000 bpd. Production was then raised to 30,000 bpd in 2017 to ensure the 65,000-bpd target would be within reach in the first phase of commercial operation planned for early 2021.

## World Concerned by Trump's 'Unchecked Authority' to Start Nuke War

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says the U.S. president's "unchecked authority" to start a nuclear war is a global concern.

"A rogue president who sought vengeance against his OWN people has been doing much worse to our people—and others—in the past 4 years," Zarif said in a Thursday tweet. "What's disturbing is that the same man has the UNCHECKED authority to start a nuclear war; a security concern for the entire int'l community," he added. In his controversial four-year term in office, Trump pulled Washington out of several international agreements, including the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) and the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty with Russia. By leaving the agreements, he stopped the U.S. commitment to underway regimes that are aimed at reducing the threat of nuclear weapons to the world.

### U.S. No Idol Anymore...

FROM PAGE 1

"Our rational demand is the lifting of the sanctions. This is the Iranian nation's right which has been violated. They are duty-bound to do that .... If the sanctions are lifted, then the US return to the JCPOA will mean something," the Leader said.

He said the issue of compensation will be raised in the next stage.

"But if the sanctions are not lifted, their return to the JCPOA may be even to our detriment," he added.

The Leader said the recent move by the Parliament and the administration to stop the implementation of nuclear commitments was a totally logical, rational, and acceptable decision.

"When the other side does not implement any of its commitments, there is no point for Iran to fulfill all its commitments," he said.

However, the Leader noted, if they return to their commitments, we will do the same.

The Leader further pointed to Iran's regional presence and said, "Our Establishment is duty-bound to behave in a way that its friends in the region are reinforced."

"This is our duty. Our presence is meant to strengthen our friends. We should not do anything to weaken those loyal to the Islamic Republic in the region," he noted.

Ayatollah Khamenei said Iran's presence creates stability, and that was proved on the issue of fighting Daesh terrorism and the like.

"Therefore, Iran's regional presence is definite, and will continue to exist," he added.

He also referred to the Western opposition to Iran's reinforcement of its defense power, and said, "The Islamic Republic system is now allowed to keep the country's defense power at a [low] level that an incompetent person like Saddam would dare to bomb our cities."

"Today our defense power is so much that the enemies have to take into account Iran's capabilities in their calculations. When our missile can shoot down the intrusive American aerial vehicle that had entered our airspace, and when our missiles can pound the Ain al-Assad airbase in such a way, the enemy has to count on these capabilities of Iran in its military decisions," the Leader said.

"We have no right to leave our country defenseless. We should not do something that emboldens the enemy, and makes us unable to respond," Ayatollah Khamenei added.

### Qatar...

FROM PAGE 1

But after the rival states reached an agreement this week to resolve the crisis, Sheikh Mohammed also said there would be no changes to Al Jazeera. Doha's foes have long accused the gas-rich nation of using the station's Arabic-language channel as a mouthpiece to criticize other Persian Gulf states and to stoke tensions in the region.

Qatar, which hosts the U.S.'s biggest military base in the Middle East, repeatedly denied the allegations against it and refused to make any concessions.

### Iran Can Easily Enrich...

FROM PAGE 1

"If we decide to enrich [uranium] above 20 percent today, it can be easily done and we are considering the needs [in other areas]," he reiterated.

Tehran began to scale back its commitments under a multilateral nuclear agreement with world powers in May 2019, a year after U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew his country from the deal - officially known as the joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - and slapped the "toughest ever" sanctions on Iran.

However, Iranian officials have stated on numerous occasions that the move will be reversed as soon as the other parties to the JCPOA return to full compliance with the deal and protect Iran's interests. Early last month, Iranian lawmakers voted in favor of the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions, which tasked the Iranian administration with suspending more commitments under the JCPOA.

The law requires the AEOI to produce at least 120 kg of 20-percent enriched uranium annually and start the installation, gas injection, enrichment and storage of nuclear materials up to an appropriate enrichment degree within a period of three months using at least 1,000 IR-2m centrifuges.



## Benzema to Face Trial for Attempted Blackmail

MADRID (Dispatches) - Real Madrid forward Karim Benzema is to face trial for attempted blackmail in a case linked to a sex tape featuring his former France teammate Mathieu Valbuena, French prosecutors said Thursday.

Benzema, 33, who has not been selected for his country since the affair came to light in 2015, is accused of paying individuals to extort money from Valbuena by threatening to make the video public.

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

## Yastremska Suspended After Failing Dope Test

PARIS (Dispatches) - Ukraine tennis star Dayana Yastremska was suspended on Thursday after testing positive for a banned anabolic agent used in male infertility treatment with the world number 29 insisting she was "astounded and shocked" by the result.

The International Tennis Federation (ITF) said Yastremska was positive for the banned mesterolone metabolite in an out-of-competition test conducted last November.

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SPORTS

SATURDAY JANUARY 9, 2021

## Last-Second Put-Back Lifts Celtics Past Heat

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Rookie guard Payton Pritchard scored on a put-back with two-tenths of a second left to give the Boston Celtics a 107-105 win over the host Miami Heat.

The 6-foot-2 Pritchard followed up on a missed drive by Marcus Smart. Jayson Tatum led Boston with a game-high 27 points. Jaylen Brown added 21 points for the Celtics, who were eliminated by the Heat in last season's Eastern Conference finals. Jimmy Butler scored a season-high 26 points to lead the Heat, who have alternated a loss with a win in each of their seven games this season. Robinson had 16 points, and Bam Adebayo was brilliant with 15 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds.

### Orlando Magic 105 - Cleveland Cavaliers 94

Terrence Ross scored 20 points and Dwayne Bacon added 19 to propel host Orlando to a victory over Cleveland.

Nikola Vucevic scored 16 points and Aaron Gordon had 15 points and eight rebounds for the Magic, who answered a modest two-game skid with back-to-back wins over the Cavaliers. Magic guard Markelle Fultz sustained a torn anterior cruciate ligament during the first quarter and is expected to miss the remainder of the season. Cleveland's Collin Sexton scored 21 points to set a franchise record of eight straight games with at least 20 points to start a season. The record was formerly held by LeBron James in 2004-05. Andre Drummond notched his eighth consecutive double-double after collecting 19 points and 15 rebounds for the Cavaliers, who have dropped four of their last five games.

### Charlotte Hornets 102 - Atlanta Hawks 94

Gordon Hayward scored a career-high 44 points as visiting Charlotte snapped a three-game losing streak with a win over Atlanta.

## Serena, Barty to Headline Australian Open Warm-Up Tournaments

LONDON (Dispatches) - World number one Ashleigh Barty and 23-time Grand Slam champion Serena Williams will spearhead the two WTA tournaments in Melbourne ahead of the Australian Open, with the top 32-ranked women split evenly across the simultaneous events, organizers said Thursday.

The onslaught of Covid-19 has forced a radical change to how the early 2021 tennis season will look, with the Australian Open pushed back three weeks to February 8.

Players will arrive in Australia from January 15 and undergo a mandatory two-week quarantine before two WTA 500 and two ATP 250 events are held alongside the ATP Cup, all at Melbourne Park.

Organizers have branded it the Melbourne Summer Series and named each tournament after areas of Victoria state.

That will see the women play the Gipsland Trophy and Yarra Valley Classic from January 31-February 6, marking Barty's first appearance in 11 months after opting out of the US and European swing last year over coronavirus fears.

As well as Williams, the likes of world number two Simona Halep, defending Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin and previous Australian Open winners Naomi Osaka, Victoria Azarenka and Angelique Kerber will take part.

The leading men's stars, including Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal, will compete in the 12-team ATP Cup, which will be run at the same time and at the same venue.

Those that didn't qualify will play in two ATP 250 tournaments -- the Great Ocean Road Open and Murray River Open, featuring top names including David Goffin, Stan Wawrinka, Grigor Dimitrov and Nick Kyrgios.

"There's no doubt this will be an historic week of tennis, and is the biggest-ever Australian Open lead-in week we have seen," said Tennis Australia's major events chief Cameron Pearson.

"While we know the circumstances are unique this year, it is a huge coup to secure such strong playing fields."



Hunter added 17. Clint Capela had a season-high 19 rebounds.

### Indiana Pacers 114 - Houston Rockets 107

Malcolm Brogdon scored a career-high 35 points and Myles Turner recorded eight blocked shots as Indiana held on for a victory over Houston at Indianapolis.

Brogdon added seven assists and three steals in 39 minutes. He recorded just one turnover. Domantas Sabonis added his eighth double-double with 22 points and 12 rebounds. Justin Holiday scored 20 off the Indiana bench while Victor Oladipo totaled 18 points and nine boards.

### Philadelphia 76ers 141 - Washington Wizards 136

Joel Embiid scored 38 points and hit all 13 of his free throws to lift host Philadelphia past Washington.

Seth Curry added 28 points to help offset a career-high 60 by Bradley Beal as the Sixers won their fifth in a row overall and their 20th straight at home. The Sixers have won seven of eight to open the season, and they sport the best record in the league.

### New York Knicks 112 - Utah Jazz 100

Austin Rivers scored 14 consecutive points late in the fourth quarter for New York, which continued its resurgence by overcoming an 18-point second-quarter deficit to beat visiting Utah.

The comeback win was the second straight for the Knicks, who trailed by 15 points in the third quarter Monday before beating the Atlanta Hawks. It is the first time New York has overcome 15-point deficits in back-to-back wins since victories over the Indiana Pacers and Charlotte Hornets on Nov. 5-7, 2017.

## Man Utd Complete Signing Of Amad Diallo

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United announced on Thursday they had completed the transfer of Ivorian winger Amad Diallo from Serie A side Atalanta.

The 18-year-old has signed a contract at Old Trafford until 2025, with the option of an extra year.

The agreement between the clubs was first announced on October 5 but the transfer was subject to a medical, work-permit and personal terms. These steps have now been completed and an application has been made for a visa. Once this has been issued, Diallo will be cleared to travel to Manchester.

Diallo made a total of five senior appearances for Atalanta and scored one goal.

United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said the teenager had been on the club's radar for a number of years.

"Manchester United has such a proud history of developing young players and everything is in place to enable Amad to reach his potential here," he said. "It will take time for him to adapt but his speed, vision and fantastic dribbling ability will stand him in good stead to make the transition. He is a player with all of the raw attributes that are needed to be an important player for Manchester United in the years to come."

Diallo said the move was "a dream come true". "I have had time to prepare for this move, both physically and mentally, and I have worked really hard to be ready to make the step up to this amazing club," he added.

## Arsenal Take Out £120m UK Gov't Virus Loan



LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal have taken out a short-term £120 million loan (\$163 million, 133 million euros) from the British government to help them cope with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the Premier League club announced Thursday.

In August of last year, the Gunners announced plans to make 55 posts in their staff redundant because of the financial hit the north London side had suffered as a result of Covid-19.

At that stage, the bulk of the club's players had agreed to a 12.5 percent pay cut from their largely lucrative pay packets in a bid to help other Arsenal staff retain their jobs.

Thursday saw the club confirm they were utilising a scheme from the Bank of England, the national central bank, to bolster their revenue at a time when matches at their Emirates

Stadium are again being played behind closed doors amid a fresh country-wide lockdown. "As we continue to work through the implications of the global pandemic on our finances, we can confirm today that the club has met the criteria set by the Bank of England for the Covid Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF)," said an Arsenal statement.

"As a result, we are taking a short-term £120 million loan through this facility to partially assist in managing the impact of the revenue losses attributable to the pandemic. This is a similar approach to that taken by a wide variety of major organisations across many industries including sport, and is repayable in May 2021.

"The CCFF is designed to provide short-term finance at commercial rates during the pandemic to companies that have strong investment ratings and which make significant contributions to the British economy."

Arsenal's statement added that the loan was in addition to the extra financial support the club was receiving from owner Stan Kroenke, a US-based sports entrepreneur.

## Juventus End AC Milan's 27-Game Unbeaten Run in Serie A

ROME (Dispatches) - Italian champions Juventus inflicted a first league defeat of the season on Serie A leaders AC Milan, ending their 27-match unbeaten run with a 3-1 win.

Stefano Pioli's side maintained their one-point advantage over city rivals Inter Milan who missed a chance to go top with a 2-1 loss at Sampdoria.

AC Milan had been unbeaten since before the coronavirus lockdown last March, with a run of 12 matches without defeat to complete last season where they finished sixth, and 15 games this campaign.

Federico Chiesa bagged his first brace for the champions, scoring on 18 and 62 minutes in the San Siro with Weston McKennie getting a third with quarter of an hour to go.

Davide Calabria had pulled a goal back before the break to level for Milan who were playing without injured star Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

The hosts had been hit hours before kick-off with the news that forward Ante Rebic and midfielder Rade Krunic had tested positive for Covid-19.

The absence of the pair was a blow for the side already without their top scorer Ibrahimovic for an eighth league game with Ismael Bennacer and Alexis Saelemaekers also out and Sandro Tonali suspended. Meanwhile Inter Milan missed a chance to move top of Serie A with a 2-1 defeat at Sampdoria which ended their eight-match winning streak.

Alexis Sanchez missed an early penalty for Antonio Conte's side who were tripped up by goals from former Inter players Antonio Candreva and Keita Balde.



## City Win Manchester Derby to Reach League Cup Final

MANCHESTER (Reuters) - Manchester City reached their fourth straight League Cup final as second-half goals from John Stones and Fernandinho gave Pep Guardiola's side a 2-0 win over Manchester United in Wednesday's semi-final at Old Trafford.

City will meet Jose Mourinho's Tottenham Hotspur at Wembley in the April 25 final as they seek their fourth League Cup triumph in a row.

In a frantic opening to the game, both teams had efforts ruled out for offside with Stones turning the ball into his own net but being saved by the flag and Ilkay Gundogan converting a low ball in from Phil Foden but, again, the attempt was rightly ruled out.

Kevin De Bruyne struck the post with a thundering drive from outside the box before Foden also put the ball in the net for City but the visitors were foiled by offside once again. It was an open and entertaining game with City looking sharper but United competitive as they sought revenge for last year's defeat by their neighbors at the same stage of the competition.

City went ahead five minutes after the break when Foden whipped in a free kick from the left through a crowded box and defender Stones bundled a cross home at the back post, the ball going in off his thigh.

United keeper Dean Henderson produced a brilliant save to tip over a strike from Riyad Mahrez, after the Algerian had burst forward from the halfway line.

Fernandinho made sure of the win seven minutes from time with a stunning volley as he pounced on a headed clearance from Aaron Wan-Bissaka.

