

The Islamic Republic of Iran Navy  
Will Stage a Two-Day Missile  
Exercise in the Oman Sea With the  
Support of Other Military Forces  
Using All Military Equipment  
In Konarak Coastline

# IRAN NEWS

Spokeswoman to Ministry of  
Health Sima Sadat Lari on  
Tuesday Announced 92 More  
Iranians Died Due to Coronavirus  
On the Past 24 Hours as the Death  
Toll Reached 56,360

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**2 DOMESTIC**

Macro, Strategic Issues  
Must Be Planned Away  
From Tension

> SEE PAGE 2



**3 DOMESTIC**

Tehran, Baghdad Resolved  
To Meet \$20b Trade Target

> SEE PAGE 3



**4 INTERNATIONAL**

FBI Warns of Plans for  
Nationwide Armed Protests  
Ahead of Biden's Inauguration

> SEE PAGE 4



**8 SPORTS**

Kawhi Leonard Hits  
Milestone in Clippers Win

> SEE PAGE 8



## Iran Not to Renegotiate On Terms of Nuclear Deal

TEHRAN (MNA) - Foreign Minister said that the U.S. participation in JCPOA is only useful if it has economic benefits for Iran, adding that the U.S. and UK must know that Iran will not renegotiate on terms of the Nuclear Deal.

Mohammad Javad Zarif made the remarks on Tuesday, noting that after the US withdrawal from the Nuclear Deal, Washington reimposed sanctions against the Islamic Republic. He added that the U.S. return to the JCPOA is not sufficient under these circumstances and the move must bring economic benefit for Iran.

"Lifting sanctions is the priority for the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and Iranian officials. After that, the issue of U.S. return to the Nuclear Deal will be considered," he noted.

He went on to say that the US and Europe must take practical steps to normalize Iran's economic relations with the world; That is, resolving all the issues caused by the U.S. that have limited economic ties with Iran.

According to Zarif, the U.S. and Europe did not fulfill their commitment regarding the JCPOA, therefore, the Islamic Republic reduced its obligations under the deal by initiating uranium enrichment up to 20 percent.

See Page 7

## Any Invasion Against Iran Will Face Harsh Response

TEHRAN (MNA) - The commander of Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy said his forces are fully prepared to defend the Iranian borders and territorial integrity, warning any threat or aggression against Iran will face a harsh response.

Rear-Admiral Alireza Tangsiri made the remarks on the 5th anniversary of capturing 10 American marines by the IRGC Navy near the Iranian Farsi Island.

"Five years ago two American boats carrying ten marines heading for Bahrain approached the five-mile distance of Iran's Farsi Island on their way, which is within the territorial waters of the Islamic Republic, and although there were two American and French supercarriers and five other destroyers in the region, the intruding U.S. boats were seized by the brave Guard's naval forces," Farsi quoted Tangsiri as saying.

On January 12, 2016, the IRGC seized two U.S. Navy boats and detained ten U.S. marines on board on Farsi Island in the Persian Gulf. The marines were captured for illegally entering into Iranian territorial waters. The IRGC freed the marines one day later.

See Page 7

## Iran Exporting Heavy Water To Eight Countries



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's nuclear spokesman says the country is currently producing enough heavy water inside the country, and is even exporting the excess quantities to eight countries.

Behrouz Kamalvandi, the spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), said the country must have its own nuclear power plants, and produce the fuel required for those plants, as well as the nuclear medicine it needs.

Speaking in a televised interview on Monday evening, Kamalvandi said the country has never stopped producing heavy water, and has made good progress so far in this regard.

"Despite the ten- or eight-year restrictions on our program imposed by the JCPOA (the 2015 nuclear deal), they will be ultimately lifted as time goes by, and we will have no limit by the tenth year," he noted, referring to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

He said after the conclusion of the nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers, some countries were even willing to invest in production of the fuel required for Iranian nuclear power plants inside the country, but the Americans prevented them from doing so.

U.S. President Donald Trump, a hawkish critic of the landmark nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers - the United States, Britain, France, China, Russia and Germany - unilaterally withdrew Washington from the agreement in May 2018, and unleashed the "toughest ever" sanctions against the Islamic Republic in defiance of global criticism.

Iran took five steps in scaling back its obligations, among them abandoning operational limitations on its nuclear industry, including with regard to the capacity and level of uranium enrichment.

Meanwhile, the Council of the European Union released a statement on Monday to express its "support to intensive diplomacy with the goal of facilitating a US return to the JCPOA and Iran's return to full JCPOA implementation."

"The EU reiterates its strong commitment to and continued support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The JCPOA is a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture and an achievement of multilateral diplomacy, endorsed unanimously by the UN Security Council through resolution 2231," it said.

The head of the UN nuclear agency says the revival of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal must happen within the coming weeks.

"We express support for the ongoing diplomatic efforts in the framework of the Joint Commission, with the EU High Representative as its coordinator, to ensure full JCPOA implementation," the EU Council said.

"We welcome President-elect Biden's positive statements on the JCPOA, and look forward to working with the incoming US-Administration," the statement added.

## Seoul's Freezing of Tehran's Assets Damages South Korea's Image

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has blasted South Korea for keeping the Iranian assets frozen in its banks citing the U.S. sanctions, saying the issue has seriously damaged the East Asian country's image among Iranian people.

Zarif made the remarks in a Monday meeting with First Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Korea Choi Jong Kun, who is heading a delegation of South Korean officials in a trip to Tehran to address the problems in the bilateral relations, particularly the Iranian frozen assets in South Korea.

In the meeting, Foreign Minister Zarif described the blocking of Iranian currency assets in the South Korean banks as the biggest obstacle to the expansion of relations between Tehran and Seoul in the current circumstances.

The Iranian minister also called on the government of South Korea to take the necessary measures to remove those obstacles immediately, stressing that the top priority in the relations between the two countries at present is Iran's access to those assets, considering the health and economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic.

The South Korean banks' illegal move to freeze the assets has had an extremely adverse effect on the Iranian public opinion and views of people about South Korea and has seriously damaged the image of that country, Foreign Minister Zarif said, adding that's why the representatives of people in the Iranian Parliament have reassessed their legal authority to address the case and insist that the problem must be resolved immediately.

For his part, Choi Jong Kun reaffirmed South Korea's resolve to settle the problem, pledging that Seoul will do its utmost to pave the way for Tehran's access to the financial resources. He also touched on the seizure of a South Korean vessel in the Persian Gulf, urging efforts to expedite the settlement of the issue.

In response, Foreign Minister Zarif emphasized that the South Korean tanker has been captured because of polluting the Persian Gulf waters. Therefore, the seizure of the Korean vessel is a completely technical issue which is being addressed within the framework of legal and judicial regulations, Foreign Minister Zarif underlined, saying the administration is naturally unable to interfere in the judicial processes.

## ViewPoint By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

### Much Fuss About Rejecting Fishy Vaccine

On Friday, January 8, and on the occasion of the anniversary of the people of Qom's uprising against the oppressive Pahlavi regime and in a cogent, detailed and attractive speech the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei touched upon tens of political, social and economic issues like health and Coronavirus-related hygiene.

One of the issues that the Supreme Leader touched upon it and specified everyone's duty was this point "Importing American or English vaccines to the country is prohibited." Hereby I quote the exact remarks of the esteemed leader and then I draw the conclusion. He said, "The last part of my speech is about the coronavirus. First of all the vaccine which was prepared domestically is a source of dignity and pride for the country. This should not be denied. This is the source of pride for the country. In one case, they are testing a vaccine on human beings and it has proven to be successful and it should not be denied. Some people are used to deny all of our capabilities. When these centrifuges were made, some of the country's scientific elites wrote a letter where they warned us not to be deceived because we are unable to do it. But you saw the result later. The same happened regarding our progress in the stem cell science. When this great achievement happened, some used to send messages to tell us not to believe this achievement. Some people told me that it is not acceptable. But we believed and progressed ten times more. And now COVID-19 vaccine is in human trial stage and God willing it will become more complete and it has been successful till now and will be successful from now on."

The Supreme Leader added, "I thank the Health Ministry and all involved in the production of this vaccine. Importing American or English vaccines to the country is prohibited. If the Americans had been able to produce a vaccine, this Corona disaster would not have occurred in their own country. They are not trustworthy or reliable. I don't know, perhaps they wish to test a vaccine on other nations to see if it works or not. And of course, I do not trust the French either. The reason is their history in giving us contaminated blood [France's HIV-tainted blood supplies]." See Page 7

## New Warships to Join Iranian Navy Fleet

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Iranian Navy's fleet in the Sea of Oman will take delivery of a new homegrown helicopter carrier as well as a missile-launching warship.

The homegrown missile-launching corvette would enhance the Navy's combat capabilities in the country's southern waters. 'Zerh' (meaning 'Armor' in Persian) missile launcher is one of the country's powerful vessels with high speed and maneuverability. It is equipped with advanced automatic missiles and artillery.

The vessel is categorized in Iran's Paykan-class rocket launching warships, all components of which have been manufactured by the Iranian Navy's experts. The warship has passed all its coastal and maritime tests and is fully prepared to embark on missions.

The Iranian Navy will also unveil a helicopter carrier dubbed 'Malcan' that has been developed by Iranian experts of the Navy. The warship will the naval fleet of the southern coasts at the order of Chief of Staff of Iranian Armed Forces Major General Bagheri. According to Navy Commander Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi, other vessels in the same class will be produced in the coming years.

In recent years, Iran's naval forces have increased their presence in high seas to secure naval routes and protect vessels against pirate attacks. The Iranian Navy dispatches flotillas, involving homegrown naval gear, to the international waters on a routine basis.

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## Zarif Condolences With Indonesia Over Deadly Plane Crash

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Monday expressed his deep condolences with Indonesian government and people over the deadly plane crash.

Following the crash of an Indonesian passenger plane, which resulted in the deaths of all the crew members and passengers, Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif in a telephone conversation with his Indonesian counterpart expressed his country's sympathy with the Indonesian government, people and families of the victims.

A passenger jet carrying more than 60 people crashed into the Java Sea on Saturday, minutes after taking off from the Indonesian capital, Jakarta.

## Macro, Strategic Issues Must Be Planned Away From tension

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Speaking at the 166th meeting of the government's economic coordination headquarters, President Rouhani stressed the need to increase interaction between the government and parliament and pay attention to the country's realities in the budget bill, saying that the country's macro and strategic issues should be kept away from tensions and should not be politicized.

Hassan Rouhani also stated that food security is one of the pillars of sustainable development of countries and described the plan to develop oilseed cultivation as examples of achieving a 'Surge in Production', a national self-sufficiency step to ensure the country's food security.

Rouhani added: "Due to the cruel sanctions of the enemies, by order of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, we have hugely increased the area under oilseeds, because the cultivation of oilseeds is essential according to the needs of the country."

He also appreciated extensive efforts by knowledge-based companies and all other



institutions to develop an Iranian coronavirus vaccine.

President Hassan Rouhani said the government seeks to procure and produce a safe vaccine.

Hence, he added, the government supports all knowledge-based firms and centres which are trying to develop and purchase vaccines for the COVID-19 virus.

"The government's top priority is to secure people's health. So, among the key objectives in the fight against this virus is to provide, buy and produce a safe vaccine for coronavirus," the president said.

"The government will stand by knowledge-based companies and the executive committee tasked with producing a vaccine for coronavirus, and will support all scientists working in this field to produce a safe vaccine," he noted.

In the session, it was decided that the Ministry of Jihad and Agriculture's plan be finalized and be given priority to the country's infrastructure plans.

## \$7b of Iranian Resources Frozen in Korean Banks

TEHRAN (MNA) – Chairman of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations said that 7 billion dollars of Iranian financial resources have been taken hostage by Korean banks.

Kamal Kharrazi made the remarks in a meeting with South Korean Deputy Foreign Minister Choi Jong-Kun on Monday.

He further stressed the significance of relations between Tehran and Seoul and expressed hope that both countries adopt necessary measures to expand bilateral ties.

Kharrazi strongly criticized Seoul's approach regarding U.S. sanctions against Tehran and noted that 7 billion dollars of Iranian financial resources have been taken hostage by Korean banks, adding that Iran is not even able to use the resources to buy medicine.

He went on to say that sanctions have made Iran self-sufficient in many fields including the production of household appliances and Korean companies have missed good opportunities in Iran.

According to Kharrazi, the seizure of the Korean tanker is not a political issue and is solely a technical and legal matter and the case has been handed to the judiciary for further investigation.

Heading a high-ranking delegation, the South Korean diplomat arrived in Tehran on Sunday.

The diplomat will reportedly join a working delegation that arrived in Tehran earlier on Thursday to negotiate with the Iranian authorities for the release of the Korean sailors and the detained ship, Yonhap news agency reported.

## Iranian Diplomat, UN Envoy Discuss Syria Developments

TEHRAN (IFP) - United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen has held talks with Ali-Asghar Khajai, a senior assistant to Iran's foreign minister in special political affairs.

During the Monday talks, the two sides discussed the latest developments pertaining to Syria, including the upcoming meeting of the Syrian Constitutional Committee, developments related to the Astana talks and an escalation of activities by the ISIS terrorist group in Syria.

They also reviewed the achievements of the committee in 2020, and underlined the need for the committee to keep moving forward in the year 2021.

The two officials further expressed their support for holding a fifth meeting of the committee slated to be held in late January in Geneva.

Pedersen and Khajai also voiced concern over the activities of terrorist groups, especially those of the ISIS, and stressed the need to keep fighting terror.

## Iran's Crude Steel Output Rises 13% in 11 Months

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Production of crude steel (steel ingot) in Iran has risen 13 percent during January-November, 2020, according to a report released by the World Steel Association (WSA).

It is while the crude steel output in the world has decreased 1.3 percent in the mentioned time span, IRNA reported.

The WSA's report said that Iran has produced 26.369 million tons of crude steel during the 11-month period of 2020, while the figure was 23 million tons in the same time span of 2019.

The country's monthly crude steel output stood at 2.575 million tons in November 2020, rising 14 percent from 2.256 million tons in November 2019.

Meanwhile, the recent data released by the Iranian sources show that production of steel ingot in the country has increased 8.3 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 20, 2020) compared to the same period of time in the past year.

Over 21.65 million tons of steel ingot was produced during the nine-month period of the present year, while the figure was 19.98 million tons in the same time span of the previous year.

Production of steel ingot in Iran is expected to surpass 30 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20), Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Darioush Esmaili has announced.

Saying that Iran is currently the world's 10th biggest steel producer, the official underscored that the country is planning to rise to 8th place by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (starts in March 2025).

## Iran Improving Quality of Strategic Defense Equipment



TEHRAN (MNA) – Defense Minister Hatami announced that in order to increase Iran's deterrent power, Armed Forces improve the quality of strategic defense equipment.

Arrogant powers resorted to all tools such as the imposed war, the cruel sanctions, and finally the assassination of Iranian scientists so as to achieve their sinister goals of creating a barrier against the growth of the Islamic Revolution in the region and the world, Brigadier General Amir Hatami said in a ceremony on Tuesday.

He stated that all plots and conspiracies of the enemies against the Islamic Republic have failed, noting that their main goal is to weaken Iran through sanctions and to reduce its missile programs.

Military authority and defense power in the Islamic Republic are important factors due to the geopolitical and strategic position of Iran as well as the existence of numerous fuel resources, therefore the country's military power in the region must be increased day by day.

Stating that the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran are among the best armies in the world, the Defense Minister noted, "We increase the deterrent power of the country through improving the quality of our strategic defense equipment, speeding up the Time to Market (TTM) of the products and reducing the production costs."

Elsewhere in his remarks, he hailed the role of Martyr General Soleimani in maintaining the security of the region, saying, the enemies sought to dominate the region through creating ISIL terrorists, however, Martyr Soleimani, thwarted the enemies' sinister plots by creating unity and cohesion in the region.

## Government Supports Stock Market

TEHRAN (MNA) - First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri stressed that the stock market is an independent body, but the government always supports it.

The government has a duty to support the stock market and do its best to address the concerns of shareholders and prevent them from being harmed, the official emphasized.

"The government does not want and should not interfere in the rules, regulations and mechanisms of the stock market, at the same time, people should pay attention to its economic mechanisms in order to enter this market and pay attention to the opinions and advice of experts in this due", Jahangiri noted.

Stating that the stock market mechanism is a purely economic mechanism, the official said: "The decisions of the Supreme National Security Council are valid for the government and the government's mission at this time is to support these decisions and rational methods because at the current stage the stock market has shown that it can be a good place to finance public and private enterprises."

Last week, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjasand said that the stock market is now on the right track and has reached a stage that can be trusted in terms of performance.

## Renegotiation of Nuclear Deal out of Question

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A high-ranking Iranian official has dismissed the possibility of any renegotiation of the 2015 landmark nuclear pact signed between Tehran and six major world states, stressing that the other sides only need to fulfill its commitments and there is no need for further talks.

"Renegotiation of the JCPOA is out of the question, as Iran, China and Russia have [already] expressed their opposition," Ali Rabiei, the administration's spokesman, said at his weekly presser on Tuesday, using the abbreviation for the official title of the Iran deal -- the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

He reminded the European signatories to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action -- France, Germany and the UK (E3) -- that a return to their commitments under the nuclear agreement did not require any dialogue.

The parties, he said, could simply honor the JCPOA without any need for new negotiations in case the

incoming administration of US President-elect Joe Biden repealed the policies of its predecessor.

Meanwhile, Russia's Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov called on Iran and the E3 to put aside their existing differences, and try to resolve the lingering issues.

"For a long time E-3, on the one hand, and Iran, on the other, refer to Dispute Resolution Mechanism. It is counterproductive. All of us are in one boat. We should focus on how to settle the existing problems and should not create new ones. This applies to all JCPOA participants," he wrote in a post published on his official Twitter page on Tuesday.

The Parliament speaker said the sanctions are lifted only when Iran can sell its oil and receive the money to meet the nation's needs. He also welcomed efforts aimed at "facilitating a US return to the JCPOA and Iran's return to full JCPOA implementation."

## Snapback Mechanism Must Be Omitted in Future

TEHRAN (MNA) – Adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution for International Affairs said that the snapback mechanism must be omitted as an irrational term in any possible negotiations.

Stating that in the conditional approval of the JCPOA, Leader of the Islamic Revolution had set the conditions and requirements for implementation that some of these conditions were not fulfilled, Ali Akbar Velayati in an interview with KHAMENEI.RI said, "What the Leader identified, some of it was done and some of it was not done."

"However, if those conditions had been met, the course of events in relation to nuclear activities would have been different," he added.

Referring to the Leader's dissatisfaction with the inclusion of the snapback mechanism in the JCPOA, Velayati said, "From the beginning, the Leader was not satisfied with the issue of the snapback mechanism, and it was done against his will."

"The snapback mechanism must be omitted as an irrational term in any possible future negotiations," he stressed.

## Kabul Calls for Continuing Tehran Key Role in Peace Talks

TEHRAN (MNA) – Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Mohammad Hanif Atmar called for the continuation of the positive and constructive role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Afghan peace talks.

In a meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Afghanistan Bahador Aminian in the capital Kabul on Tue., the Afghan foreign minister pointed to the positive and constructive role of Iran in ensuring security and creating regional consensus and called for the continuation of Tehran's key role in the peace process in Afghanistan.

For this reason, Afghan Foreign Ministry issued a statement and thanked Islamic Republic of Iran for its cooperation and collaboration in restoration of peace in Afghanistan.

In this meeting, the two sides expressed their readiness to hold Sixth Meeting of Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation and finalize the comprehensive

cooperation document between Iran and Afghanistan.

In addition, the two sides emphasized strengthening and expanding political, economic, and trade relations between the two countries.

Afghan foreign minister, for his part, appreciated Iran's positive and constructive role in the Afghan peace process and added that Islamic Republic of Iran has encouraged Taliban, as an influential group in the country's security, to join the peace talks.

The second round of peace talks between the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban group began in the Qatari capital Doha.

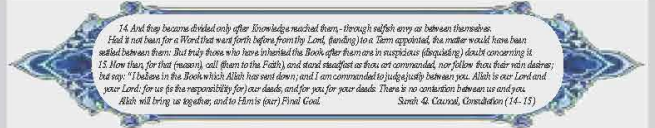
The Afghan peace talks between Afghan government and the Taliban group started on Sept. 12, 2020 with the participation of a number of foreign ministers and representatives of international organizations, which have so far only managed to agree on the agenda of the talks.





## PRAYER TIME

|                          |       |
|--------------------------|-------|
| ■ Noon (Zohr)            | 12:13 |
| ■ Evening (Maghreb)      | 17:31 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr) | 05:45 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Sunrise     | 07:14 |



## Tehran, Baghdad Resolved To Meet \$20b Trade Target

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian has highlighted Tehran and Baghdad's determination to raise the value of annual trade exchanges to \$20 billion, pointing to the major role that the private sectors and a joint investment fund could play in working towards that goal.

Delivering a speech to Iran-Iraq Economic Conference on Tuesday, Ardakanian said the main and common target of the two neighbors at the level of political leaders is to increase the value of annual bilateral trade exchanges to \$20 billion.

The energy minister explained that achievement of the trade target requires plans to allow the private sector to get involved in the economic activities freely, remove the trade obstacles, set up a joint investment fund, and settle the problems arising in the transportation industry, standard and customs issues, or the preferential trade arrangements.

The Iranian Energy Ministry has been tasked three months ago with handling the affairs of Iran-Iraq Economic Cooperation Joint Commission, he noted, saying the first successful plan was to convene the commission after six years.

"The main purpose of the fourth meeting of the Economic Cooperation Joint Commission is to create facilities for the private sectors in the trade and economic activities," the minister said, adding that there are also plans to strengthen cooperation between the state-run organizations.

Ardakanian further expressed hope that negotiations among the participants in the conference, held on January 12 and 13 within the framework of four expert sub-committees on technical and engineering services, consular affairs, monetary and banking issues, and trade affairs, would result in agreements.



The Iranian minister also stressed the need to expedite the implementation of joint projects in the energy and transportation industries, customs affairs, as well as construction and health sectors, and warned the state organizations to avoid the obstructive and bureaucratic obstacles that may impede the activities of private sectors.

At the conclusion of the conference, Ardakanian and Iraqi Trade Minister Alla Ahmed Hassan visited an exhibition of Iranian and Iraqi products, held at the Energy Ministry of Iran.

The 4th session of Iran-Iraq Economic Cooperation Joint Commission kicked off on Tuesday morning, attended by high-ranking officials and business people from the two countries.

The commission is going to weigh plans for stronger cooperation in various sectors with an eye to the geographical, cultural and religious commonalities between the two Muslim neighbors.

Participants in the meeting are also planned to discuss the ways to boost economic ties, promote exports, and evaluate the markets for optimum productivity in various sectors, such as the transportation and energy industries, tourism sector, construction projects, and water and electricity industries.

## Int'l Water, Electricity Exhibitions Kick Off in Tehran

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iranian Minister of Energy Reza Ardakanian has inaugurated the 20th edition of Iran International Water and Waste Water Exhibition (WATEX 2021) and the 16th Iran International Electricity Exhibition (IEE 2021) in Tehran.

The two events were opened at Tehran's international fairground in a ceremony attended by Ardakanian, Iraqi Trade Minister Alla Ahmed Hassan and several other foreign guests.

Some 275 Iranian and foreign companies are taking part in the WATEX 2021 and IEE 2021, which are held in compliance with health protocols.

The exhibitions will remain open until January 15, 2021, from 9 am to 5 pm only to water and electricity professionals and experts as well as industry managers and economic activists.

## Iranian Trade House To Open in Azerbaijan

TEHRAN (Trend) - The establishment of the Iranian Trade House in Azerbaijan will give an impetus to the more effective establishment of the activity of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Chamber of Commerce, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Azerbaijan Seyid Abbas Mousavi said.

Mousavi made the remark at the meeting with the President of the National Confederation of Organizations of Entrepreneurs (Employers) of Azerbaijan Mammad Musayev, Trend reports referring to the Confederation.

"Before the visit to Azerbaijan, the ambassador visited four Iranian regions bordering with Azerbaijan, met with entrepreneurs, heads of chambers of commerce and industry, as well as with the management of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture," Mousavi said.

"Iranian entrepreneurs have expressed interest in establishing ties with Azerbaijan," the ambassador added.

At the same time, Mousavi stressed that the meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Commission, which will be held in Tehran on January 18-19, 2021, will also contribute to the development of economic ties.

"The Tabriz Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture is interested in holding a joint video conference with the Confederation," the ambassador said.

## Necessity for Synergy Among Developmental Organizations in Industry



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade and head of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) Mr. Mohsen Salehi Nia in the introduction ceremony of new head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) announced readiness of IDRO for cooperation with this organization in the common fields.

Salehi Nia emphasized the interaction among developmental organizations subset of the ministry with the goal for synergy with capacities and capabilities, noting that this synergy causes reinforcement of the components of the provision chain and development of facilitator centers in the small, medium and big industries.

He also called reinforcing value chain and using collective power and networking of small industry units as an important step in providing the needs of big industries in the country.

Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade in a decree appointed the former deputy governor on economic affairs of Razavi Khorasan Provincial Mr. Ali Rasoulzadeh as the new CEO of ISIPO.

In the ceremony, Mr. Salehi Nia also hailed the services of the outgoing CEO of ISIPO.

## Kyrgyzstan Eager for Transit of Goods Via Iran Southern Ports

TEHRAN (MNA) - Kyrgyzstan is keen on using Iran's southern ports for transiting commodities, the Kirgiz Ambassador to Tehran Avazbek Abdrazakov said.

Abdrazakov made the remarks in a meeting

with Managing Director of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) Mohammad Rastad on Tuesday.

In the meeting, the ambassador noted that due to the closure of the border between China and Kyrgyzstan,

the transit of goods through the southern ports of Iran to the Sarakhs-Kyrgyzstan border in the northeastern Iranian province of Khorasan Razavi is of considerable importance and it is hoped that this capacity can be used. Rastad for his part said Iran is ready to promote its ports, maritime, and training capacities in order to develop mutual cooperation with Kyrgyzstan.

"Thanks to the active presence of operators and suitable equipment in the north and south of Iran, it will be possible to present services with the highest quality and the least cost," Rastad said.

Referring to the development of the strategic port of Chabahar and the launch of the Zahedan-Chabahar railway

## National Medal of Honor In Exports Goes to ESCO

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - During the ceremony of honoring the top and exemplary exporters of the country which was held on Sunday in presence of First Vice-President Eshaq Jahangiri, Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) was awarded with national Medal of Honor as the top exporter of the year.

The CEO of Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) Eng. Manour Yazdizadeh received the special plaque and statue of the top exporter award which was given by the first vice-president.

Reacting to this big achievement, Mr. Yazdizadeh felicitated all endeavors of ESCO and the national steel industry for this valuable achievement and enumerated the reasons for this selection and achievement. Continuity in growth of exports, the increase in the number of targeted export markets, increase in exports of steel production to the countries in the region, Africa, Southeast Asia, keeping the top quality of the products, 100 percent repatriation of the resulted forex from exports to the national economic cycle, registering the universal brand and logo of the company ESCO and ZOBESCO were the main factors for this success, he added.

He then pointed to the growth in production of construction products in the country, saying that ESCO has two major goals in sight which include production of new industrial products like production of national rail and expansion of rail network and also expansion of export markets that in both of them all endeavors of ESCO play key factors and currently exports of rail have begun while the country was exporter of it till last year.

On the hurdles in way of exports, he said the company faces challenges in this regard which are due to cruel sanctions of the U.S. and some domestic problems, expressing hope that due to cooperation of officials, those hurdles would be removed and the country once again would witness economic boom. ESCO has won this award seven times and in 2014 it also won the distinguished exporter award.



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Ten Thousand Billion Tomans

## The Foundation of Development Projects of Shahr Babak Copper complex started



According to the public relations of Shahr Babak Copper Complex, the Minister of SAMT, Kerman Governor, the CEO of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company, Mostafa Reza Hosseini, the representative of Shahr Babak people in the Islamic Consultative Assembly and officials were present. They inaugurated the Shahr Babak copper complex, the construction of several copper projects with a credit of more than ten thousand billion tomans. In this ceremony, the beginning of projects including Miduk 2 concentrator, Khatunabad slag flotation plant, three low-grade soil processing plant, lime factory were announced. Also, the development project of Midouk copper mine, the project of transferring Persian Gulf water to Shahr-e Babak, the project of connecting Khatunabad factory to the country's railway network and the project of reviving the 10,000-seat Sardar Delha stadium were started. The mining transport fleet will also be modernized. Implementation of these 9 mining industrial projects in Shahr Babak city can create nearly 1000 job opportunities.



## Portugal's President Tests Positive for Covid-19

LISBON (Dispatches) - Portugal's President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa has tested positive for coronavirus and cancelled all public engagements, his office announced late Monday just two weeks before a presidential election he is expected to win.

The 72-year-old head of state was "asymptomatic" and isolating in the presidential palace in Lisbon, his office said in a statement. Last Wednesday, he had spent a few hours in "administrative isolation" after a member of his entourage tested positive, but the president then tested negative and had not been placed in quarantine because his contact with the person concerned had been considered "low risk".



## Malaysian King Declares State of Emergency

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) - Malaysia's king Tuesday declared a nationwide state of emergency to fight a coronavirus surge that is overwhelming hospitals, with critics charging it was a move by an unstable government to cling to power.

The announcement came a day after the prime minister introduced sweeping new curbs across much of the Southeast Asian nation, including the closure of most businesses, and warned the health system was "at breaking point".

Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah agreed to declare an emergency until August 1 following a request from Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin in a Monday meeting, the national palace said in a statement.



## FBI Warns of Plans for Nationwide Armed Protests Ahead of Biden's Inauguration



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The FBI has warned of armed protests being planned for Washington and all 50 U.S. state capitals in the run-up to President-elect Joe Biden's Jan. 20 inauguration, a federal law enforcement source said on Monday.

Threatened with more violence from outgoing President Donald Trump's supporters following last Wednesday's storming of the U.S. Capitol, the FBI issued warnings for next weekend that run at least until Inauguration Day, the source said.

In other steps to safeguard the U.S. capital, the National Guard was authorized to send up to 15,000 troops to Washington, and tourists were barred from visiting the Washington Monument until Jan. 24.

The chief of the National Guard Bureau, General Daniel Hokanson, told reporters he expected about 10,000 troops in Washington by Saturday to help provide security, logistics and communications.

He said the number could rise to 15,000 if requested by local authorities. At least one lawmaker asked the Pentagon to do more.

Senator Chris Murphy, who said he was sending a letter to the acting secretary of defense on Monday, said it was unclear if the National Guard would be sufficient to protect the nation's capital and that active-duty troops may be needed also.

"I'm not afraid of taking the oath outside," Biden told reporters in Newark, Delaware, referring to the traditional setting for the swearing-in ceremony on the Capitol grounds. But he said it was critically important that people "who engaged in sedition and threatened people's lives, defaced public property, caused great damage" be held accountable.

Biden's inaugural committee said on Monday the theme of the Jan. 20 ceremony would be "America United." Trump, who has sought unsuccessfully to overturn the Nov. 3 election results with false claims of widespread fraud, said last week he would not attend the ceremony, a decision the president-elect supported.

The Park Service said it would suspend tours of the Washington Monument, an obelisk honouring the country's first president, due to safety concerns from threats to disrupt the inauguration.

Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser called for the U.S. Interior Department to cancel public-gathering permits through Jan. 24. "This inaugural planning period has to be very different than all the others," she told reporters on Monday.

In a letter to acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf made public on Sunday, Bowser called for a fresh approach to security after what she called last week's "unprecedented terrorist attack."

## Putin Hosts Talks Between Azerbaijan, Armenia Leaders

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday brought together the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan for the first time since a war last year over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, in an effort to resolve problems that risk undermining the deal that ended the conflict.

A Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement in November halted the six-week conflict between Azeri and ethnic Armenian forces, locking in territorial gains for Azerbaijan.

But tensions persist, with low-level sporadic violence, prisoners of war still held by both sides, and ambiguity about how a prospective transport corridor through the region will work.

Putin said the ceasefire deal, which saw Moscow deploy peacekeepers, was being implemented without serious incident and the talks had been useful.

"We were able to agree and sign a joint declaration on developing the region," he said. "I'm talking about concrete steps to build economic links and to develop (transport) infrastructure projects."



## Turkey Says Maritime Talks with Greece to Resume

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey and Greece will resume the suspended exploratory talks about territorial claims in the Mediterranean Sea and other issues on January 25 in Istanbul, Turkey's foreign ministry said.

Plans for talks last year foundered after disagreement about a Turkish seismic exploration vessel deployed to disputed waters. The ship has since returned.

Ankara and Athens both said earlier on Monday that they were willing to resume the exploratory talks, which were suspended in 2016 after 60 rounds in 14 years. Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said his government would attend the talks.

"We seek a fertile and productive relationship with Turkey," he told reporters in Lisbon, saying officials would have to be in contact formally. "It's probably about time we stopped chat-chit-chatting and sat down and agreed on a date."

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu is likely to address the dispute and the new mediation efforts when he meets EU ambassadors in Ankara on Tuesday. He is also due to visit Brussels on January 21.

The two NATO military alliance members are at odds about the limits of their continental shelves, energy rights, air space and the status of some islands.

Their dispute threatened to spill into open conflict when Turkish and Greek warships collided in August while shadowing Turkey's Oruc Reis vessel as it surveyed for oil and gas in the waters in west of Cyprus.

European Union candidate Turkey claims gas resources in the Mediterranean that are also contested by Greece and Cyprus - a dispute that has fanned territorial disputes about maritime boundaries. Turkey rejects the maritime boundary claims of Greece and the Greek Cypriot administration, saying Ankara is in favour of resolving all issues through international law.

The EU has threatened Ankara with sanctions, including ones on arms exports, various times since August.

Turkey and Greece also staged rival military exercises with regional partners.

## Indonesian Divers Hunt for Crashed Plane's Black Boxes

JAKARTA (AFP) - Indonesian divers returned Tuesday to a wreckage-littered seabed off Jakarta in their hunt for the black boxes that will likely be key to unlocking the mystery of why a passenger jet carrying 62 people fell from the sky.

Some 3,600 personnel are taking part in the recovery effort, assisted by dozens of boats and helicopters flying over small islands off the capital's coast.

Underwater images from Indonesia's navy showed divers plumb the murky depths as they combed through twisted wreckage from the Sriwijaya Air Boeing 737-500, which plunged about 10,000 feet (3,000 metres) in less than a minute before slamming into the Java Sea Saturday. Authorities have so far been unable to explain why the 26-year-old plane crashed just four minutes after takeoff.

But they say they have the approximate location of the black boxes after picking up signals from the devices, which record information about the speed, altitude and direction of the plane as well as flight crew conversations.

Black box data helps explain nearly 90 percent of all crashes, according to aviation experts.

But the boxes could be hidden under layers of mud or plane wreckage in waters about 23 metres (75 feet) deep, and divers have to grapple with a strong current and poor weather. "They've got to go through garbage and other debris (on the seafloor) and the mud and visibility are also a challenge," Yusuf Latif, a spokesman for Indonesia's

search-and-rescue agency, said Tuesday.

The agency deployed a remotely operated vehicle to assist the divers, as investigators examined recovered parts of the wreckage at the port.

Scores of body bags filled with human remains were being taken to a police morgue where investigators hope to identify victims by matching fingerprints or DNA with distraught relatives.

Late Monday, authorities identified flight attendant Oldy Bisma, 29, as the first confirmed victim after matching fingerprints from a retrieved hand to those in a government identity database.

There were 10 children among the passengers on the half-full plane, which had experienced pilots at the controls as it left Jakarta bound for Pontianak city on Borneo island on a 90-minute flight.

National Transportation Safety Committee investigator Nurcahyo Utomo said Monday that the crew did not declare an emergency or report technical problems before its dive.

The available data suggested it was "most likely" the plane was intact when it hit the water Saturday, he added. The crash probe was likely to take months.

Aviation analysts said flight-tracking data showed the plane sharply deviated from its intended course before it went into a steep dive, with bad weather, pilot error and mechanical malfunction among the potential factors.



## Trump Administration Labels Cuba as State Sponsor of Terrorism

WASHINGTON (Dispatches)

The United States has designated Cuba as a "state sponsor of terrorism", US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced, the latest move in the final days of the Trump administration that observers say will complicate President-elect Joe Biden's foreign policy plans.

In a statement on Monday, Pompeo said the US was designating Cuba "for repeatedly providing support for acts of international terrorism in granting safe harbor to terrorists".

He also accused Cuba of asserting "malign interference in Venezuela and the rest of the Western Hemisphere".

"With this action, we will once again hold Cuba's government accountable and send a clear message: the Castro regime must end its support for international terrorism and subversion of U.S. justice," Pompeo said.

Biden, who is set to be inaugurated on January 20, plans to move Washington closer to normalised relations with Havana, Bloomberg reported earlier this month - including easing restrictions on travel, investment and remittances.

Biden served as vice president under then-President Barack Obama when the US and Cuba restored diplomatic relations in 2015.

Earlier that same year, Obama had removed Cuba from the US list of "state sponsors of terrorism" - a key step in the nations' ability to formally mend ties. But President Donald Trump's administration has applied pressure on the Cuban government and various industries in the country.

The U.S. recently added a Cuban bank to its restricted entities list, alleging that the financial institution had ties to the Cuban military and its profits helped fund the country's "interference" in Venezuela.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez rejected the US' "state sponsor of terrorism" designation on Monday, calling the move "hypocritical and cynical".

"The U.S. political opportunism is recognized by those who are honestly concerned about the scourge of terrorism and its victims," he tweeted.





**Shanon**  
(adviser)

**Parsian**

**Niavaran Apt (\$2800)**  
250sq.m, 3bdrs  
S/p, Sauna  
J, balcony  
marble fl  
fireplace  
pkg, & F.F

**Farmanieh Villa (\$7000)**  
2000sq.m  
5bdrs, S/p  
Sauna, J, pkg  
green yard  
balcony, & F.F

**Elahieh Apt (\$2400)**  
230sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, F.F

**Apt (\$2000)**  
Mahmoodieh  
160sq.m, 2bdrs  
S/p, S, J, pkg, & F.F

**Darrous Villa (\$2500)**  
700sq.m, 5bdrs, S/p, & yard

**Jordan Apt (\$1400)**  
130sq.m, 2bdrs, F.F

**Zaferanieh bldg (\$8000)**  
5storey, 15bdrs, & pkgs

**Gheitarieh (\$1800)**  
170sq.m, 3bdrs, & F.F

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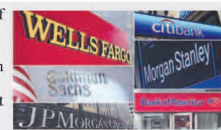
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## U.S. Bank Quarterly Profits Expected to Fall Again

NEW YORK (Reuters) - When the biggest U.S. banks begin reporting fourth-quarter results on Friday some of the headlines could show profits plunged by as much as 40% from a year earlier, before the pandemic struck. But investors will be focused on digging out clues to the earnings rebound expected in 2021. "You can look at Q4 as somewhat of a transition quarter as you put some of the challenges from 2020 in the rear-view mirror and look ahead to an improved 2021," said Barclays analyst Jason Goldberg. The pandemic caused interest rates to plunge and produced a record decline in the margin between what lenders charge for loans and what they pay for money, said Goldberg.



## Twitter Shares Dive 7% After Trump Account Suspension

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Shares of Twitter Inc slumped 7% on Monday, on course to knock off about \$2.5 billion from the market value of the social media company after it permanently suspended the account of U.S. President Donald Trump.

The slide came as some Republicans hit out over the weekend at the platform for gagging one of its most watched participants, with traders also pointing to signs that the affair was further fuelling calls for greater regulation of Big Tech.

Trump's account had more than 88 million followers and had been retweeted billions of times.

"Trump has a very high and loyal following and a lot of those eyeballs will go away if Trump is permanently restricted from posting," said Andrea Cicioni, head of strategy at brokerage TS Lombard.

Other social media platforms, including Facebook Inc, have been quick to issue similar bans on the outgoing president last week after the violence at Capitol Hill.

But the fall in Twitter's shares in premarket trading was much heavier than for any of its peers.

U.S. media also reported San Francisco police were bracing for a possible protest by pro-Trump supporters outside Twitter's headquarters on Monday.

Twitter said on Friday Trump's suspension was due to the risk of further violence, following the storming of the U.S. Capitol last Wednesday.

It was the first time the company had banned a head of state and was accompanied by the suspension of accounts belonging to vitriolic Trump fans.

European Union Commissioner Thierry Breton said the events at the Capitol were likely to herald an era of tougher social media regulation, comparing it to the global crackdown on terrorism after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

"The fact that a CEO can pull the plug on POTUS's loudspeaker without any checks and balances is perplexing," he wrote in a column for Politico. "It is not only confirmation of the power of these platforms, but it also displays deep weaknesses in the way our society is organized in the digital space."

Twitter, Facebook and Google have faced a surge in the cost of moderating content on their platforms in recent years, so far countered by rises in the revenue they get from advertising and other services.

U.S. President-elect Joe Biden has been quoted as criticizing the "overwhelming arrogance" of the sector's leaders and analysts expect more legal moves to counter the power of Facebook and others over the next four years.

"Incremental moderation may be welcome, but it's not cheap and could benefit Facebook, which already employs a moderation army (around six times) larger than Twitter's workforce," Bernstein analysts wrote in a note.

## Forecasts Morocco's Economic Growth to Reach 4% in 2021

RABAT (Dispatches) - The World Bank forecasts a 4% growth in Morocco's economy this year thanks to an increase in agricultural production.

Moroccan state media reported the World Bank's forecast on January 10, saying that Morocco will record a growth of 4% thanks to agriculture after a rough season due to drought.

The World Bank also predicts 3.7% economic growth in Morocco in 2022.

The 2019-2020 agriculture season experienced lack of rainfalls, which impacted the country's cereal and agriculture production.

Morocco's production of the three main cereals for the 2019-2020 season stood at 32 million. The number showed a decrease of 39% compared to the previous season.

2020 was an average year for production, with 52 million quintals, the Ministry of Agriculture announced.

The campaign is also down by 57% compared to an average year under the ministry's signature Green Morocco Plan.

The statistics from the World Bank are in sync with earlier estimates by Morocco's High Commission for Planning (HCP). Earlier this week, the HCP said it expected the Moroccan economy to grow by 0.5% during the first quarter of 2021.

Economic activities in the Middle East and North Africa are projected to show a "modest recovery" of 2.1% in 2021 due to damages caused by COVID-19 and low oil prices, the HCP found.

These prospects count on the control of COVID-19, the stabilization of oil prices, the absence of any escalation of



geopolitical tensions and the development of anti-COVID vaccines in the second half of the year.

The projections are also based on the assumption that the situation will improve over a two-year period and forecasts that economic output will be still 8% below the level indicated by pre-COVID-19 estimates.

According to the World Bank, the growth rate of oil-importing countries is expected to reach 3.2% in 2021 due to the gradual easing of travel restrictions and the slow recovery in domestic demand.

For oil exporting countries, the growth rate is expected to reach 1.8% in 2021 thanks to the normalization of oil demand and the expected easing of OPEC + oil reduction quotas, as well as the gradual elimination of restrictions countries imposed to combat the pandemic.

## Pakistan Says Good News Soon About Restarting IMF Program

ISLAMABAD (Reuters) - Pakistan is in talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to put its fiscal support program back on track, the country's central bank governor said, adding he was optimistic about the economic outlook despite the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

With dwindling foreign exchange reserves and a struggling economy, Pakistan entered a three-year \$6 billion IMF bailout program in 2019 but is yet to have its second review approved, which has been pending since early last year.

"We hope to have good news for the market and the world that we are putting the programme back on track," Dr Reza Baqir said in an interview on Monday at the Reuters Next conference.

Last year, staff from the IMF and Pakistani authorities reached an agreement to pave the way for the disbursement of \$450 million in IMF funds pending approval from the global lender's executive board, which has yet to take place.

Baqir said there was no disagreement on the end goal between the two sides, and that Pakistan needed to increase its low tax-to-GDP ratio.

He said the only discussion was on the timing of reform measures, which would have contractionary effects on the economy and would cause more hardship for people already suffering from a loss of livelihood due to the pandemic, as well as inflation.

"We don't (want to) arrest the promising recovery under way," he said.

Pakistan and the IMF have been working to implement IMF-supported economic reforms, in particular tax collection, aimed at stabilizing the economy and shoring up a yawning fiscal deficit.

Though the bailout program is still pending, Pakistan received \$1.4 billion in IMF emergency financing aimed at containing the pandemic and mitigating its economic impact.

Authorities are counting on the IMF bailout package to bolster Pakistan's fiscal position and increase global confidence in its economy.

"Pakistani authorities and the IMF team remain closely engaged, discussions are going on, both teams are working very hard and non-stop to bring the program review to positive conclusion," the IMF's Resident Representative to Pakistan, Teresa Daban Sanchez, told Reuters.

Baqir also said he was more optimistic about the outlook even as Pakistan battles a second wave of the coronavirus outbreak.

## Smartphone Shipments in China Fell 20.4% in 2020



SHANGHAI (Reuters) - Domestic smartphone shipments in China in 2020 fell 20.4% from the previous year, government data released on Monday showed, as the number of handsets delivered to consumers dropped to 296 million from 372 million in 2019.

The figures China Academy of Information and Communications (CAICT), a state-backed think tank, reflected both the impact of the coronavirus crisis on the supply chain and demand, and the ongoing trend for consumers keep their phones for longer before upgrading to a new model.

In 2019, shipments of smartphones had declined 4% from the previous year, according to CAICT data.

Handset vendors had entered 2020 hoping the year would bring renewed sales as consumers purchased new phones compatible with China's rapidly-expanding 5G networks.

But, in the first half of the year, domestic brands Oppo, Vivo, and Xiaomi Corp each saw steep shipment declines while Huawei, the leading Chinese brand at the high-end, continued to grow market share.

In the latter half, Huawei sales slowed as trade restrictions imposed by Washington on the company took effect, crimping its supply of critical components. Oppo, Vivo, and Xiaomi have ramped up production in hopes of capturing that share.

Apple, released its first 5G-enabled handsets in China last autumn. Analysts remain bullish on the devices' reception as loyal iPhone owners who once delayed upgrading now buy new phones.

Phone makers shipped a total of 25.2 million smartphones to consumers in China in the month of December, marking a 12.8% year-on-year decline, according to CAICT.

## Dinar Devaluation Will Save Iraq 12 Trillion Dinars in 2021

ERBIL (Dispatches) - The devaluation of the Iraqi dinar will save the country 12 trillion Dinars (approx. \$8.3 billion) this year, a member of the Iraqi parliament's finance committee told state media on Sunday.

"The step to devalue the dinar to fill the deficit will save 12 trillion Dinars," Ali Saadun, a member of Iraqi Parliament's Finance Committee told Iraqi state media on Sunday.

The MP also emphasized that their committee is in constant meetings with Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi. "He has suggested multiple possible ways to improve the economic situation in Iraq," Saadun said.

"The price of the dollar will remain stable at around 147,000 Dinar per \$100," Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) MP and member of the finance committee Shirwan Mirza told Rudaw English on Sunday.

Iraqi state media announced on December 19 that the Central Bank would set the dollar at 1,470 IQD for the public. The devaluation of the Iraqi dinar is a step towards reform and creating a "financial balance" that will revive the economy, Iraq's Minister of Finance said at the time.

Influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr voiced his skepticism of the measure's ability to alleviate public suffering. "The Central Bank and all other banks are prisoners of corruption and computers. The government and parliament must seek specialized methods to end this and liberalize it immediately. It is not," Sadr tweeted on December 19. Iraq's economic woes have worsened since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, which saw oil prices plummet - bad news for Iraq's highly oil-dependent economy. Iraqi demonstrators took to Baghdad's protest epicentre Tahrir Square on December 21 to air their discontent after the government decision to devalue the country's currency.

## Sri Lanka's Economy Hemmed in by COVID-19 and Geopolitical Tensions

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - The unprecedented disruptions of COVID-19 are causing a geopolitical reset — and as the global order is redrawn, small emerging market economies like Sri Lanka are vulnerable to the fallout. Sri Lanka straddles vital shipping routes and is at the center of diplomatic spats between China and the United States, who called on Sri Lanka to make "difficult but necessary choices" over its growing economic and political ties to China.

In December 2020, a U.S. grant offer of US\$480 million under its Millennium Challenge Corporation was withdrawn and any further assistance under the US Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act has been made conditional on Sri Lanka containing China's influence. China in turn denounced what it considers as US pressure on countries to "pick sides". The challenges are many for Sri Lanka's newly elected government to sidestep global rivalries and maintain its stated stance of a neutral foreign policy.

The economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic is not helping. Sri Lanka's economy was already weak, weighed down by persistently low growth averaging under 3 per cent, high public debt nearing 90 per cent of GDP and large fiscal deficits of near 7 per cent of GDP at the end of 2019. With foreign debt settlements averaging US\$4 billion per year due in 2020-2023 — primarily in the form of international sovereign bonds — Sri Lanka's ability to implement fiscal and monetary stimulus, without generating further macroeconomic imbalances, is severely constrained.

Sri Lanka had early success in battling COVID-19, recording only 3000 cases and 11 deaths by the end of September 2020. This helped to revive economic activities. But a second and more severe wave of infections has seen those numbers spike sharply to over 43,000 infections and 204 deaths as the year drew to an end.

Dealing with Sri Lanka's foreign debt settlements remains the most critical priority for now. Despite sovereign credit rating downgrades, the government remains confident of meeting all repayments without resorting to a conditional arrangement with the International Monetary Fund. This is in keeping with the government's stated intentions of moving away from foreign loans to foreign investment, with the latter already earmarked to raise an estimated US\$2.5 billion in 2021. For Sri Lanka's debt-burdened economy, the strategy makes good sense. Yet it will also pose fresh challenges in dealing with rivalries closer to home, such as that between China and India.



## Tehran Military Court Pursuing Ukrainian Plane Case

TEHRAN, Jan. 12 (MNA) – The Iranian envoy to Kyiv said that fair settlement of the Ukrainian plane case will be achieved not through interviews and harsh political statements, but through negotiation and adherence of all international rules.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has sent the draft of the final technical report of the Ukrainian plane crash to Ukraine and other relevant

countries before the designated and renewable period in the Chicago Convention, and it is waiting for their opinion, the Ambassador of Iran to Ukraine wrote in his Twitter account.

Ukraine's demands have also been met in recent days in the second round of talks in Tehran, although they were not within the framework of Iran's international obligations, Moradi added.



## Green Economy Plans Fuel New Metals and Energy "Supercycle"

LONDON (The Guardian) - The global economy could be on the brink of a new commodity "supercycle" as governments prepare to use a green industrial revolution to kickstart growth following the coronavirus pandemic.

The price of commodities, such as energy and metals, have reached record highs in recent weeks despite the ongoing spread of Covid-19 and are expected to climb further as countries embark on plans for a green economic recovery. Market experts, including US bank Goldman Sachs, believe the boom could echo the last "supercycle" in the early 2000s led by the sharp growth of emerging BRIC economies (Brazil, Russia, India and China).

"Covid is already ushering in a new era of policies aimed at social need instead of financial stability," the U.S. bank said. "This will likely create cyclically stronger, more commodity-intensive economic growth."

Chris Midgeley, the head of analytics at S&P Global Platts, said "an unusual confluence" of global events had ignited a surge in commodity markets in recent months, but the trend was largely driven by growth in China.

Iron ore prices climbed to \$176.90 a ton shortly before Christmas, the highest since May 2011, and the market price for copper topped \$8,000 a ton for the first time in more than seven years. Global oil prices have climbed to 11-month highs of \$55 a barrel with help from the OPEC oil cartel. "Construction sites are some of the few areas of the economy that have remained open, and in places like China the government has been trying to stimulate that part of the economy," Midgeley said.

The fiscal stimulus plans outlined by countries – including the UK and the incoming Biden administration in the U.S. – are likely to increase demand for metals and energy to build green infrastructure. "Things like copper, nickel and cobalt are all likely to see a boost from the extra demand to build infrastructure. Even steel and petrochemicals will be needed," said Midgeley. A weaker U.S. dollar, the currency used to trade most commodities, could allow prices to climb higher as demand grows.

Mark Lewis, chief sustainability strategist at BNP Paribas Asset Management, said: "I've been in financial markets for 30 years now and I have never seen anything like it. It feels like any market you look at, investors want to buy."

The next three decades are "likely to bring a supercycle in investments in clean



energy infrastructure, clean transportation and everything else that is required to make the green transition possible", he said.

Higher fossil fuel prices could increase the appetite for low-cost renewable energy, which will be even cheaper by comparison as those prices rise, Lewis added.

Low-carbon energy will be even more economically attractive to major energy users in Europe thanks to record high prices for carbon permits on the EU's emissions trading scheme, which reached €34.25 (£30.90) a ton of CO2 for the first time last week.

However, higher fossil fuel prices could also tempt major oil and gas companies to invest in lucrative new projects by inflating the profits of existing portfolios in "one last party" for fossil fuels, he warned. "This is the dilemma for these companies," said Lewis. "Any company will be interested in maximising returns from their existing [fossil fuel] portfolio. But we will be watching very closely for whether they start investing in major new projects. It will be a very interesting test of their commitment."

## Saudi Cut to Boost Oil Market De-Stocking, Even as Demand Falters



LONDON (Reuters) - Saudi Arabia's voluntary oil production cut is expected to bring the oil market into deficit for most of 2021 even as new lockdowns to contain the spread of the coronavirus batter oil demand, analysts say.

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, surprised the market on Jan. 5 with a voluntary output cut of 1 million barrels per day (bpd) in February and March.

The move came as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies - a group known as OPEC+ - agreed most producers would hold output steady in February and March, while allowing Russia and Kazakhstan to raise output by a modest amount.

With coronavirus infections spreading rapidly, producers are wary of a new blow to oil demand which could lead to rising inventories.

"We remain in uncharted territory as the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, but [OPEC+] has so far succeeded in both putting a floor below prices and reducing volatility, which should encourage further cooperation," Barclays said.

News of the cut boosted oil prices to an 11-month high, with backwardation, when prompt prices trade at a premium to future prices, widened, which could encourage traders to take oil out of storage.

In its most recent research, Goldman Sachs revised down its demand forecasts for January, February and March by 1-2 million bpd each month.

Still, and largely as a result of the Saudi cut, the bank sees a small deficit in February, a revision from an implied build of 0.6 million bpd previously.

It expects the oil market to be in deficit for the remainder of the year, peaking at 2.3 million bpd in September, or nearly 3% of global oil supplies for that month.

Consultancy Rystad Energy sees an even bigger deficit. "In the most optimistic case which includes full OPEC+ compliance and the voluntary Saudi cut, we see crude stocks decreasing by 1.3 million bpd for February, and 0.8 million bpd for March," Rystad head of oil market research Bjornar Tonhaugen said.

## Turkish Factory Activity Expanded Nearly 10% in November

ANKARA (Reuters) - Turkey's industrial production is expected to have increased 9.55% annually in November, rising for a sixth straight month, a Reuters poll showed on Monday, even as the government tightened measures against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Turkey logged its first coronavirus infection in March, prompting many factories to pause operations. Industrial production plunged in April and May by 31.3% and 19.4%, respectively, but turned positive in June.

Forecasts in the poll of six financial institutions ranged from 6.38% to 10.30% year-on-year growth in the calendar-adjusted index, seen as a pre-cursor for broader economic performance. The median was 9.55%.

Turkey's economy contracted nearly 10% annually in the second quarter due to measures to slow the spread of the coronavirus but reopening steps and the government's fiscal stimulus boosted it to 6.7% in the third quarter.

Ankara began new curfews in November and adopted full weekend lockdowns in December. It says the measures are designed to cause little interruption to key sectors.

## Euro Zone Investor Morale Rises on Vaccine Euphoria

BERLIN (Reuters) - Investor morale in the euro zone rose more than expected in January, hitting its highest level since February due to growing confidence about a successful vaccination strategy to tackle the coronavirus pandemic, a survey showed on Monday.

Sentix's index for the euro zone climbed into positive territory for the first time in almost a year, reaching 1.3 from -2.7 in December. A Reuters poll had pointed to a reading of 0.7.

The expectations index rose to an all-time high of

33.5 from 29.3 while the current situation index came in at -26.5, its highest level since March and compared to -30.3 in December. In a statement, Sentix said the overall index reading was surprising given the far-reaching restrictions on economic activity.

"Now that more vaccines have been approved, investors apparently expect a quick implementation of the vaccination strategy and thus a definitive end to the economic and personal freedom restrictions," Sentix said in a statement.

## MPs Lawmakers Hail AEOI's Move to Resume 20% Uranium Enrichment

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The majority of Iranian lawmakers have hailed the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI)'s move to restart the enrichment of uranium at 20-percent purity level as part of a law recently adopted by the Parliament (Majlis).

In a statement on Tuesday, 190 legislators threw their weight behind Iran's nuclear industry for its resumption of 20% uranium enrichment and called for full and precise implementation of the law designed to counter the sanctions imposed on the country, especially those by the United States.

On December 1, Iranian lawmakers overwhelmingly voted in favor of the "Strategic Action Plan to Lift Sanctions and Safeguard Interests of Iranian People," which mainly intends to counteract the unilateral sanctions imposed on Iran after U.S. President Donald Trump on May 8, 2018 pulled his country out of a 2015 Iran nuclear deal. The bill became law after Iran's Guardian Council ratified it a day later.

According to the new law, the Iranian administration is required to suspend more commitments under the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was inked by Iran and six major countries on July 14 that year. The law tasked the AEOI with producing and restoring at least 120 kilograms of enriched uranium with a 20-percent purity level every year and also enriching beyond 20 percent if the country's peaceful nuclear activities demanded it, among other things.

In their statement, the MPs said the Parliament approved the strategic action plan to reiterate Iran's legitimate right to use peaceful nuclear technology and the importance of lifting all cruel sanctions against the country.

The Islamic Republic would not step back one iota from its rights, they added.

Iran on January 4 announced the beginning of the process to enrich uranium to 20 percent purity at its Fordow nuclear facility in its latest step to reciprocate the United States' unilateral move to withdraw from the JCPOA and the failure of the European signatories to fulfill their side of the deal.

## Iran Not to Renegotiate...

FROM PAGE 1

The Iranian diplomat further maintained that the JCPOA signatories are not allowed to add new conditions for lifting sanctions, saying that Iran's missile program is not related to the Nuclear Deal.

"Europeans and Americans need to know that we will not renegotiate what we once agreed on. This is not the rule of negotiation," Zarif underlined.

He highlighted that the whole world believes that the policy of maximum against Iran has failed, adding that if the U.S. seeks to return to the JCPOA and fulfill its commitment, and the Islamic Republic will comply with its obligations as well.

## Much Fuss About...

FROM PAGE 1

With taking such a stand by the Supreme Leader, the foreign media stirred up a homot's nest which indicates which part of the sedition has been embarrassed. First an alleged tweet was hit the media which quoted Chief of Staff of the President of Iran Mahmoud Vaezi as saying that President Hassan Rouhani contracted coronavirus and it tried to show that Rouhani has sulked and distract the attention to this point that the president has opposed the Leader's views. When Vaezi rejected this news report about the alleged tweet, a media hype was kick-started to show that the Leader of the Islamic Revolution does not care his nation by not letting them be immune by the imported vaccine, and in the virtual world the attacks were so much that people believed the attack has caused more pain in the world arrogance and its pain has been even more painful than the attack on the Ain Al-Assad air base in Iraq.

Essentially we and the world people should consider this point that with Iran's getting powerful in the fields of defense, security and economy and achieving genuine independence, there will be no room for the arrogance to parade. It is in this scene that with resistance and standing on own feet, the least profit is the efficient use of existing capacities of the country for providing the domestic needs which ultimately leads to eradication of the poverty from the society and provision of welfare and distribution of health among the public, and ultimately making the goals of the arrogance inapplicable.

I wish Iranian nation once for all would have the cancerous tumor of west-orientation and infiltration inside them undergone surgery, and with the help of Almighty Allah and this wise, prudent, brave and compassionate leader it would gain its real independence.

Of course, it is explicable and emphasizeable that this juncture is very crucial and decisive for the nations while reeve of the world is in a critical condition both politically and economically as well as its administration challenge and gives opportunity to the nations. Any country gets lesson from the past can make its future otherwise chain of captivity and slavery of aliens will remain on their necks because world arrogance tries to show the genuine servants of any nation as traitors, and the traitors as servants in order to loot the national interests of any country.

Hence, as long as people of the countries do not have collective consciousness and awareness, it will be the same old story. Today they attack on the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution for his straight remarks and exposure of the behind-the-scene of American, British and French vaccines, and tomorrow they expect any decision with the help of their infiltrators that they make in their think tanks is carried out exactly inside the country. So people should ponder this point that what their answers will be to as many as questions which are in front of the world people. Essentially why do they falsify the home-made vaccine? Why do they want to send free vaccines for our healthy people while they have shown no pity to our ill people and slapped sanctions on medicines? Why do Americans insist on elimination of our missile production program and cry foul? Or why do the U.S. and Europe want Iran to be eliminated from the regional presence and want it to stop helping the friends of the Islamic Republic?

Since these questions seem to be unanswered, it is very natural that we have no way but to encourage the nations to take a path whose happiness lies in it.

## Any Invasion...

FROM PAGE 1

An investigation was conducted by the IRGC right after the detention and the results showed that American marines had gone astray during their voyage in the Persian Gulf. The IRGC declared in a statement that "it has released the U.S. Marines and their vessels in international waters" after it became clear that the illegal entry was not a deliberate act.

"Following technical and operational investigations and in interaction with relevant political and national security bodies of the country and after it became clear that the U.S. combat vessels' illegal entry into the Islamic Republic of Iran's waters was the result of an unintentional action and a mistake and after they extended an apology, the decision was made to release them," the statement said.

"The Americans have undertaken not to repeat such mistakes," it said, adding, "The captured marines were released in international waters."



## PGA Pulls 2022 Championship Out of Trump National

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The Professional Golfers' Association of America cut ties to President Donald Trump when it voted on Sunday to take the PGA Championship event away from his New Jersey golf course next year.

The vote comes four days after the Trump-fueled riot at the nation's Capitol as Congress was certifying the election victory of President-elect Joe Biden.

It was the second time in five years the PGA of America removed one of its events from a Trump course.

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## Aitken Hopes to put S. Korea Back on F1 Map

LONDON (Reuters) - British-Korean driver Jack Aitken, overwhelmed by the response he received from fans in South Korea after his Formula One debut last year, hopes to use his newfound support to catch the eye of teams looking to tap into the East Asian market.

Aitken made his F1 debut for Williams at the Sakharin Grand Prix as a replacement for George Russell, who stood in for Lewis Hamilton at Mercedes after he tested positive for COVID-19.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 13, 2021

## Kawhi Leonard Hits Milestone in Clippers Win

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Kawhi Leonard scored 35 points, leading the host Los Angeles Clippers to a 130-127 victory over the Chicago Bulls on Sunday.

Leonard hit 14 of 22 shots, including 7 of 9 3-pointers, and made a 3-pointer in the third quarter to top 10,000 career points.

Paul George had 28 points, nine assists and seven rebounds, Lou Williams added 21 points and Marcus Morris Sr. chipped in 11 points and seven boards for the Clippers. Nicolas Batum recorded four of the Clippers' 13 steals.

Zach LaVine had a season-high 45 points, connecting on 10 of 16 3-pointers, seven rebounds and seven assists for the Bulls, who lost their third in a row. It was the third consecutive game that LaVine scored at least 32 points.

### Utah Jazz 96 - Detroit Pistons 86

Donovan Mitchell scored 28 points as visiting Utah continued its dominance over Detroit, winning its ninth consecutive game over the Pistons.

Mike Conley had 22 points, six assists and five rebounds, and Jordan Clarkson contributed 18 points off the bench for the Jazz, who never trailed. Rudy Gobert grabbed 19 rebounds and blocked four shots.

Jerami Grant's 28 points led the Pistons. Reserve Saddiq Bey tossed in 12 points, and Blake Griffin added 10 points, six rebounds and five assists.

### Oklahoma City Thunder 129 - Brooklyn Nets 116

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored a season-high 31 points as visiting Oklahoma City overcame a slow start and pulled away for a victory over Brooklyn in New York.

Reserve Hamidou Diallo added a career-high 25 points for the Thunder, who entered the game averaging 101.9 points and easily surpassed that total. Al Horford contributed 22 as Oklahoma City rallied from 15 points down.

## Browns Get First Playoff Win Since 2002

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The visiting Cleveland Browns scored 14 seconds into the game and Kareem Hunt ran for two touchdowns Sunday en route to a 48-37 win over the Pittsburgh Steelers in an AFC wild-card game. Cleveland plays next Sunday at Kansas City.

The Browns, in their first playoff game since 2002, were without coach Kevin Stefanski, who tested positive for COVID-19, and assorted other coaches and players because of protocol related to the pandemic.

The Steelers won the AFC North but lost four of their final five regular-season games following an 11-0 start, including a 24-22 defeat last week against Cleveland when four key starters were rested.

Cleveland quarterback Baker Mayfield was 21-of-34 passing for 263 yards and touchdowns to Jarvis Landry, Austin Hooper and Nick Chubb as the team notched its first playoff victory since the 1994 season.

Ben Roethlisberger, one of those rested last week, completed 47 of 68 passes for 501 yards, with four touchdowns to Chase Claypool (two), Eric Ebron and JuJu Smith-Schuster, and four interceptions.

Ravens 20, Titans 13

Lamar Jackson rushed for a touchdown en route to recording his first NFL playoff win in Baltimore's victory over Tennessee in Nashville, Tenn. The victory propels the Ravens into the AFC semifinals, and they'll visit the second-seeded Buffalo Bills on Saturday.

Jackson completed 17 of 24 passes for 179 yards and rushed 16 times for 136 yards, including a 48-yard score with 2:32 left in the second quarter. His performance helped fifth-seeded Baltimore outgain fourth-seeded Tennessee in total yards (401-209).

Titans running back Derrick Henry, who authored the eighth 2,000-yard rushing season in league history, was held to 40 yards on 18 carries by a defense that used run blitzes liberally.



### Denver Nuggets 114 - New York Knicks 89

Nikola Jokic posted another double-double by finishing with 22 points and 10 rebounds for visiting Denver, who cruised past New York.

Jokic, who also had a team-high five assists, has recorded at least a double-double in all 10 games this season. He has four triple-doubles to go with three points-assists double-doubles and three points-rebounds double-doubles.

Gary Harris had 14 points while Monte Morris and PJ Dozier scored 12 points apiece for the Nuggets, who won for the second time in a little more than 24 hours and have four victories in their past five games. Julius Randle (29 points, 10 rebounds) recorded his eighth consecutive double-double for the Knicks. Elfrid Payton (12 points) was the only other New York player to get into double figures.

### Los Angeles Lakers 120 - Houston Rockets 102

Anthony Davis scored 27 points and blocked three shots in his return from a one-game injury hiatus as Los Angeles remained unbeaten on the road with a victory over Houston.

Davis, who missed the Lakers' win over the Chicago Bulls last Friday with a right adductor strain, started 9 for 9 from the floor. LeBron James added 18 points, seven rebounds and seven assists while Montrezl Harrell produced 16 points and eight boards off the Lakers bench.

Christian Wood paced the Rockets with 23 points while James Harden added 20 points and nine assists but committed seven turnovers. Houston shot just 12 for 41 from behind the arc.

## Dybala Out for Up to 20 Days With Knee Injury

ROME (AFP) - Paula Dybala has been ruled out for up to 20 days after suffering a knee ligament injury during Juventus' weekend win over Sassuolo, the Italian champions revealed on Monday.

In a statement, Juventus said that Argentina forward Dybala had undergone examinations at the club's medical centre which revealed injury to "the medial collateral ligament of the left knee with recovery times of approximately 15/20 days".

Dybala was substituted three minutes before the break in the 3-1 win in Turin which keeps Juve in the hunt for 10th straight Serie A title. The 27-year-old has scored just two league goals in a rocky season under new coach Andrea Piolo which has also featured a spat with the club over a contract extension.

He will now miss Juve's clash with title rivals Inter Milan this weekend, with the Turin club seven points behind current league leaders AC Milan.

Juve added that Weston McKennie, who pulled up after 18 minutes at the Allianz Stadium and was replaced by Aaron Ramsey, was being monitored but that tests found no injuries to the American midfielder.

Federico Chiesa has also avoided a spell on the sidelines despite being on the receiving end of a hard Pedro Obiang tackle which led to the Sassuolo midfielder being sent off just before the end of the first half.

## Renews Yokohama FC Contract Aged Nearly 54



TOKYO (Dispatches) - Veteran striker Kazuyoshi Miura, who turns 54 next month, renewed his contract with Yokohama FC on Monday -- extending his record as Japan's oldest professional footballer.

It means that Miura, better known as "King Kazu" for his spirited onfield style, will kick off his 36th career season this year.

"Last season, I was feeling the joy of playing football at a time when the world was facing a tough situation because of the new coronavirus," he said in a statement.

"Personally it was not a satisfactory season, but my ambition and enthusiasm towards football are increasing," he added. "I will work hard every day, aiming to contribute to the team's victory this season by playing as many games as possible."

He played four games for the club last year, becoming the oldest first-division J-League player in history at 53 years and nine months old.

Miura, who has played for Yokohama FC since 2005, has been setting age records for some time.

In 2017, he became the oldest player to score in a professional match.

Miura left Japan for Brazil in 1982 and signed a contract with Santos FC in 1986 to make his professional debut.

He made his Japan debut in 1990 and pushed for the country's first ever World Cup appearance in 1998 but failed to make the final squad for France, despite scoring 55 goals in 89 games for the national side.

He was one of the stars of the professional J-League at its 1993 launch before joining Italy's Genoa on loan the following year.

He has insisted he won't hang up his boots until he turns 60, and he remains a massive draw for fans in both Japan and abroad.

## Kenin Crumbles To Sakkari Power In Abu Dhabi

ABU DHABI (AFP) - Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin crashed out of the WTA event in Abu Dhabi, losing in three sets to number nine seed Maria Sakkari in the quarter-finals on Monday.

After top seed Kenin took the opening set 6-2, the Greek bounced back by galloping through the next two 6-2, 6-0 winning the last 10 games in a row to complete her fifth Top 5 win and book a semi-final meeting with the Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka.

"Beating these players this week it means a lot," said Sakkari after her win.

"I'm playing players that I've never played, like (Garbine Muguruza) yesterday, so I have a better idea if I play them again."

"So in general it gives me a lot of confidence starting the year like that and I'm super happy to travel to Australia with some good matches with me."

The Australian Open begins in Melbourne on February 8.

Kenin survived a match point in the previous round before getting the better of Yulia Putintseva but the American found the new, improved Sakkari a different proposition.

Kenin swept through the opening set but the match changed completely when Sakkari held service for 3-2 in the second and then broke Kenin to go 4-2 ahead.

The Greek, ranked 22 in the world, pounded the lines to take the set and then bulldozed the third, inflicting a rare bagel on the world number four. "I think that one of the things that really helped me is that I realised that my ball is pretty heavy," said Sakkari.



## Guardiola Confused by Football's Virus Rules

LONDON (Dispatches) - Pep Guardiola says he is baffled by some of the coronavirus rules in the game, admitting he does not understand why certain matches have been postponed while others have gone ahead.

Four Premier League matches have so far been called off, including City's trip to Everton last month, but a different approach appears to have been taken in the FA Cup over the weekend.

Both Aston Villa and Derby fielded sides made up of youth players for their third-round ties after their entire first-team squads were told to isolate.

The Premier League last week called on players to tone down their celebrations in a set of reinforced Covid-19 protocols that also emphasized the need to avoid handshakes and shirt-swapping.

Britain is grappling with its worst outbreak of the disease since it hit the country early last year, though elite sport is allowed to continue.

City's own problems with the virus have continued, with Sergio Aguerro forced to miss Sunday's 3-0 victory over Birmingham in the FA Cup third round.

The Argentine has been told to self-isolate after it was discovered he is a close contact of someone who has tested positive for the virus.

City have already been without eight other players following positive tests at various stages since Christmas Day.

Guardiola said the club would follow the new protocols but he said it was unrealistic to expect players not to celebrate goals.

