

Spokeswoman for Iran Health Ministry Sima Sadat Lari Said On Tuesday That Some 87 More Iranians Lost Their Lives Due to COVID-19 During the Past 24 Hours As the Death Toll Hit 56,973

# IRAN NEWS

Gov't Spokesman Ali Rabiei Said On Tuesday That the United States Needs to Honor Its International Commitments to the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

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## Still No Sign of South Korea Funds

TEHRAN (Bloomberg) - The governor of the Central Bank of Iran, Abdolnaser Hemmati, answered questions put to him by Bloomberg in writing about billions of dollars Iran has trapped in South Korea because of U.S. sanctions. Some Iranian officials have linked Iran's seizure of a tanker in the Persian Gulf earlier this month to those frozen funds. Questions to Hemmati, who met with a delegation of South Korean officials last week, were limited to this topic.

When he was asked by Bloomberg, "You've said that interest should be paid on the \$7 billion of Iranian funds that are currently in South Korea. How much interest do you estimate has accumulated over the past two years?"

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## Zarif Gets 2nd Yellow Card From Majlis



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif failed to convince Majlis lawmakers yesterday and received his second yellow card in his last months in office. Zarif who had been summoned to Majlis to answer the questions of some lawmakers could not convince

them and was shown another yellow card. Addressing the open session of Majlis and in response a question by the lawmakers, Zarif said, "Today is the last day of Trump's infamous presidency in the United States, and their policy of maximum pressure has failed with the help of the great Iranian nation."

He added: "The duty and goal of foreign policy are to prevent the policies of the United States, rivals and others; the foreign policy tools are also clear."

Regarding these tools, he added: "Foreign policy relies on national tools, but the tools at the disposal of the foreign minister are interviews, negotiations and coalition building, and we have nothing else but these tools."

Zarif said: "Today is the last day of Donald Trump's infamous presidency in the United States, and with the same tools and with the help of the Iranian people, we have been able to defeat the U.S. policy of maximum pressure, which of course was due to the resistance of the great Iranian nation."

In response to a parliament's question regarding negotiation with the U.S. one week after the assassination of Lt. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, Zarif said that the Iranian nation's resistance along with diplomacy led to the defeat of Trump in foreign policy.

He stressed that all mass communication media acknowledge that the US's maximum pressure policy failed due to the people's resistance and diplomacy.

Concerning his meeting with an Israeli Zionist element one week before the assassination of Lt. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, which the foreign ministry denied the meeting at that time, Zarif said that the meeting referred to one year and a half before the assassination, and was about the extradition of Dr. Soleimani who was jailed in the U.S.

In the end, the lawmakers did not get content with the foreign minister's explanations over the meeting, and therefore, he received a yellow card.

The minister also receives another yellow card over his explanations failed about the weak economic diplomacy of the Foreign Ministry.

According to Majlis statute, the minister after getting his third yellow card can be impeached

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**ViewPoint**  
 By Hamid Reza Naghashbani  
**Central Asia, an Attractive Landscape for Iran**

Countries, so-called the Central Asians, of Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, all in a hidden and intangible unity pursue a policy in their political, social and even economic relations in order not to be labeled either as leftist or rightist. They are pursuing the existing ground for establishing ties very smartly. That what process we can have with these countries as a country with independent spirits and away from extreme western investment or democratic socialism approach requires a foreign ministry deeply believes in the Islamic Revolution.

In the Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Revolution of Iran in the past 42 years due to the inclination towards the West, there has been never a ground for creating organic links in order to define a lasting framework for ties with each of these Central Asian countries based on the mutual interests. These countries have never sacrificed and will never sacrifice two major principles in their foreign policies for their momentary interests. In their relations with other countries, these countries have accurate and defined policies and pursue them. The titles that they have chosen for these two principles are: First diversification in not monopolizing the relations and secondly balancing in joint exploitation in relations as they are willing to cooperate with big powers like Russia, China, Europe and the U.S. and even with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In the level of the regional powers, countries like Turkey, India and other ones have certain definitions and clear stands in their foreign policy baskets of the Central Asian countries. These countries in their aligned and convergence policies pursue openly this strategy in order that no power in the Central Asian can have absolute and dominating power. Indeed, these countries want to adapt their relations with China through adapting ties with Russia; to force Russia for competition via China and through these two major powers force the U.S. for giving concessions. In between, the ground for Iran's acting in the Central Asia can be studied in the very context.

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www.sm-soleimani.com E-mail: ICF4040@GMAIL.COM Tel: +98 21 85538248 Fax: +98 21 85538247 @smic313

Sina Stewie, Cryptocurrency Capital Market Analyst:

## Cryptocurrencies are an Opportunity To Save the World's Financial Markets

Emerging cryptocurrency markets these days offer investors a new opportunity to monetize and increase their capital by participating in this market. Although the outbreak of Covid-19 has caused traditional capital and financial markets around the world to stagnate, the cryptocurrency market is still reversing. These markets are becoming more attractive and prosperous every day. The fans of such markets are increasing. These markets also have their own attractions for our country's investors, and evidence shows that Iranian investors have also been happy with this market.

If you want to know more about the current state of the cryptocurrency capital market and the future of such digital capital markets in the post-corona era, read our interview with Sina Estavi, a cryptocurrency capital market analyst active in blockchain project development.

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## Budget Most Influential Gov't Document

TEHRAN (IP) – Majlis Speaker on Tuesday called the budget document the most important government's document that plays a role in people's lives.

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said at the beginning of today's public session of the parliament in his pre-agenda speech: "The budget document is the most important financial document of the government, and it is determining people's lives." He also highlighted that "The source of the country's economic problems is the budget deficit." He explained further that to restore economic stability and eliminate market inflation, one should reform the economic structure.

## Tehran, Ankara Sign Accords for Pakistan, China Railway Link

TEHRAN (PresSTV) - Iran and Turkey have signed three documents to expand transnational rail services linking them to Pakistan, Afghanistan and China, an official says.

Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran (RAI) Managing Director Saeed Rasouli and his Turkish counterpart Ali Ihsan Uygun signed the documents in Ankara Monday to maximize freight and passenger transport.

"Both the rail route connecting China to southern Europe and Turkey-Afghanistan and Turkey-Pakistan rail links as well as the connection of Iran's southern ports to Turkey will be accelerated and operationalized by the signing of these documents," Rasouli said.

He said the Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad (ITI) transnational railroad is expected to enhance connectivity with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by providing a rail connection between China and Turkey.

Iran, Turkey and Pakistan are the founders of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), currently a 10-member political and economic intergovernmental organization established in 1985.

The ITI railroad service, stretching for 6,540 km, will cut the 21-day journey between Pakistan and Turkey by sea to 10 days. And by extension, it will connect to China's Xinjiang autonomous region which is populated by ethnically Turkic Uighur Muslims.

The railroad would further boost BRI, a trillion-dollar plan to connect the infrastructure and economies of countries across Asia, Africa and Europe.

For Iran, the ITI railroad is an attractive alternative trade route because it can help move around US sanctions given that the ECO countries trade in local currencies.



The new railway connections will also offer greater flexibility going forward and stimulate the economies of the participating countries by streamlining their trade.

Observers see the ITI railroad as a BRI extension, while China regards Iranian transport infrastructure in particular and ECO's more generally as parts of the new Silk Road.

The 2,300-kilometer BRI is to link Urumqi in China's resource-rich Xinjiang province to Tehran, connecting Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan along the way and extending to Europe via Turkey.

The ITI railroad is about to be the first regular rail service between China and Turkey, and an alternative to a more circuitous route via the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway.

Last month, a train reached Xi'an in China's Shaanxi province northeast of Xinjiang after traveling from Turkey through Georgia, Azerbaijan, crossing the Caspian Sea by ferry, and Kazakhstan.

The three countries launched a container train service in 2009, but it only got as far as test runs and was never fully operational.

Even so, they always planned to follow up the initial freight trains with passenger services and are now willing to launch the ITI transnational line with the aim of enhancing connectivity with the new Silk Road, Tokyo-based Nikkei Asia reported.

## Role of FTZs and SEZs in Economic War Is Significant



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The Supreme Council of Free Trade-Industrial and Special Economic Zones held a meeting presided by First Vice-President Eshaq Jahangiri on Monday.

Addressing the meeting, Jahangiri emphasized the role of free zones of the country in development especially during the hard times of sanctions, saying that the role and stand of free zones in this critical period for meeting the demands of the country has been significant, and expressed hope by implementation of some reforms, all would see development of activities in these zones.

He said direction of activities in the free zones should be toward developing exports in the future because with this attitude the zones can both attract investment and pick up the activities. Jahangiri also hailed the secretariat of the council and its managers and said drawing up the comprehensive plan for special economic zones can lead to the organized development of the zones and ultimately to job creation, absorbing investment and development.

He also urged the council to present reports of its performance in the past years.

Meanwhile secretary of the council Mr. Morteza Bank briefed the participants with the implemented projects and actions in these areas. Then participants approved some proposals like approving the financial balances of some zones in the past fiscal year.

## Iran, EAEU to Kick Off Implementing PTA in Nov. 2022

TEHRAN (MNA) – Islamic Republic of Iran and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) will start implementation of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in Nov. 2022.

Speaking in the 19th meeting of the Board of Representatives of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA), Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Hamid Zadboum said that the government issued a license for the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO) for doing Free Trade with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

Accordingly, the Free Trade Agreement between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) will start in the Iranian month of Aban of the year 1401 (to fall in Nov. 2022).

Paving suitable ways for economic cooperation between member states and also promoting healthy competition has been cited as the main aim behind launching Free Trade Agreement between Iran and EAEU, chief of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran added.

EAEU's member states have \$850 billion worth of trade and business with countries in the world, \$518 and \$331 billion of which is related to exports and imports respectively, Zadboum added.

He went on to say that 80 percent of EAEU's exports to the Islamic Republic of Iran is related to agricultural products especially grains while 68 percent of Iran's export to EAEU is related to agricultural products especially fresh fruits and dried nuts.

## Iran COVID Vaccine to Be Mass-Produced Within Next 3 Months

TEHRAN (MNA) – Head of Execution of Imam Khomeini Order (EIKO) said that the Iranian made coronavirus vaccine will be mass-produced within the next three months.

Speaking on the sidelines of unveiling ceremony of new products manufactured in the field of supplements of pharmaceutical raw materials, "Ivermectin and Mucocele" drugs, held at the venue of Alborz Barakat Foundation on Tue., Mohammad Mokhber added that the Iranian COVID-19 vaccine has been produced by EIKO according to the health protocols and guidelines announced by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education.

Fortunately, two phases of COVID-19 vaccine, produced by EIKO, has been launched and tested on volunteers successfully without any side effects, he added.

Today, the third stage of the Iranian coronavirus vaccine- developed by the Execution of Imam Khomeini Order, will be launched, he said, adding, "At this phase, the vaccine will be injected to other 56 volunteers."

## Enemies Not to Lift Sanctions, Unless Iran Makes It Useless



TEHRAN (IP) - The chief commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps says that today one who should make sanctions useless is Iran's nation.

Delivering a speech at the national conference of managers of the foundation for preservation and dissemination of sacred defense values, Major-General Hossein Salami noted: "Today we do not need JCPOA since we have formed our life without it."

"We will not rely on the U.S.; it cannot feed its own people, millions of them sleep on the streets, we do rely on God," he added.

Salami went on to say that today, the enemy focuses on preserving U.S.' congress, in the heart of the U.S., its army defends the congress.

"We are resisting more powerful than before since we have found the ways of overcoming enemies through the leader's guidance," Salami added.

"The enemies put maximum pressure on the Iranian nation and made psychological war, but we have always preserved the Islamic Revolution since we know that enemies are thinking about conspiracies, although they just made themselves tired," Salami highlighted.

"We have been through all difficulties, although sanctions exist, Iranian resistance is endless," he said.

Referring to the Sacred Defense, Salami said that after the sacred defense conspiracies getting more complex, new fronts were created against Iranians in terms of culture, economy, religion, and security. Still, the sacred defense made us more powerful and more resilient.

## Army's Ground Force Starts Drill on Makran Coast

TEHRAN (PresSTV) - The Iranian Army's Ground Force has launched a new drill to assess the combat readiness of its military units as well as the pace of their deployment from territorial areas to mission zones.

The drill, codenamed Eghtedar (Strength) 99, kicked off on the southeastern Makran coast on Tuesday, in the presence of Army Chief Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi and Ground Force's Commander Brigadier General Kioumars Heydari.

Airborne brigades, special forces and rapid reaction units are participating in the military exercise, which is being supported by the Army's Air Force and Aviation Unit.

During the maneuver, a variety of creative tactics designed domestically will be put into operation in order to evaluate the multifold skills of the Ground Force's professional brigades.

Hundreds of paratroopers also parachuted from several C-130 military transport aircraft and landed on designated locations. They also used equipment such as motorcycles, 107mm rocket launchers and 23mm cannons in the drill area to attack and capture mock targets.

Deputy Commander of the Iranian Army Brigadier General Mohammad Hossein Dadras hailed the Ground Force as a "capable and leading force" in various battlefields.

"Today, the Ground Force has achieved considerable operational capabilities in the fields of drones and missiles," he said. "The power and capabilities of the Army's Ground Force in responding to threats will be demonstrated during Eghtedar 99 drill."

Last week, Iran's Navy launched massive military exercises in the Sea of Oman, during which it took delivery of Makran helicopter carrier, a domestically-developed logistics ship that is said to be the country's largest ever military vessel.

## Tehran, Baku Weigh Plans to Boost Trade Ties

TEHRAN - Chief of Staff of the Iranian President's Office Mahmoud Vaezi and First Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan Shahin Mustafayev have stressed the need to broaden economic and trade ties between the two neighbors and expedite the implementation of the previous agreements.

In a Monday meeting held after the 14th meeting of the Joint Commission on Iran-Azerbaijan Economic Cooperation, Vaezi hailed the growing relations between the two Muslim neighbors, saying 13 presidential meetings indicate the two countries' determination to boost relations.

He also noted that the economic and trade interaction between Tehran and Baku have grown constantly despite the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, pointing to more than 100 reciprocal meetings between diplomatic delegations at the level of ministers and signing of over 40 cooperation agreements.

Vaezi also unveiled plans to finalize a preferential trade agreement between Tehran and Baku within the next month, emphasized the necessity for reconstruction of the

### IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



Azeri territories liberated recently after the Nagorno-Karabakh war, and noted that the Iranian companies can participate in the reconstruction process.

For his part, the Azeri deputy prime minister praised Iran's stances on the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute and its support for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, calling for the promotion of economic and trade ties with the friendly neighbor, Iran.

Mustafayev said he has attended the latest round of the Economic Cooperation Joint Commission with a 14-strong delegation within the framework of seven specialized committees on cooperation in various fields, noting that good decisions have been made in the meetings.

He further dismissed rumors that the Azerbaijan-Nakhchevan railway would ignore Iran's interests, stressing that the new rail route will serve the interests of Iran, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia, Turkey and Georgia, as the six countries will be able to expand trade cooperation.

## FM Willing to Contribute to Joint Projects With Armenia

### IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Artashes Tumanian, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to the Islamic Republic of Iran was received by Seyed Rasool Mohajer, Deputy Foreign Minister on Economic Diplomacy, the Armenian Embassy in Iran informs.

During the meeting, the Ambassador briefed the Deputy Minister on the current state of Armenia – Iran

economic relations. Projects in infrastructure, trade and investment were pointed out. The sides discussed the objectives, challenges and capabilities for developing bilateral and multilateral economic relations in the aftermath of Artsakh war.

Mr. Mohajer affirmed the willingness of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran as well as his readiness to contribute in implementing of Armenia – Iran economic plans and projects.







Sina Estavi, Cryptocurrency Capital Market Analyst:

# Cryptocurrencies Are an Opportunity to Save the World's Financial Markets

cryptocurrencies are essentially a fee that people pay to the core platform development team and its technology to develop future services. Basically, blockchain technology products are constantly evolving, and the active people in this field buy a part of their shares by buying and selling these cryptocurrencies. Ongoing projects bring more development with user funding. With the development of the blockchain platform and the technologies based on this platform, we are moving towards the independence of communities and the elimination of borders every day, and as a result, interfacial communication is increasing.

cryptocurrencies have not been ineffective in changing the price of bitcoin. On the other hand, the technology intended for Bitcoin (mining and transactions) in 2008-2009 has been very forward-looking and complete, which has led to it becoming a model for companies developing other cryptocurrencies. In fact, many cryptocurrency developers are first inspired by bitcoin to build technology and begin the process.

**What role do the world's major exchanges play in the cryptocurrency financial markets?**

In this regard, it is better to say that cryptocurrency exchanges try to establish communication between people active in this field, and to establish this communication, they also receive a fee from people as a service fee. In general, if cryptocurrencies were not present, a market would not be formed and it would be difficult to buy and sell cryptocurrencies in the world. Another plan of cryptocurrencies is to identify projects and cryptocurrencies that start at a specific time.

**Unlike many financial markets that have been affected by Covid-19, why did the cryptocurrency market react and see the unprecedented growth of most cryptocurrencies?**

It is safe to say that he was initially impressed by Covid-19, but recovered quickly. On March 17, 2019, the price of Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies fell by an average of 60% due to the spread of the Corona virus (the first wave of Covid-19). After a very short period (approximately 4 months) it returned to the price before the outbreak period. The cryptocurrency market is controlled by the amount of supply and demand in the international market, and ordinary people determine its price trend. This market can be much more profitable and even riskier than other financial markets, the process of which is determined by government or government-affiliated institutions and organizations. Entering the field of cryptocurrencies undoubtedly requires knowledge and it is by no means recommended to enter this market with little knowledge, because due to the very high risk, it can cause a lot of damage to people's capital.

**How do you evaluate the cryptocurrency market in the post-Covid-19 era?**

The corona virus has caused many people around the world to face a new form of capital and wealth. Covid-19 disease has changed people's lifestyles in many areas, and the world has rapidly shifted to the world of the Internet and digitalization. Covid-19 made people look at money and banknotes digitally as well. As a result, people's habits for investing changed. In the current situation, the mood of people in investing and earning money has changed due to the outbreak of Covid-19 disease. For this reason, we are witnessing a significant growth of cryptocurrency markets. During the Covid-19 pandemic, people became acquainted with new and exciting ways of earning money in quarantine. Certainly in the post-Covid-19 era, people around the world and future generations will become more familiar with the field.

**E**merging cryptocurrency markets these days offer investors a new opportunity to monetize and increase their capital by participating in this market. Although the outbreak of Covid-19 has caused traditional capital and financial markets around the world to stagnate, the cryptocurrency market is still reversing. These markets are becoming more attractive and prosperous every day. The fans of such markets are increasing. These markets also have their own attractions for our country's investors, and evidence shows that Iranian investors have also been happy with this market. If you want to know more about the current state of the cryptocurrency capital market and the future of such digital capital markets in the post-corona era, read our interview with Sina Estavi, a cryptocurrency capital market analyst active in blockchain project development.

**Can the cryptocurrency market be considered a new type of capital market?**

Basically, capital markets have a special shape and are very influential in the decisions of different governments and countries; But the field of cryptocurrencies and its international market is completely independent of government decisions. The cryptocurrency market is controlled by the supply and demand of people in the market, so it can be acknowledged that ordinary people and individuals determine the market trend. In a way, emotions play an important role in the market. Of course, we must point out that unlike other capital markets, cryptocurrencies need more knowledge than before, and people must undoubtedly enter this field with a sufficient level of knowledge.

**Do cryptocurrencies only play a role in digital capital markets, or are other blockchain technology products influencing these new financial markets?**

There is basically a powerful technology behind every cryptocurrency that is constantly evolving. As a result, people with good knowledge of new technologies can find their main path in this field. In fact, I have to point out that

**Many financial experts consider cryptocurrencies to be parallel currencies. Are these cryptocurrencies a threat to traditional currencies in countries and the global economy?**

One of the things that can be mentioned is the elimination of traditional currencies; Because these currencies are limited to a specific time and place and in a way cause a lot of energy and money to be spent on them to reach the people of the community. Most importantly, due to the paperiness and short life of banknotes, the reproduction of banknotes causes damage to the environment. Ultimately, the best alternative to wasting the energy and national capital of any country is the digital sphere and the entry of governments into the Internet. Over the past year, the Covid-19 outbreak has led many countries to switch to digital platforms. Meanwhile, digital markets have grown significantly. The blockchain platform and the cryptocurrency market have also been considered by people from different communities in this field. In my opinion, cryptocurrencies are not a threat to the global economy, but an opportunity for the global economy to flourish.

**What factors affect the behavioral response of investors in the cryptocurrency market?**

As mentioned, there are real people in the cryptocurrency market, and you put a person's emotions behind every trade. As a result, some people are influenced by the communities and do business on the same basis, while others are looking for the development and development of capital and are present in the market with this new perspective. People have different moods, but they can have similarities. These differences and behavioral similarities in different situations, can cause people to play influential roles in the cryptocurrency capital market.

**What makes Bitcoin superior to other cryptocurrencies in this market?**

If you look at the history of bitcoin, you will see that this cryptocurrency was an unknown creator named Satoshi Nakamoto, and many people around the world are looking for his identity, but to date no information has been found about him. Bitcoin, meanwhile, is not controlled by anyone, and in a way it is only individuals with different financial positions that have shaped the market for these cryptocurrencies. Of course, it should also be noted that all over the world,

## MSC Ready to Build Naqsh-e Jahan Olympic Sport Complex in 5 Years

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – The CEO of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) during unveiling ceremony of Martyr Haj Qasem Soleimani's bust at Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium of Isfahan voiced readiness of the company for constructing Naqsh-e Jahan Olympic Sport Complex in five years.

Addressing the ceremony Mr. Hamid Reza Azimi said, "Today we are unveiling the statue of a figure that safeguard of independence and security of the country was very important to him and in this line we should elevate the stand of the country based on the goals and ideals of these martyrs."

He added many sport projects have been implemented in different parts of the country but the country has not yet built an Olympic sport complex. He noted that MSC has repeatedly said that if a land around 300 hectares around the stadium is handed over to the company, it can construct the Olympic Sport Complex where all national sports events in all fields can be held and even it can host the Asian Games. Azimi expressed hope this demand of the company would be accepted by officials. He reiterated that MSC will accept all costs of building the Olympic sport complex, noting that Iran and Islamic establishment has not yet built an Olympic sport complex for the society, expressing hope this would happen by MSC.

He also felicitated the foundation anniversary of Mobarakeh Steel Company, saying that several companies are working under its supervision. Azimi reiterated that MSC enjoys having an important stand and it is a cultural and economic enterprise which is fully aware of its responsibilities. He noted new type of steel slip has been produced by the company which is the result of his colleagues in the company with reliance on the home-made equipment.



## Decrease in Risk Rate at Persian Gulf Star Refinery

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Risk Manager of Persian Gulf Star Oil Company (PGSOC) says the risk rate at Persian Gulf Star Refinery has decreased from 1.35 to 1.2 in recent two years, adding that if this trend goes on, the refinery can reduce the risk rate to 1.1, which is a big achievement.

Mehdi Alizadeh said that since his arrival at the company, he had realized that the insurance of the refinery was a very vital issue and he felt it should be studied and revised. He went on to say, first he studied the medical insurance policy of the staff and found that the type of contract contradicts with the Central Insurance Company's statute and this was against the company and its staff's interests.



Alizadeh noted that the company corrected the topics of the insurance policy, and new contract was signed with the insurer based on the experts' views.

He said since the risk rate is very important parameter in the insurance costs, the company tried to reduce the rate because the more the rate is lower the less the company will pay premium.

Alizadeh further said that the risk rate of the refinery was 1.35 in 2018 and it was lowered to 1.3 till March 2019 but due to endeavors of the company, the risk rate was lowered from 1.3 to 1.25, and last year it was decreased to 1.2.

He reiterated that if the current trend goes on, the risk rate of the refinery will be lowered to 1.1 in two years which will be a big achievement for the youngest refinery of the country.

## Over 1.2m Tons of Coal Concentrate Produced in 9 Months

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran produced 1.224 million tons of coal concentrate in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 20, 2020), according to the data released by the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry.

The ministry's data show that the production of coal concentrate has fallen 1.5 percent in the nine-month period of this year from that of the previous year.

Iran has produced 1.242 million tons of the product in the first nine months of the past year.

As previously announced by the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMDRO), a total of 1,585,531 tons of crude coal was extracted in the past Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19, 2020).

### MOBIN ENERGY PERSIAN GULF CO.

#### Golden Statue of the Ministry of Oil's Social Responsibility Conference for the Persian Gulf Energy Sustainability Report

The first sustainability report of Mobin Energy Persian Gulf Co. in the fifth conference of social responsibility of the Ministry of Oil, won first place and a golden statue. According to Mobin Energy Public Relations, the fifth conference of social responsibilities of the Ministry of Oil was held online this year under the influence of Corona. The level of quality and quantity of submitted reports was significantly increased. The closing ceremony of this conference was held on 13 and 14 January. According to the Stability Report, the three national companies topped the list. Mobin Persian Gulf Energy Company was one of them. The company has had significant activities in environmental protection. Consecutive acquisition of a pollution-free certificate in ten years, as well as protection of the endangered species of eagle-beaked tortoise, have been the reasons for obtaining this rank. Among the rare measures of energy, we can mention self-sufficiency in the production of three thousand pieces and high currency savings in this regard. This issue was considered by the judges of this conference and it was appreciated.

کسب مقام اول و تقدیر  
طلایی بنجمین همایش  
مسئولیت اجتماعی  
صنعت نفت در بین کلیه  
شرکتهای وزارت نفت

MEC Mobin Energy Persian Gulf Co.



## Ugandan Opposition Says Troops Raid Its Offices

KAMPALA (Reuters) - Bobi Wine, leader of Uganda's main opposition party, said troops raided its headquarters on Monday as staff tried to prepare a legal challenge to President Yoweri Museveni's declared victory in an election last week.

Wine, himself under house arrest, said party leaders were now on the run. "Our party office has been raided by the military and been cordoned off," Wine told Reuters. "Everybody is being pursued."

Police spokesman Patrick Onyango said the National Unity Platform (NUP) office had been cordoned off for security reasons, but he gave no more details and did not say if troops had entered the premises.



## Two UN Troops Killed in C. Africa

BANGUI (AFP) - Rebels killed two peacekeepers in the Central African Republic on Monday, the UN mission MINUSCA said, hours after the top court confirmed President Faustin Archange Touadera's re-election in a December vote marred by low turnout.

The peacekeepers -- a Gabonese and a Moroccan -- were killed in an ambush on their convoy near the southern city of Bangui, a city that the UN said at the weekend had been retaken from armed groups who had seized it two weeks earlier. The attack, the latest in a series blamed on a coalition of armed groups that mounted a failed coup ahead of the December 27 vote, brought the number of MINUSCA troops killed since then to seven.



## PM Wins Key Confidence Vote, Tougher Test Next



ROME (Reuters) - Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte won a crucial confidence vote in the Chamber of Deputies on Monday, hanging on to power after a junior partner quit his coalition and opened a political crisis amid the raging COVID-19 pandemic.

Had he lost the vote, Conte would have been forced to resign.

After his appeal to opposition and non-aligned lawmakers to back him following last week's walk-out by former premier Matteo Renzi's Italia Viva party, Conte's government won the lower-house vote by 321 to 259.

The margin was wider than expected and gave the government an absolute majority in the 629-seat chamber. Conte will face a tougher test in the upper house Senate, where the government had only a slim majority even when Italia Viva was still part of the coalition.

Looking to entice centrist and liberal lawmakers, Conte promised to revamp his policy agenda and shake up his cabinet, saying he wanted to modernise Italy and speed up implementation of a recovery plan for the recession-stricken economy.

"I ask for clear, transparent support, based on the strength and clarity of the proposal," Conte told the Chamber opening the confidence debate, condemning Renzi's tiny centrist party for abandoning the 17-month-old coalition.

"Let's be frank, we can't undo what has happened, we can't regain the trust and confidence that are essential conditions for working together. Now we have to turn the page," he said, apparently closing the door on any reconciliation with Renzi.

Italia Viva said it withdrew from the cabinet because it did not agree with the prime minister's handling of the twin coronavirus and economic crises.

Without mentioning Renzi by name, Conte said there was "no plausible justification" for his walkout, which risked damaging Italy at a time when it was president of the G20 group of major global economies.

Italy's borrowing costs rose on Monday as financial markets fretted over the political crisis, but a large-scale sell-off has been averted by the European Central Bank's large-scale purchases of Italian assets.

The outcome is highly uncertain but most observers expect Conte to win thanks to absences and abstentions, while falling short of an absolute majority.

That would allow him to remain in office for now as head of a minority government, but in an extremely precarious position if and when he tries to push through any contested legislation.

The most optimistic recent tally by political analysts has put Conte on 157 votes, four short of an absolute majority, though Monday's wider than expected victory margin may buoy the premier's hopes.

## Navalny Calls for Street Protests After Being Jailed

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny on Monday urged Russians to take to the streets in protest after a judge remanded him in pre-trial detention for 30 days despite calls from Western countries to free the opposition politician.

The United Nations and Western countries had told Moscow before the ruling to let Navalny go, and some countries have called for new sanctions on Moscow, which on Monday told them to mind their own business.

The ruling to remand him in custody for violating the terms of a suspended jail sentence, a day after he flew back to Russia for the first time since he was poisoned with a nerve agent last summer, could be the prelude to him being jailed for years.

Moscow's prison service has applied to convert a suspended three-and-a-half year embezzlement sentence in the same case, which he says was trumped up, into real jail time early next month. He faces three other separate criminal cases too. As Navalny was led out of a police station, he told supporters that the only thing they needed to be afraid of was their own fear.

## Clashes in Darfur Region Leave Dozens Dead

NYALA (Dispatches) - The latest inter-ethnic violence to rock Sudan's restive Darfur region had killed nearly 140 people by Monday, tribal leaders said just weeks after a peacekeeping mission ended operations.

Clashes left 55 people dead in South Darfur on Monday, after a separate round of violence in West Darfur reportedly killed 83 and displaced tens of thousands over the weekend.

It was the worst violence reported since the signing of a peace agreement in October, which observers had hoped would end years of war.

The bloodshed, which appeared not to involve any signatories to the deal, came just over two weeks after the United Nations / African Union peacekeeping force UNAMID ended years of operations.

While former rebels have committed to laying down their arms, decades of conflict have left the vast, impoverished region awash with weapons and divided by bitter rivalries over land and water. In South Darfur, fighting broke out early Monday between the powerful Arab Rizeigat tribe and the Fallata, a cattle and camel-herding people who trace their roots to the Fulani of western Africa.

"The clashes between the Rizeigat tribe and the Fallata tribe have killed 55 people, and wounded 37 others," local Fallata leader Mohamed Saleh told AFP.

Saleh said that several homes were torched in the attack, which appeared to be in revenge for Fallata tribe's killing of a Rizeigat member around a week ago. The fighting in South Darfur comes after at least 83 people were killed in clashes between rival ethnic groups on Saturday and Sunday in El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur state.

On Monday, SUNA news agency quoted the West Darfur governor as saying the death toll was yet to be confirmed as uncounted bodies remained at the scene of the fighting.

Aid group Save the Children urged all sides to lay down their arms "before the situation gets out of control."



## Guatemalan Security Forces Break Up U.S.-Bound Migrant Caravan

VADO HONDO (AFP) - Guatemalan security forces on Monday broke up a caravan of some 4,000 Honduran migrants trying to reach the United States on a journey of thousands of kilometers through Central America on foot, AFP reporters witnessed.

Police advanced on the group in a coordinated move, striking batons against their shields to make an intimidating noise, prompting the migrants to scatter.

The group was still on Guatemalan soil, and many would likely regroup to resume their quest for a better life further north. The caravan, which departed Honduras on Friday, has been held up since Saturday at the town of Vado Hondo in southeast Guatemala, some 50 kilometers (31 miles) inside the border.

They have been waiting to pass, sleeping out of doors and blocking a key road where a massive logjam of cargo trucks has built up as a result.

As the migrants retreated before the advancing security forces Monday, several threw stones at police.

The officers responded with teargas as they attempted to drive the group back towards the Honduran border, thus clearing the road for trucks.

Women carrying small children were among those to flee before the police.

"I am going with my son, in Honduras I have

nowhere to live," a woman told the Guatevision channel, catching her breath after a brisk run.

"If we had money we would not be here heading north. They treat us like dogs, it should not be like this," said another woman, holding a small girl by either hand.

On Sunday, the group was confronted by police and soldiers wielding tear gas and batons under strict orders to stop anyone without travel documents or a negative coronavirus test going any further.

Several migrants were injured in Sunday's clashes, a health worker said.

Saying they are desperate to escape poverty, unemployment, gang and drug violence and the aftermath of two devastating hurricanes, the migrants aim to cross Guatemala and Mexico and walk all the way to the United States.

They are hoping for a warmer welcome, and a better life, in the America of President-elect Joe Biden after years of anti-immigrant rhetoric by Donald Trump. Some 9,000 have set out from Honduras since Friday.

On Monday, Guatemalan migration authorities said more than 1,500, including 208 children, have since returned to Honduras. Some 800 people were stuck in a neighboring town to Vado Hondo.



## Bolsonaro Allies Set to Win Control of Brazil's Congress

BRASILIA (Reuters) - Despite a deep recession and the world's second-deadliest COVID-19 outbreak, candidates backed by Brazil's right-wing president Jair Bolsonaro are expected to win control of Congress next month, politicians and analysts said on Monday.

Bolsonaro is openly supporting center-right Congressman Arthur Lira for speaker of the lower chamber against centrist Balaia Rossi, who has the backing of current Speaker Rodrigo Maia and lawmakers keeping their distance from the president.

Lira, who cast himself as fiscally conservative in a written exchange with Reuters, has more than the 257-vote majority needed, according to risk consultancy Arko. That means an uphill battle for Rossi and the left-wing parties he is courting, which favor more help for low-income Brazilians hurt by the pandemic.

With more than 8.5 million confirmed COVID-19 cases and over 209,000 deaths - second only to the United States - the second wave of Brazil's outbreak is likely to raise pressure on the government to spend more, widening its huge budget deficit.

Hospitals in the jungle city of Manaus are overwhelmed again, prompting pot-banging protests in Brazil's largest cities over the handling of the pandemic by Bolsonaro, who has repeatedly denied the gravity of the virus.

On the economic front, Ford Motor Co announced last week it was shutting production in Brazil and cutting about 5,000 jobs, in a symbolic blow for a country that likely suffered its worst recession on record in 2020.

Yet polls show Bolsonaro has retained public support in the crisis, with 37% of those polled calling him a "good" or "great" president in both August and December surveys by pollster Datafolha. That solid support, along with a growing willingness to discuss traditional horse-trading in Congress, have helped him secure a political base of center-right lawmakers.

His favored candidate in the Senate, Rodrigo Pacheco of the Democrats party, has a clear lead to become president of the Senate, by 46 senators to 33 for his rival Simone Tebet, according to Arko.





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## Samsung Chief Jailed for 2.5 Years Over Corruption Scandal

SEOUL (Dispatches) - The de facto chief of South Korea's Samsung business empire was convicted Monday over a huge corruption scandal and jailed for two and a half years, in a ruling that deprives the tech giant of its top decision-maker.

Lee Jae-yong, vice-chairman of Samsung Electronics, the world's biggest smartphone and memory chip

maker, was found guilty of bribery and embezzlement in connection with the scandal that brought down president Park Geun-hye.

Lee "actively provided bribes and implicitly asked the president to use her power to help his smooth succession" at the head of the sprawling conglomerate, the Seoul Central District Court said in its verdict.



## China Enters 2021 After Recording Lowest Economic Growth in 40 Years

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's economy picked up speed in the fourth quarter, with growth beating expectations as it ended a rough coronavirus-stricken 2020 in remarkably good shape and remained poised to expand further this year even as the global pandemic raged unabated.

The world's second-largest economy has surprised many with the speed of its recovery from the coronavirus jolt, especially as policymakers have also had to navigate tense U.S.-China relations on trade and other fronts.

Beijing's strict virus curbs enabled it to largely contain the Covid-19 outbreak much quicker than most countries, while government-led policy stimulus and local manufacturers stepping up production to supply goods to many countries crippled by the pandemic have also helped fire up momentum. Gross domestic product (GDP) expanded 6.5% year-on-year in the fourth quarter, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Monday, quicker than the 6.1% forecast by economists in a Reuters poll, and followed the third quarter's solid 4.9% growth.

GDP grew 2.3% in 2020, the data showed, making China the only major economy in the world to avoid a contraction last year as many nations struggled to contain the Covid-19 pandemic. And China is expected to continue to power ahead of its peers this year, with economists forecasting GDP to expand at the fastest pace in a decade at 8.4%, according to a Reuters poll.

"The higher-than-expected GDP number indicates that growth has stepped into the expansionary zone, although some sectors remain in recovery," Xing Zhaopeng, economist at ANZ in Shanghai. "Policy exiting will pose counter-cyclical pressures on 2021 growth."

Backed by the strict virus containment measures and policy stimulus, the economy has recovered steadily from a steep 6.8% slump in the first three months of 2020, when an outbreak of Covid-19 in the central city of Wuhan turned into a full-blown epidemic. Asia's economic powerhouse has been fuelled by a surprisingly resilient export sector, but China's consumption - a key driver of growth - has lagged expectations amid fears of a resurgence of Covid-19 cases.

Data last week showed Chinese exports grew by more than expected in December, as coronavirus disruptions around the world fuelled demand for Chinese goods even as a stronger yuan made exports more expensive for overseas buyers. Yet, underscoring the massive Covid-19 impact worldwide, China's 2020 GDP growth marked its weakest pace since 1976, the final year of the decade-long Cultural Revolution that wrecked the economy.

Overall, the slew of brightening economic data has reduced the need for more monetary easing this year, leading the central bank to scale back some policy support, sources told Reuters, but there would be no abrupt shift in policy direction, according to top policymakers.

On a quarter-on-quarter basis, GDP rose 2.6% in October-December, the bureau said, compared with expectations for a 3.2% rise and a revised 3.0 gain in the previous quarter. Highlighting the weakness in consumption, retail sales fell 3.9% last year, marking the first contraction since 1968, records from NBS showed. Growth in retail sales in December missed analyst forecasts and eased to 4.6% from November's 5.0%, as sales of garments, cosmetics, telecoms and autos slowed.

However, China's vast manufacturing sector continued to gain momentum, with industrial output rising at a faster-than-expected rate of 7.3% last month from a year ago, hitting the highest since March 2019.

## Japan's Ministers See Economy Picking Up

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's main economic ministers were cautiously optimistic on Monday that the world's third-largest economy is picking up from the Covid-induced slump thanks to stimulus spending, though the situation is severe with downside risks.

Addressing the opening session of parliament, Economy Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura said Japan's economy would grow 4 per cent in real terms and 4.4 per cent in nominal terms in the coming fiscal year, bringing gross domestic product back to pre-pandemic levels.

The projections appeared rosier than private-sector analysts' estimates, and the recent declaration of a state of emergency in Tokyo, the capital, and 10 other major regions raised the spectre of a double-dip recession this year.

"We will do the utmost to defeat deflation and revive the economy to meet the projections," Mr Nishimura said in a speech. "With the industrial world's heaviest public debt in mind, the ministers told parliament that they would strive to revive the economy and restore public finances simultaneously, while putting making coronavirus response a top priority."

"We will strive to achieve both economic revival and fiscal reform in order to bring the primary budget balance to a surplus in fiscal 2025," Finance Minister Taro Aso told parliament.

The primary budget, which excludes new bond sales and debt servicing costs, serves as a key gauge of fiscal health, but the coronavirus stimulus spending made the target even more elusive.

Japan has deployed a combined US\$3 trillion in economic packages to combat the health and economic crisis, with annual government bond issuance at an all-time high of 236 trillion yen (\$33 trillion).

Japan is saddled with a public debt burden at more than twice the size of its US\$5 trillion economy, by far the largest among industrial nations due to years of massive stimulus and the snowballing costs of supporting its fast-ageing population.



## Indicators Economy Pakistan Witnessing Significant Growth

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - At a time when the world economic growth rate has been hit hard by the COVID-19 (coronavirus) shocks, the economy of Pakistan has been showing significant progress as indicated by various indicators, depicting prudent policies of the government in running the country in these crisis times.

According to official figures, the Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) witnessed growth of 7.41 percent during the first five months (July-November) of the current fiscal year compared to the corresponding period of last year. While on year-on-year basis, the LSMI grew by 14.46 percent in November 2020 as compared to November 2019.

The monthly inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), decelerated to 8 percent on year-on-year (YoY) basis in December 2020, from 8.3 percent during November. On month-on-month (MoM) basis, it decreased by 0.7% in December as compared to an increase of 0.8 percent in November 2020 and a decrease of 0.3 percent in December 2019.

On revenue side, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) collected taxes of Rs2204 billion during the first half of the current fiscal year as against the revenues of Rs2101 during the corresponding period of fiscal year 2019-20, showing growth of 5 percent. The tax collection on year-on-year basis increased by 8.3 percent during the month of December 2020 compared to same month of last year. The collection during December 2020 was recorded at Rs508 billion against Rs469 billion in December 2019.

Meanwhile, the remittances from overseas Pakistanis during December 2020 rose by 16.2 per cent year-on-year to \$2,436 billion, compared to \$2,097bn in December 2019. The remittances remained above \$2 billion for the seventh consecutive month.

The remittance during the first half of the current fiscal year increased by 24.9 percent to \$14.2bn against the remittances of \$11.372 billion during July-December (2019-20).

Meanwhile, the overall, liquid foreign currency reserves held by the country, including net reserves held by banks other than the SBP, stood at \$20,519 million as on January 08, 2020 compared to \$18,658.1 in January 2020, showing increase of 9.97 percent.

The country's exports increased by 4.98 percent during the first half (H1) of the current fiscal year (2020-21) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. The exports from the country during July-December (2020-21) were recorded at \$12,098 billion against the exports of \$11,524 billion during July-December (2019-20), according to the latest PBS data.

During the month of December 2020, the exports went up to \$2,366 billion against the exports of \$1,988 billion in December 2019, showing growth of 19.01 percent.

## Turkey's Economy To Grow 4% in 2021



ISTANBUL (Reuters) - Turkey's economy will grow 4.0% in 2021, rebounding well from a slump brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, while inflation was seen falling to 11.6% due to tight monetary policy, according to a Reuters poll.

The economy contracted nearly 10% on an annual basis in the second quarter, when the initial COVID-19 wave hit, but swung back to growth in the third quarter and is expected to narrowly avoid a contraction for 2020 as a whole.

The Jan. 11-18 poll of economists saw growth of 0.6% last year based on the median, with some forecasting a contraction.

Despite the constraints on growth last year, inflation remained high and rose to near 15% in December. The central bank has hiked its key interest rate to 17% to cool prices, even as a second coronavirus wave has again slowed economic growth.

Turkey's economy was expected to have grown 2.4% in the final quarter of 2020 and to expand 2.0% in the first quarter of 2021, according to the median.

It is expected to expand 4.0% in full-year 2021, according to the median estimate of 38 economists, after growth surges to 8.4% in the second quarter.

The finance minister and central bank governor - both appointed in early November - will focus on correcting macro imbalances rather than reverting to a policy of stimulating demand, Berna Bayazitoglu of Credit Suisse said. "We expect economic activity to contract in H1 2021 in sequential terms, the pressure on the balance of payments to ease and headline inflation to slow from May-June 2021," she said in a note.

Bayazitoglu added the outlook depended on President Tayyip Erdogan's tolerance for high rates and slow growth, given the economy has underperformed in recent years, chipping away at public support for his ruling political alliance.

## Malaysia to Roll Out Additional \$3.7b Stimulus Measures

KUALA LUMPUR (Reuters) - Malaysia will introduce 15 billion ringgit (\$3.71 billion) worth of additional stimulus measures to support its pandemic-hit economy and fight COVID-19, Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said on Monday.

Last week, Malaysia declared a state of emergency and imposed a nationwide travel ban and lockdowns in the capital and five states to help curb the spread of the outbreak, which has been worsening in recent days in the Southeast Asian country. Muhyiddin said strict curbs under the movement control order (MCO), which took effect on Wednesday, should not have as much of an impact on the economy compared to the last lockdown in March since more economic activities are allowed to continue.

"As such, the impact of the current MCO to the economy is expected to be manageable," Muhyiddin told a televised address. Public mobility and businesses ground to a near halt over six weeks between March and April after the government imposed strict coronavirus curbs, causing Malaysia's economy to contract for the first time in more than a decade in the second quarter.

The government's new aid measures include an additional 1 billion ringgit to fund procurement of more supplies for frontline healthcare workers, including reagents and screening kits and personal protective equipment.

Banks will also extend a moratorium on loans and restructure repayment for individuals and businesses, while the government will expedite disbursement of cash aid to low income families and individuals and broaden the scope of a wage subsidy plan for employers.

## Canada's Economic Recovery Faltering

BENGALURU (Reuters) - Canada's economy will hit a major roadblock during the first quarter of 2021 before gaining momentum in the next quarter, according to economists in a Reuters poll who said the country's GDP would reach its pre-pandemic growth levels within a year.

Although economic activity had recovered partially from a record drop -7.5% in Q1 and 38.1% in Q2 - in the first half of 2020, it took another hit after a resurgence in coronavirus infections led to renewed tight containment measures.

The Jan. 11-18 Reuters poll of over 40 economists predicted the economy, which grew a record annualized 40.5% in the third quarter of 2020, expanded 3.8% in the fourth quarter, a third consecutive downgrade.

It was expected to grow just 0.7% this quarter - the weakest since polling began for that period in October 2019, with five of 18 contributors predicting a contraction.

"With cases and hospitalizations surging across Canada, the second wave of the pandemic threw a bucket of cold water on the economic recovery. Many businesses already weakened by the first bout of the crisis will find it harder to survive the second wave," said Ksenia Bushmeneva, economist at TD.

"While the eventual ramp up in vaccine distribution offers hope of a strong economic rebound in the second half of the year, the economy is entering 2021 on a wobbly footing and could suffer a modest contraction in the first quarter."

Despite expectations for a solid recovery from next quarter - primarily backed by vaccine optimism - the economy was forecast to grow 4.4% in 2021, the weakest prediction for the year since January 2020.

Still, nearly 70%, or 16 of 23 economists who replied to an additional question said Canadian GDP would reach pre-COVID-19 levels "within a year." Five said "within two years" and two said "two or more years."

"We expect Canadian GDP growth will pick up in Q2 and the following quarters as vaccine distribution ramps up, allowing for a more sustained easing in containment measures as 2021 progresses," said Josh Nye, senior economist at RBC Economics.

Meanwhile, the unemployment rate, which edged up in December to 8.6%, was expected to slow to 7.0% and 6.2% by end-2021 and end-2022, respectively. If realised, that would still be above the pre-COVID-19 levels of around 5.5%.

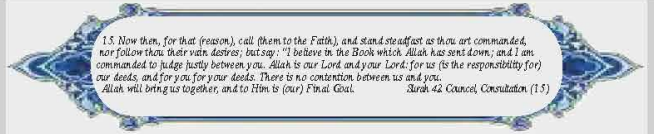
All 21 economists who answered another question said inflation would either pick up significantly or stay around the same as last year, but poll median showed inflation would average 1.7% and 1.9% this year and next, respectively, below the Bank of Canada's target of 2.0%.





PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:15
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:38
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:43
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:11



# N. Korea's Parliament Approves New Development Plans

SEOUL (AP) — North Korea's rubber-stamp parliament has passed decisions made by a major ruling party meeting where leader Kim Jong Un vowed to bolster his nuclear deterrent and established plans to salvage the country's battered economy.

The North's Korean Central News Agency said Monday that members of the Supreme People's Assembly during Sunday's meeting unanimously supported the development plans for the next five years that were revealed during the Workers' Party congress that ended last week.

The assembly also approved a major reshuffle of the Cabinet, which Kim had criticized over failures in economic policies. KCNA said six of the Cabinet's eight premiers were replaced.

North Korean premier Kim Tok Hun, who has led the Cabinet since August after his predecessor was sacked, said during a speech at the assembly that "serious mistakes" were observed while the Cabinet implemented the previous five-year development plan that ended last year.

Reports and images from state media suggested Kim Jong Un did not attend the assembly. State media also didn't mention a reshuffling of the State Affairs Commission, the government's highest decision-making body that is led by Kim.

Meetings of the Supreme People's Assembly are usually brief, annual affairs that are intended to approve budgets, formalize personnel changes and rubber-stamp policy priorities set by Kim and the ruling party leadership.

During the party congress, Kim called for accelerated national efforts to build a military arsenal that could viably target Asian U.S. allies and the American homeland and announced a long wish-list of new sophisticated assets, including longer-range intercontinental ballistic missiles, nuclear-powered submarines, spy satellites and tactical nuclear weapons.

But it's unclear whether North Korea is fully capable of developing such systems. While the country is believed to have accumulated dozens of nuclear weapons, outside estimates of the exact status of its nuclear and missile program vary widely.

The North showcased some of its most advanced strategic assets during a nighttime



military parade on Thursday, including what appeared to be a new ballistic missile that is being developed to be fired from submarines.

In an article published last week on 38 North, a website specializing in North Korea studies, analyst Michael Elleman said that the new missile was similar in size with another submarine-launched ballistic missile the North rolled out during a parade in October. He noted that the new missile, which the North designated as "Pukguksong-5," had a payload shroud that was slightly longer than the previous one.

"These dimensional similarities indicate North Korea is still in the process of settling on a specific design for its next-generation SLBM," said Elleman, who projected the Pukguksong-5 to have a possible range of around 3,000 kilometers (1,860 miles) when completed.

But "there have been no reports of North Korea ground testing large solid-rocket motors recently, another indication that the Pukguksong-5 design remains on the drawing board," he said.

Central Asia...

FROM PAGE 1

Perhaps it can be analyzed in terms of structural defense that all Central Asian countries have this concern that Shanghai Cooperation Organization may turn into an anti-West bloc or an East NATO; therefore, these countries do not have any will to enter an open encounter with other countries, regions or treaties. They are cooperating with the U.S. as one of their partners but this cooperation will continue until the U.S. does not dominate the strategic and lasting strategic affairs in those countries. Their relations with China is like it; the Central Asian countries broke away from the USSR in the '90s and today China is the main trade partner of them except Kazakhstan and this happens while with propagation policies of the U.S. intelligence service CIA and Western intelligence services, the project of Sinophobia has been spread in the region and to some extent in the Central Asia, and it is because these countries are moving on course to adjust their relations with China and to reduce the role of Beijing in their economic and political relations.



These countries never want to agitate the U.S. with their policies of both eastern and western. In such a condition, an appropriate capacity is provided for the Islamic Republic of Iran to enter more interactions and co-operations with these states with taking into consideration the two acceptable and strategic principles of those countries as the principles of diversification and balance that I earlier explained in my article.

Of course one should regard this point that Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan do not want to replace China with Russia or the U.S. or to replace China with Iran. These countries do not want Iran, Russia and China to enter cooperation with them in order to encounter the U.S. influence in the region. If Iran from this angle looks at lucrative scene of cooperation with the Central Asian countries not like the past and in an exact and defined framework and brings in the important fields of for bilateral cooperation like rail, road and air transit or laying the ground for the arrival of private sectors of both parties in the framework of keeping the reciprocal balance and activate them, it can materialize convergent strategy with the neighbors.

Undoubtedly this strategy can meet the political, social and economic interests of all of these countries. In our religious thought, neighbor has had and has a rooted and attractive definition. Employing this content may activate this motivation in the opposite parties and boost tourism field between each two countries.

In the exports of agro products, cooperation with Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization and marine trade in the Caspian Sea with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan can be put on the agenda of both sides for cooperation. By the way, security and enforcement cooperation in the fields of combatting the drugs trafficking, terrorism and extremism especially with focus on Afghanistan will be welcomed by the Central Asian countries. So we look at them in terms of attractions and in return they look at us in terms of having a lasting relations. The next government in Iran will have a valuable climate ahead of it in this framework and in other words it can tie a 400-million-people population together with friendship.

## Producing Uranium Metal for "Peaceful Purposes"



TEHRAN (AFP) - Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran has downplayed the concerns expressed by the three European parties to the 2015 nuclear deal regarding Tehran's nuclear activities.

Asked by reporters about the recent statement from the UK, France and Germany, Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Tuesday, "The statement has been a joint statement from the spokespersons for the foreign ministries of the three countries, not a joint statement from the foreign ministers."

"Anyway, as already announced by the Atomic Energy Organization (of Iran), utilization of the uranium metal production factory in Isfahan, stipulated in the Parliament's legislation, and the production of advanced fuel (silicide) to be used at the Tehran Research Reactor, are two totally different issues," the spokesman added.

"What the (International Atomic Energy) Agency has reported on applies to the start of research and development activities to design a more advanced fuel for Tehran Research Reactor, dubbed silicide fuel," Khatibzadeh added, noting that Iran had informed the IAEA about the plan two years ago and has recently provided the UN nuclear agency with the designing information.

The uranium metal is an intermediate product in the process of producing silicide fuel, he noted, adding, "The Design Information Questionnaire (DIQ) for Isfahan uranium metal plant has not been yet submitted to the Agency (IAEA), and this will take place after the necessary arrangements and within a deadline set by the law."

The Foreign Ministry's spokesperson finally dismissed the baseless speculations about the issue, saying, "Uranium metal also has peaceful applications. A number of countries are currently using uranium metal-based fuel for their reactors, and this is not in contradiction to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Safeguards (Agreement) commitments of the countries. Moreover, this technology is a necessity in Iran, which must fulfill the patients' demands for nuclear medicine with the best quality, and it is completely based on humanitarian and peaceful grounds."

## Jask Oil Terminal Offshore Pipe-Laying Operation Begins

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The operator of Jask oil terminal project in southern Iran announced the beginning of the offshore pipeline extension operation for the early-phase of this project on Tuesday.

"Following the favorable weather conditions and the completion of initial preparations in recent days, the shore pulling operation of a 2.5-kilometer pipeline leading to the first single-point-mooring (SPM) of the terminal was started," Vahid Maleki said.

The mentioned operation is being carried out by a pipe-layer vessel called Sea Master, according to Maleki.

The official pointed to the implementation of this operation as the first part of the offshore development of Jask oil terminal and added "the offshore section of the early phase of this project will be completed with the construction of two 36-inch offshore pipelines with a total length of 12 kilometers, various coastal facilities, as well as a single point mooring."

Maleki put the physical progress of the first phase of the Jask oil terminal at 70 percent and said: "the early operation of this project will be realized by the end of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 20)."

As the country's second major oil terminal, Jask terminal is under construction by Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) on 60 hectares of land and with nearly €260 million of investment.

In line with the development of the mentioned oil terminal, a pipeline project, dubbed Goreh-Jask oil transfer project, is also underway which is going to provide Iran with an alternative route for the country's crude oil exports that are currently carried out through the Strait of Hormuz.

At the first phase, this project will have a capacity to transfer over 300,000 barrels of crude oil per day from Goreh to Jask oil terminal, the transfer capacity of the pipeline, however, can be increased up to 30 million barrels per day in the second phase of the project.



Still No Sign...

FROM PAGE 1

he replied: "the Islamic Republic of Iran has been prevented from using its funds with Korean banks, as a result of the Korean banks' full cooperation with the maximum pressure policy of the United States against Iran. This policy is against international law and not justified by legal principles. Therefore, we believe that those Korean banks should pay the damage suffered by the Islamic Republic of Iran during these two years. The amount of such damage is a technical issue which should be determined by banking and financial experts.

In response to a question whether the South Korean delegation give an indication that they can release the funds soon or they did give a time frame for when they can resolve the situation, Hemmati said, "The South Korean delegation mentioned that they have the political will to resolve the issue and enable Iran to make use of their assets, but the problem is that they want to comply with the U.S. policies and regulations as well."

Then in response to a question whether they were specific about what is stopping them from releasing the money or whether they are facing direct pressure from the U.S. government, for instance, or from certain U.S. banks, the top banker said, "There are a number of problems for the utilization of funds belonging to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iranian banks and financial institutions, including the Central Bank of Iran, are listed by the U.S. Treasury as sanctioned entities. Unfortunately, the Korean government has succumbed to the pressure and, unlike some other countries, refuses to

cooperate with Iran. Our other partners could find some ways so that we can use resources to import humanitarian goods, but the Korean government did not propose any reliable channel in this regard. The funds are held with Korean banks which have business with the U.S. banks and they take it as an excuse that the funds are Korean won and cannot be converted into euro directly."

Hemmati also said during his meeting with South Korean officials they promised that they would do whatever they could in order to release the funds. But this was not the first time they are making such promises.

He also added that the oil tanker and the seizure of that vessel linked to Iran's trapped funds was not discussed in the meeting.

In response to the question whether it possible to redirect the funds that Iran has trapped in South Korea into Instex or whether that is something that you have been discussing, Hemmati said, "Transferring the funds to Instex or the Swiss channel remains among the possible options but it is the second step. The first step is that we should witness a political will in Korean banks to release the funds and cooperate with Iranian banks. We have not witnessed such a political will yet. In addition, it needs to be reminded that Instex has been practically of little use so far and is mostly affected by the same U.S. sanctions. So Instex has not worked as we expected to make trades with the European countries beyond the U.S. sanctions, as the European countries have not had enough courage to hold their economic sovereignty."



## Kevin Na Wins Sony Open

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Kevin Na overcame a three-stroke deficit with six holes to play with three straight birdies and another on the 18th hole to win the Sony Open in Honolulu.

Na carded a 5-under-par 65 on Sunday to finish at 21-under 259 at Waialae Country Club.

The 37-year-old Na recorded his fifth PGA Tour victory by edging Chris Kirk and Chile's Joaquin Niemann, who tied for second one shot back.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

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

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## Zverev Splits With Federer's Management Firm

BERLIN (Reuters) - German Alexander Zverev has parted ways with Roger Federer's sports management company Team8, the world number seven said.

Zverev, who recently split with coach David Ferrer, reached his maiden Grand Slam final at the U.S. Open, picked up two ATP titles in Cologne and made the final of the ATP Masters 1000 event in Paris in 2020. "I reached my first Grand Slam final without my parents and brother being court-side due to them contracting COVID-19," Zverev wrote on Instagram.

## Knicks Cruise in Rout of Celtics

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Julius Randle and RJ Barrett each posted double-doubles Sunday afternoon as the visiting New York Knicks snapped a five-game losing streak with their most lopsided win in almost five years, a 105-75 rout of the Boston Celtics.

The Knicks never trailed in producing their biggest margin of victory since March 9, 2016, when they defeated the Phoenix Suns, 128-97. It was also New York's most lopsided victory over the Celtics since a 102-70 win on Nov. 4, 1997. The Celtics, who had their five-game winning streak snapped, suffered their most lopsided defeat since a 116-86 loss to the Cleveland Cavaliers in Game 3 of the Eastern Conference Finals on May 19, 2018. Boston's 75 points were its fewest in the regular season since an 83-75 loss to the Miami Heat on Jan. 1, 2015. They scored 72 in a playoff loss to the Atlanta Hawks in 2016.

Randle finished with 20 points and 12 rebounds while Barrett had 19 and 11, respectively. Immanuel Quickley had 17 points and a team-high eight assists off the bench while Obi Toppin (12 points) and Reggie Bullock (11 points) also got into double digits.

### Chicago Bulls 117 - Dallas Mavericks 101

Lauri Markkanen had a season-high 29 points to go with 10 rebounds and Garrett Temple scored 17 of his season-high 21 points in the first half as Chicago snapped a four-game losing streak by beating host Dallas.

Bench scoring and ball movement boosted the Bulls, whose reserves outscored the Mavericks' 61-22. Chicago shot 50.6 percent behind six scorers in double figures while finishing with 32 assists against 13 turnovers. Chicago's defense produced a season-best 14 steals to help overcome a triple-double from Dallas' Luka Doncic, who amassed a game-high 36 points, 16 rebounds and 15 assists. Doncic scored 30 points in the first half on 11-of-19 shooting, establishing a new career best for scoring in the first 24 minutes.

### Los Angeles Clippers 129 - Indiana Pacers 96

Marcus Morris Sr. and Luke Kennard each scored 20 points to lead seven players in double figures, and host Los Angeles hammered Indiana.

Paul George also scored 20 for the Clippers, who played without forward Serge Ibaka (undisclosed illness) and guard Lou Williams (hip). Williams sat out his second consecutive



contest. Kawhi Leonard finished with 17 points, seven rebounds and five assists.

Doug McDermott scored 23 points on 9-of-12 shooting -- including 5 of 7 from 3-point range -- for the Pacers, who were without center Myles Turner (hand), the NBA's leader in blocks at 4.2 per game. Domantas Sabonis had 19 points, 14 rebounds and six assists.

### Utah Jazz 109 - Denver Nuggets 105

Jordan Clarkson led Utah with a team-high 23 points off the bench and Donovan Mitchell finished with 18 points to lead visiting Utah past Denver.

Bojan Bogdanovic, who couldn't play against Denver in the playoffs because of a wrist injury, was a bright spot for Utah with 17 points.

Nikola Jokic continued his torrid start to the season with 35 points, 14 rebounds and nine assists, but Denver fell behind early, finally took a lead, but couldn't fend off the Jazz in the second half.

## Nadal in ATP Top 10 for 800th Successive Week

LONDON (Dispatches) - Rafael Nadal on Monday became the first player to be ranked in the ATP top 10 for 800 consecutive weeks, a run spanning more than 15 years.

The world number two broke Jimmy Connors' previous record of 789 straight weeks in the top 10 in November.

The Spaniard first broke into the top 10 in April 2005, shortly before winning the first of his 13 French Open titles.

The 34-year-old is still over two-and-a-half-years short of matching Roger Federer's record of spending 931 weeks in total in the top 10.

There were no changes at the top of the rankings as players prepare for the Australian Open next month.

Some of the sport's biggest stars were among those told they would get no "special treatment" on Monday, with 72 players stuck in hotel quarantine in Australia after four Covid-19 cases on the chartered planes which flew players to the country.

## Atletico to Appeal Against Trippier 10-Week Ban

MADRID (Dispatches) - Atletico Madrid will appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) after Kieran Trippier's 10-week ban for breaching betting rules was upheld by FIFA on Monday.

Atletico will request Trippier's suspension is again put on hold while the appeal is being heard, raising the possibility of the defender again returning to action.

As it stands, Trippier is banned until February 28 and is due to miss eight La Liga fixtures, as well as Atletico's first leg at home to Chelsea in the Champions League last 16.

FIFA said in a statement on Monday the suspension handed to Trippier by the English Football Association (FA) applies worldwide.

But Atletico will now submit a fresh appeal to CAS, according to a club source, and request Trippier's ban is again put on hold again until it is completed. Trippier was able to play for Atletico against Sevilla last week after the English FA had failed to delay enforcing his ban until the result of Atletico's appeal to FIFA was known.

FIFA said in a statement on Monday: "The FIFA Appeal Committee has dismissed the appeal lodged by the club Atletico Madrid in a case concerning the player Kieran Trippier. "As a consequence, the decision of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee passed on 23 December 2020 is confirmed, extending sanctions imposed on the player by the English FA to have worldwide effect."

## Davis Cup Finals to Take Place Over 11 Days, Three Cities

LONDON (Reuters) - The 2021 Davis Cup Finals will be held over 11 days rather than seven and will almost certainly be staged across three cities, the International Tennis Federation (ITF) confirmed on Monday.

The changes proposed by the ITF's event partner Kosmos Tennis, the Spanish-based investment firm who are pumping in \$3 billion over 25 years, were agreed by the ITF Board. This year's event is scheduled for Nov 25-Dec 5.

The ITF confirmed that two more European cities are being sought to share the staging of the 2021 Finals with Madrid which hosted the first edition of the revamped competition in 2019.

## Kyrgios Calls Djokovic "Tool" After Quarantine Demands

LONDON (Reuters) - Nick Kyrgios joined former Davis Cup player Sam Groth in criticizing Novak Djokovic after the Serbian world number one reportedly wrote to Australian Open organizers asking them to ease quarantine restrictions for players.

Passengers who arrived on three charter flights have been placed into hard quarantine, including more than 70 players who are unable to train outside their rooms for 14 days before the year's first Grand Slam starts on Feb. 8.

A Spanish tennis website reported that Djokovic wrote to Tennis Australia boss Craig Tiley with a list of "demands", asking for reduced isolation periods and having players moved to "private houses with tennis courts".

Djokovic's management team did not immediately respond to request for comment. Kyrgios criticised Djokovic time and again in 2020 for organizing the Adria Tour

exhibition event in the Balkans, where multiple players including the top-ranked Serbian contracted the virus.

"Djokovic is a tool," Kyrgios, ranked 47th in the world, said on Twitter.

Djokovic, who opted to rent a private house instead of staying at a hotel during the 2020 U.S. Open, is among top players who are serving their mandatory quarantine in Adelaide before travelling to Melbourne for the year's first Grand Slam. Many Australians have questioned the decision to host the tournament with organizers flying in 1,200 players and their entourages when thousands of citizens are stranded overseas due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Djokovic, who set up the breakaway Professional Tennis Players' Association last year after resigning as the head of ATP's Players Council, was looking to gain popularity, said Australian Groth.

"Is he serious? It's a selfish political move to gain popularity," he wrote in his column here for The Herald Sun. Groth also pointed to the criticism Djokovic received for organizing the Adria Tour in June. "To suggest players should have shorter quarantine isn't only ridiculous, it's insulting to Australians that have had to endure it," Groth added.

"What did he think would happen? That (Victoria's Premier) Dan Andrews would say 'sure Novak anything you want'? Spare me."

## Tokyo to Cut Back on Athletes at Olympics Opening Ceremony

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Tokyo Olympics organizers said Monday they will slash the number of athletes at the opening and closing ceremonies of this year's coronavirus-delayed Games, as a report said thousands fewer will attend.

More than 11,000 athletes are expected to compete at the Tokyo Games, but anti-virus measures limiting the time they can spend in the Olympic Village mean not all will be able to attend the opening and closing festivities. Organizers said they would also "reconsider" how many athletes can take part in the ceremonies, and how to get them into the stadium safely.

"In order to ensure the safety and security of the athletes and simplify operations at the Tokyo 2020 Games, we believe it is necessary to reconsider the number of participants at the opening and closing ceremonies and how they will enter the stadium," the organizing committee said in a statement.

A report in Japan's Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper on Monday said the International Olympic Committee expects only 6,000 athletes to take part in the July 23 opening ceremony, citing unidentified sources.

Tokyo 2020 organizers said the details are still being worked out in discussions with the IOC and other organizations, and "a specific approach has not been decided yet".

The organizing committee has insisted the Games can go ahead even if the virus has not been brought under control, and unveiled a raft of anti-virus measures in a 53-page interim report in December. Athletes cannot check in to the Olympic Village -- which can accommodate 18,000 people -- more than five days before their event, and must leave two days after finishing their competition.



## Chiefs Reach AFC Championship

NEW YORK (Reuters) - The reigning Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs beat the Cleveland Browns on Sunday to reach the AFC Championship, but it may have come at a cost as Patrick Mahomes was knocked out of the game during the third quarter due to a concussion.

With the winner of next week's game between the Chiefs and visiting Buffalo Bills moving onto the Feb. 7 Super Bowl, all eyes will turn to Kansas City to see if quarterback Mahomes will be healthy enough to compete.

Mahomes, who was named the Most Valuable Player of last year's Super Bowl, appeared dazed after he got up from a hit midway through the third quarter before eventually jogging to the Chiefs' locker room where he was further evaluated.

On the play, with the Chiefs facing a third-and-one, Mahomes went for the first down but was denied by Browns linebacker Mack Wilson and the front of his helmet slammed into the ground. Prior to leaving the game, Mahomes had completed 21-of-30 passes for 255 yards and a touchdown.

The quarterback's availability for the AFC Championship will depend on his progress through the NFL's concussion protocol in the week ahead. The top-seeded Chiefs led 19-10 when Mahomes went down and then, with the help of backup quarterback Chad Henne, held on to secure a 22-17 win and keep alive their hopes of a second consecutive trip to the Super Bowl.

In the closing minutes, Henne made a pair of big plays to secure the win. Henne broke free for a 13-yard run to set up a fourth-and-one and then connected with receiver Tyreek Hill on a five-yard pass for a first down before they ran out the clock.

