

**Spokeswoman for Health Ministry  
Sima Sadat Lari Said on Sunday  
Some 89 More Iranians Died of  
COVID-19 Over the Past 24 Hours  
As the Death Toll Mounted to 57,383**

**Iranian Defense Minister Said that  
Iran Aviation Industries Organization  
(IAIO) Has Always Been a Perfect  
Model for the Armed Forces and the  
Country in the Field of Countering  
Oppressive Sanctions**

VOL. XXVI, No. 7150 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

MONDAY JANUARY 25, 2021 - BAHMAN 6, 1399

2

DOMESTIC

**President Assures  
People of Bright  
Economic Future**



> SEE PAGE 2

3

DOMESTIC

**Europeans Killed the  
Time With INSTEX**



> SEE PAGE 3

6

INTERNATIONAL

**2021 Declared in Uzbekistan as  
The Year of Support for Youth  
And Public Health Promotion**

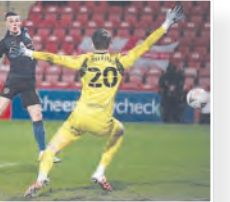


> SEE PAGE 6

8

SPORTS

**Man City Survive  
Huge FA Cup Scare,  
Arsenal Crash Out**



> SEE PAGE 8

## Iran Has Lost All Its Trust In U.S., Europe

TEHRAN (IFP) - A senior Iranian diplomat says the country has completely lost its trust in the United States and Europe.

Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Seyyed Abbas Araqchi said Tehran fulfilled its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal, but the U.S. and the Europeans failed to keep their side of the bargain.

"The Europeans either were unable to or did not want to deliver on their commitments. Of course, the result of both will practically be the same," he noted.

Araqchi further reiterated Tehran's demand that Washington lift its sanctions against Iran and rejoin the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"Iran's demand is a realistic one, and that is, the U.S. should lift the sanctions and return to the JCPOA," he said in an interview with the Italian newspaper la Repubblica. "We held talks in good faith, and implemented the JCPOA in good faith. Now, it is the new U.S. administration's turn to make up for the mistakes of the previous administration," Araqchi said.

"It was the U.S. that withdrew from the JCPOA, so it should return to the agreement itself. And in order to rejoin the nuclear deal, the U.S. should [first] lift all sanctions," he added.

**See Page 7**

## Health Minister Concerned About Circulation of COVID-19

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Health Minister Saeed Namaki on Sunday expressed concern about circulation of COVID-19 in the country, saying if a new wave of the disease takes place, the Iranians will have to endure far more hardship than before.

Speaking during a conference, he said that lowering the daily death toll to double digits was a great achievement, however, warning about the possibility of beginning of a new wave of disease.

What worries the health officials is the circulation of the disease from one Iranian city to another, Namaki said, adding that the travels have to be strictly controlled.

The minister said that the new variant of the virus is very complicated and every moment reveals a special form of itself which is different from the previous ones.

The new COVID variant also has very high pathogenicity and mortality, Namaki said.

"The new virus is not restricted to Europe and can spread in any climate, even if we control all the ways," he said.

He announced that COVID vaccination would begin soon in Iran.

**See Page 7**

## Yerevan, Tehran Keen to Augment Trade to \$1b in 6 Months



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran and Armenia signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Saturday for the expansion of trade ties between the two countries.

The MOU was signed by Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Alireza Razm Hosseini and the Armenian Economy Minister Vahan Kerobyan in Tehran.

Speaking on the sidelines of the signing ceremony, Razm Hosseini put Iran's exports to Armenia at about \$300 million and noted that the signing of this MOU will be a great step towards improving the level of trade between the two neighbors.

Pointing to Armenia's position as one of the members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), with which Iran has recently signed a preferential trade agreement, Hosseini said Iran is seeking to become a permanent member of the EAEU and Armenia could be of significant help in this regard.

According to the Iranian minister, areas like the mining industry, foodstuff, and home appliances could be good opportunities for the two countries to develop mutual cooperation.

Kerobyan for his part expressed his government's readiness for cooperation to boost mutual trade and produce joint products and to pave the way for Iran to enter the markets of third countries.

"We are ready to support Iranian traders to use Armenia for entering third countries," he said.

Kerobyan said that based on negotiations with Iranian envoy to Armenia, both countries are willing to augment trade to \$1b within six months.

He also praised Iran capacities and called for expanding economic relations between two countries.

Efforts should be made for export of both countries' products not only to Eurasia but to other states, he added.

He called for joint venture economic cooperation with Iran, saying that Iranian producers can finish part of their products in Armenia.

Kerobyan also said after signing the agreement that his country is ready for mutual trade and cooperation and joint productions to help Iran enter other countries' markets.

Noting that Armenia owns a big market, he said that Armenia is ready to host Iranian tradesmen to be able to enter the third countries.

**See Page 7**

## Iran, Tajikistan Ink Pact to Complete "Istiqlol Tunnel"

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian and Tajik officials penned an agreement on the completion of the second phase of the 'Istiqlol tunnel', located in the northwest of Tajikistan's capital of Dushanbe.

The signing ceremony was held in Dushanbe and was attended by Tajik officials, the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Deputy Minister of Planning and Supervision of the Iran Water & Power Resources Development Company Behrouz Moradi, the CEO of an Iranian company, and other Iranian and local guests.

Addressing the event, the Minister of Transport of the Republic of Tajikistan Azim Ibrahim called Tajikistan and Iran two friend countries with commonalities in language, culture, and history.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has been involved in the implementation of many infrastructure projects in Tajikistan including Sangtuda 2 Hydroelectric Power Plant and 'Istiqlol tunnel,'" he said, "Fortunately, today is the opportunity to start the second phase of the Istiqlol Tunnel project, and we hope that its completion would be a valuable gift to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Tajikistan's independence."

He further explained that due to the signed agreement, lighting, ventilation, firefighting, installation of surveillance cameras, etc. of the tunnel are taken into account.

Moradi, for his part, expressed content having the agreement signed after inking an MoU on January 2, 2020, between the Water and Power Resources Development Company of Iran (on behalf of the Ministry of Energy of Iran) and the Ministry of Transportation of the Republic of Tajikistan.

"We are witnessing the finalization of a cooperation agreement for the implementation of the second phase of the Istiqlol tunnel project between an Iranian company and the Ministry of Transport of Tajikistan under the pandemic and thanks to the mutual efforts," he added.

He hoped that the project would strengthen mutual cooperation between the two sides.

The Istiqlol tunnel is a 5,040 m long tunnel located 80 km northwest of Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe, at an elevation of 2,720 m.

The tunnel is part of the M34 highway and connects the Tajik capital to the country's second-largest city, Khujand.

## ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



## Albeit Biden Positive, His Team Is Negative

In the news it has been reported that U.S. President Joe Biden has assigned a special team to examine the impacts of the imposed U.S. sanctions against the countries to weigh the amount of their effects on the spread of the coronavirus in the U.S. This executive order can be interpreted as a shift in the mindset that Biden is not to re-sign the imposed sanctions on Iran that the U.S. presidents used to extend it every year in February.

Perhaps talks between Iranian Envoy and Permanent Representative to the UN Majid Takht Ravanchi with Biden's team can indicate this point that the Supreme Leader's message for rejoining the JCPOA and removing all sanctions has been considered as a possible return to the JCPOA which is not an unthinkable idea, and this notion has been transferred to the Biden team. That the Democrat, as they say, have lost Iran during the presidency of Jimmy Carter and been deprived of friendship with an aligned element like Muhammad Reza Pahlavi as an allied friend in the Persian Gulf, the most important energy reservoir in the world, and have always been weeping for compensating this damage somehow, is unforgettable.

Biden's approach, devoid of a blind obedience to the Zionists who see the Islamic Revolution as an obstacle in way of their existence, can lay the ground for making up the past damages and be a motivation for the Democrats for return to Iran at least in the economic sphere. But, of course, but the array of ten men in the Biden team who are Jews, and undoubtedly have been and still are dependent on the Zionist current, will without any doubt hinder the progress of these measures for Biden himself. Because after the arrival of the Biden team at the White House and starting the job, the mentioned elements have had some remarks about Iran which are rooted from this mindset which indeed will form their roadmap.

In this regard, the new U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken during the Senate meeting for his vote of confidence called Iran the biggest sponsor of terrorism. Meanwhile new U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin the Senate meeting for his approval for the job claimed Iran has always been both a threat to the U.S. allies in the West Asia and to its deployed forces in the countries in the region. If we put aside the remarks of these two men of the Biden team, on Saturday night the U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in an interview with Qatari TV channel Al-Jazeera said that the U.S. would cooperate with friends and allies to confront Iran's destructive influence and said the U.S. strongly condemns the threats (ignoring the Saudis' threats) created by Iran.

**See Page 7**

## Indonesia Seizes Iranian And Panamanian Tankers

JAKARTA (AP) — Indonesian authorities said that they seized an Iranian tanker and Panamanian tanker suspected of carrying out the illegal transfer of oil in their country's waters Sunday.

The tankers — the Iranian-flagged MT Horse and the Panamanian-flagged MT Freya — were seized in waters off Indonesia's West Kalimantan province, said Wisnu Pramadita, a spokesman for the Indonesian Maritime Security Agency.

He said the tankers are suspected of a variety of violations, including not displaying national flags, shutting off their identification systems, anchoring illegally as well as the illegal transfer fuel between ships and spilling oil.

Authorities were escorting the two tankers to Batam island in Riau Islands province for further investigation, he said.

Iranian state television acknowledged the tanker's seizure, citing Indonesian authorities. The report did not elaborate.

**See Page 7**



Advertisement Department  
**021-44253335-39**

www.irannewsdaily.com  
info@irannewsdaily.com

@irannewsdaily @irannewsdaily



# Leader Appoints Representative For Iranian Students in Europe

TEHRAN (MNA) – Leader of Islamic Revolution appointed Hojat-ol-Islam Ahmad Vaezi as the new Leader's representative in the affairs of the Islamic Association of Iranian students in Europe.

In a decree released on Sunday, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei appointed Hojat-ol-Islam Ahmad Vaezi as the new Leader's representative in the affairs of the Islamic Association of Iranian Students in Europe.

"I appoint you as my representative for Islamic Association of Iranian students in Europe, and I hope that you will succeed in establishing an intellectual, spiritual and emotional relationship with those dear youth who are among the future hopes of the country," the message read.

## President Assures People of Bright Economic Future

*IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK*

**TEHRAN - President Hassan Rouhani has assured the nation of a bright future for the Iranian economy as the failure of the U.S. economic war will open up a new chapter in trade ties.**

Speaking at a meeting of the government's economic coordination headquarters in Tehran on Sunday, Rouhani predicted that Iran's economic situation would improve given the easing of inflation expectations and increased oil and non-oil exports.

However, he added, the enemies are seeking to stop or slow down the positive trend through propaganda by their hostile media and psychological warfare.

"It has been proven to the government that the goal of the defeated directors of the economic war is to disrupt the country's economic peace, and today they are trying to make the victory of the nation against the economic war fruitless and bitter," Rouhani said.

"I am sure that economic activists and the people ... do not pay attention to such statements and measures, and strongly continue their activities with confidence, tranquility and hope for the bright horizon of the country's economy."

The Iranian chief executive further stressed that the failure of former U.S. President



Donald Trump's economic war has changed the view of Iran's trading partners, with the country's economic relations entering a new phase.

Iran has been under a series of illegal sanctions imposed by the U.S. since 2018, when Trump withdrew Washington from the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The U.S. unleashed the so-called maximum pressure campaign and targeted the Iranian nation with the "toughest ever" restrictive measures.

Rouhani stated that with the defeat of former Trump's economic war, the view of Iran's trade parties has changed and the country's economic relations are entering a new phase, adding that everyone should help manage sensitive markets such as foreign exchange within the policies of the central bank to reach the desired balance.

"The country's economic situation is improving rapidly, but keeping such a development requires calm and peace in the market."

## Iran Extends UK Travel Restrictions

TEHRAN (MNA) – Chief of Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) announced the travel restrictions to London were extended by the end of the current month (Feb. 18) due to the outbreak of coronavirus variant in the UK.

Touraj Dehghani Zanganeh said on Sunday that travel restrictions will continue through February 18, due to the new variant of COVID-19 in UK.

The deputy roads minister went on to say that no passenger is accepted at Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKIA) and Iran's National Flag Carrier "IranAir" will have no flights to London.

The Islamic Republic of Iran suspended its flight to the UK last month due to the spread of a new variant of COVID-19 in England, he said, adding, "According to the request of the National Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters, Iran cut off its flights to UK up to the end of Jan. 20 but the travel restrictions continued by Feb. 18 as well."

Last month, the Iranian Civil Aviation Organization announced all domestic and foreign airline companies as well as air ticket sales centers to ban sales of any ticket whether from Tehran to London and vice versa.

## Iran Constructing Sci-Tech Park at iLand City



TEHRAN (IFP) - Work is underway to construct a science and technology park in the newly-established commercial and entertainment township of iLand, southwest of Tehran.

Iranian Vice President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari visited the site of the park to see for himself the process of its construction.

"The potential created to build a sci-tech park has given fresh impetus to the trend of the formation of a smart city," he said.

He added the Science and Technology Department of the President's Office supports the development of knowledge-based infrastructure in the country.

"The purpose of this visit was to offer support to the development of innovation and technology ecosystem for companies and individuals who take steps towards solving problems of society through innovative services and solutions," he noted.

He said the department is seriously making efforts to establish knowledge-based companies, technological units and creative industries at the sci-tech park.

"By supporting this complex, we try to help further develop the potential of smart cities and set the stage for the development of advanced technologies in this atmosphere," the vice president said.

Located 35 km southwest of Tehran, the iLand commercial and entertainment township covering 1,400 hectares of land includes resort, residential and technological facilities. Part of the complex is allotted to the Iranians' Sci-Tech Park.

## Tehran Would Welcome Change of Genuine Approach by Riyadh

*IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK*

TEHRAN - Foreign Ministry says Saudi Arabia has begun to realize that its aggressive foreign policy has been a failure and appears to be revising some aspects of it accordingly, adding that the Islamic Republic would welcome any genuine change of approach by Riyadh.

"It looks like the Saudi officials have begun reforming some of their policies concerning interaction with some of the Persian Gulf's littoral countries, having understood that war and bloodshed does not help them out any more, and also having despaired of their former allies," Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said in remarks to ISNA that the news agency published on Sunday.

Khatibzadeh said if Riyadh has seriously put reforms on its agenda and come to the conclusion that "regional cooperation" was the best way out of the region's problems, the Islamic Republic would then be the first country to welcome the change.

"We have always emphasized that the regional countries should arrive at a common understanding regarding the regional problems," he said, adding that such understanding would help establish a "security mechanism" that could be used to govern the region, Khatibzadeh noted.

However, the kingdom has so far left Iran's proposals for negotiation and resolution of standing differences between the countries unanswered, the official lamented.

Regional powerhouse Iran's steady growth and burgeoning regional influence has hardly sat well with the Saudi kingdom over the past years. Riyadh cut its diplomatic ties with Tehran in early 2016 after its execution of senior Saudi Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr prompted angry protests in front of Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran.

Mohammed bin Salman's designation in 2017 as the next in line to assume Saudi kingship was followed by an exponential increase in Riyadh's animosity towards Tehran.

Under bin Salman, the kingdom along with the Israeli regime put pressure on the administration of



former U.S. President Donald Trump to withdraw from a historic nuclear deal with Iran, which Washington did in May 2018 and restored its draconian sanctions against Tehran.

Khatibzadeh reminded that Saudi Arabia tows a long record of violations against the region, from the war on Yemen and support for regional militancy and Takfiri terrorism to a 2017 Saudi-led regional blockade of Qatar.

Iran, by contrast, has been leading a responsible and at the same time lenient approach towards the regional issues and has exercised self-restraint in the face of misconduct by Saudi Arabia and others, he said.

Even if Riyadh might have some concerns, "the answer is not war," the official said.

The spokesman said that Tehran has always invited the kingdom to negotiation. He cited a proposal by President Hassan Rouhani, dubbed Hormuz Peace Initiative (HOPE), which is designed to enable reconciliation and further cooperation among all countries of the region, as a case in point.

"Some concerns may be delusional and lead to foreign intervention in the region," he said, adding, "We are even prepared to discuss these delusional and notional concerns."

Nevertheless, "the solution is in the Saudis' hands and they can solve this issue whenever they choose to," the official noted.

Separately, Khatibzadeh addressed the issue of a Korean tanker that was impounded by Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy on January 4 for endangering the marine ecosystem.

The official reminded that the capture was a purely technical matter, and that Iran had urged Seoul – which has asked Qatar to mediate the vessel's release – not to try to resolve the issue "through political channels."

The spokesman also pointed to a letter by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in which he has listed the countries that have outstanding membership debts to the world body, including Iran.

Khatibzadeh said Iran had duly picked the financial channel through which to pay the membership dues, but the U.S. sanctions have prevented the country from using the channels.

"We have asked them [the UN] to tell us how we were supposed to transfer this money so Americans cannot block it," the official noted, reminding that Iran's case differs from those of the countries that are in default of their membership fees.

Asked about a possible prisoner exchange with the United States, the official said Iran was prepared to go ahead with such a move under the newly-inaugurated administration of U.S. President Joe Biden.

He strictly rejected any accusation that the Islamic Republic had arrested any American citizen on its soil as means of "taking hostages."

The spokesman said the charges facing those who have been arrested in Iran are completely clear. "Some of these charges are serious, including abetting terrorist actions or military espionage and other measures against Iran's national interests."

This is while the Americans, he added, place Iranians under arrest or have them arrested elsewhere in the world only under the "hollow pretext" that they have bypassed Washington's sanctions against Tehran.

## ISOICO Strikes Deal to Build 1st Home-Made Jack-Up Drilling Rig



*IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK*

TEHRAN - Iran Shipbuilding and Offshore Industries Complex (ISOICO) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with North Drilling Company (NDCO) for the construction of the country's first locally-made jack-up offshore drilling rig.

The MOU was signed by the ISOICO Head Hamidreza Rezaian Asl and the NDCO Managing Director Masoud Eydi on the sidelines of the 25th edition of Iran International Oil, Gas, Refining, and Petrochemical Exhibition (Iran Oil Show).

Based on the MOU, the two sides will cooperate in designing and constructing the mentioned drilling rig which will be used for the development of oil and gas fields in shallow waters of the Persian Gulf.

NDCO had previously awarded the overhaul project of the Sahar 2 offshore drilling rig to ISOICO.

Addressing the ceremony, Mr Rezaian Asl pointed to the arrival of ISOICO to the drilling rig repair since 2011, adding that ISOICO for the first time by repairing the Modarres Platform proved its capability and now it has turned into a hub of repairing drilling rigs in the country. He then said the tariff of the company comparing to other ship-building companies in the region is 30 percent cheaper.

Since the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions on the Iranian oil industry, the country has been taking serious measures for cutting reliance on foreign sources for meeting its technological needs.

Designing and constructing drilling rigs has been one of the major achievements of the country's oil industry in this regard.

The drilling rig, called Fat'h-72 was completely designed and constructed by experts from the province's Academic Center for Education, Culture, and Research (ACECR) in Ahvaz, the capital city of Khuzestan.

Located on the costs of the Persian Gulf, Iran Shipbuilding and Offshore Industries Complex Company is an Iranian shipyard, active as a shipbuilder and ship-repairer of different types of vessels and offshore structures.

ISOICO is a subsidiary of the Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO).

## Oil Show Reveals Futility of Sanctions

TEHRAN (Shana) – First Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri said this year's Iran Oil Show literally proves the ineffectiveness of the sanctions on Iran.

During a visit to the 25th Iran Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition in Tehran on Sunday, the official said the exhibit is the country's largest energy event that has been held under the toughest sanctions on the country.

The First Vice President stated: "In this exhibition, I saw that the Iranian youth have big projects in the field of oil, gas and petrochemicals, we must be able to reach a level and gain such savvy to export our products."

Meanwhile Oil Minister said the country is able to supply 80% of the items and parts used in the petroleum industry.

Bijan Zanganeh who was accompanying Jahangiri said: "We are now able to manufacture and supply at least 80% of the fixed equipment of the oil industry inside the country."

"We have a shortage of capacity in seamless pipes production and we need to invest in CRA pipes," he said.

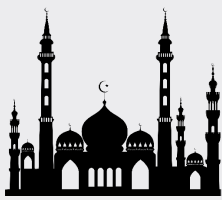
The oil minister referred to catalysts and chemicals as other commodities needed by the oil industry, and said:

"In this sector, in recent years, the country has faced a leap in production and self-reliance."

Zanganeh further said that rotating equipment is the third item produced by domestic manufacturers, and continued: "Now most of this equipment such as turbines and gas transfer compressors and various types of oil and product transfer pumps are being produced by major companies (OTC and MAPNA) and medium-sized ones."







## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:16
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:43
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:41
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:08

20. To any that desires the tilth of the Hereafter, We give increase in his tilth, and to any that desires the tilth of this world, We grant somewhat thereof, but he has no share or lot in the Hereafter.  
21. What! have they partners (in godhead), who have established for them some religion without the permission of Allah. Had it not been for the Decree of Judgment, the matter would have been decided between them (at once).  
But verily the Wrong-doers will have a grievous Penalty.  
Surah 42. Counsel, Consultation (20 - 21)

# Europeans Killed the Time With INSTEX

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - Head of the Iran-Switzerland Chamber of Commerce believes Europeans killed the time with their financial mechanism of INSTEX after the JCPOA and pullout of the U.S. from the deal, adding that time is limited for resolving banking problem and FATF issue.**

Speaking to ILNA, Sharif Nezam Mafi said the U.S. should return to the JCPOA and the FATF dispute should also be resolved in order that banks could work with most of the banks in the world and Iranian businessmen could continue their trade with lesser costs. He further said but this will also need a range of time because 3 year and a half years later the U.S. will hold another presidential election and one should wait and see whether Donald Trump or his fans will come to power or not.

On the failure of the financial mechanism of INSTEX, he said the reason which made the mechanism fail was that European parties launched the mechanism finally to buy time and not to have banking transactions. He further said so it is clear that there has been no other reason for the failure but the passiveness and lack of political will by the European parties.

Sharif Mafi noted that four years are spent on a financial system and ultimately it does not function is strange especially regarding the Europeans which have modern and state-of-art banking systems. He added perhaps in the beginning they had decided to launch the mechanism to resolve the problems but due to its complication they decided to let it alone and it indicates that there has been no strong will behind it.

On resolving the banking problems of Iran, he said first the U.S. should return to



the JCPOA and the problem of FATF is solved in order that our banks can work with international banks and businessmen can reduce the cost of their trade but it needs a range of time because 3 years and a half later Trump and his fans may come to power and if it happens, again Iran will see more pressure on its banking system.

Sharif Mafi went on to say that since JCPOA has not been approved by in the U.S. Senate and it is just a government executive treaty, if Joe Biden returns to the JCPOA, the next president may once again pull out of it and we have seen how Trump easily did it once.

He said he thinks one of the demands of Iranians from the U.S. will be the approval of the JCPOA in the Senate for more guarantee on its implementation because if the JCPOA is to be left or rejoined every four years after arrival or departure of a president in the U.S., nobody will take it seriously.

On Switzerland's Humanitarian Trade Agreement (SHTA), he said since the restrictions of the U.S. and FATF are valid, the SHTA is still working, adding that SHTA is not an institute like INSTEX but it is a channel for issuing a certain series of licenses. He noted if Biden rejoins the JCPOA or the FATF problem is resolved, these licenses will still be required but the number of banks would change and instead of one bank, six or seven banks would be involved in working with Iran.

He expressed hope that by departure of Trump, countries like South Korea, Iraq, China and Japan which had blocked Iran's funds in their banks because of the Trump Administration would release them.

## 2nd Int'l Expo of Smart City Opens

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The Second International Exhibition of Smart City was inaugurated at Tehran's Mosalla yesterday.

The three-day exhibition was inaugurated by Deputy Interior Minister on Civil Affairs Mr. Seyed Mehdi Jamalinnajad.



The event represents an ideal platform to promote products and services as well as discuss the benefits and challenges faced in developing smart cities projects by hosting government legislators, thought leaders and technology providers presenting case studies and displaying Hi-tech solutions for smart cities applications. The exhibition will enable all the stakeholders to capitalize on accumulated knowledge, share future vision and synergize implementation strategies and resources to achieve this vision.

The exhibition is underway by observing all sanitary protocols and measures. The exhibition was inaugurated concurrent with inauguration of the second Exhibition on Housing, Urban Planning and Urban Regeneration.

## Gas Condensate Output Increases From SPGF

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Director of 4th Refinery of South Pars Gas Field (SPGF) said that production of gas condensates has increased at phases 6, 7 and 8 of the gas field significantly.

Behzad Salari pointed to the increase of gas volume in phases 6, 7 and 8 and added, "Statistics showed that approx. 18,181,000 barrels of gas condensates have been produced in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (from March 21 to Oct. 20), showing about 14 percent growth as compared to the last year's corresponding period."

He put the gas condensates produced in the first seven months of the past Iranian calendar year (from March 21 to Oct. 20, 2019) in 4th refinery hit more than 15,985 barrels.

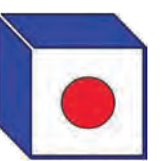
He went on to say that more than 135,821 tons of propane and 85,147 tons of butane was produced at 4th Refinery of South Pars Gas Field from March 21 to Oct. 20, 2019.

The production of gas from South Pars Joint Gas Field in the current government dubbed "Hope and Prudence" has registered a 2.5-fold hike, Director of 4th Refinery of South Pars Gas Field (SPGF) added.

## Khorasan Steel Co. Sets Record for Sales, Dividend

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Khorasan Steel Complex Company (KSC) by shattering its record for dividend could improve the value of each share by 221 percent in the first nine months of the current year comparing to the same period last year.



The company which has listed at Tehran Stock Market with the capital symbol of FAKHAS has increased the profit of each share of the company to 1994 rials in the first three quarters of the current Iranian colanders year has set the new record of 221 percent rise for its share.

According to the CEO of the company Mr. Kasra Ghafoori, the company has registered 49,309b rials of sales and net profit of 17,940b which are the best ever records of sales and dividend in the history of the company.

Ghafoori said one of the main goals of KSC is to earn more profits for its shareholders, adding that the performance of an economic performance should be in a way that it increases the value of the capitals of its shareholders and earn them more profits.

He then highlighted the reasons behind this growth in sales and dividend and said managerial decision-making in the risk and liquidity factors have been of the effective factors for such success.

Ghafoori went on to say that in the first nine months of the last year, the net profit of the company was 5,590b rials, adding that the surge in the net profit and earning 17,940b rials indicates 221 percent growth and has registered a brilliant records for the said period.

It is noteworthy to mention the total registered capital of the company at the Stock Market is 9,000b rials.

### Iran to Buy Air-Pollution Measurement, Hospital Equipment From Japan



TEHRAN (IP) - Iranian officials consulted with the Japanese representative to use Japan's experience in establishing hospitals and purchase Japanese equipment for measuring air pollution.

In the meeting held on Saturday, representatives from Japan and Iran expressed hope for more cooperation with the sanctions lifted.

The head of Public Relations for Iran's Foreign Ministry Nasrin Vaziri stressed that health is an exception in the sanctions area, and called for the acceleration of constructing a hospital in a Japanese style in Iran as well as equipping hospitals and research centers.

At the meeting, the Iranian side also demanded the granting of the loan based on 'Yen' currency, as well as bilateral cooperation in the fight against the coronavirus, which the Japanese side also agreed to.

The Head of Iran-based Japan's International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Azuma for his part referred to the impact of the sanctions on the implementation of the two countries' agreements, saying the implementation of any new project is subject to the permission of the Japanese government, and due to the non-finalization of the cooperation agreement between Japan and Iran, it is not possible to implement a new project.

He pointed to the cancellation of air-quality control of Tehran due to the outbreak of the coronavirus and added that some equipment has been purchased to be imported to Iran in order to continue the Tehran air quality control project.

## Iran Can Enhance Its Regional Exports Via UAE

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Chairman of Iran-UAE Joint Chamber of Commerce Farshid Farzanegan believes that the Iran's market potentials link with the facilities of the countries like the UAE can increase its regional exports.

Farzanegan says Iran should continue its strategic relation with the UAE, and come out of passiveness, adding that the country should not pave the ground for presence of rivals in the scene of the UAE market and it should strengthen and consolidate its position in the UAE market and increase its trade.

He then pointed to the trade volume of Iran and the UAE, saying that it is a considerable figure as the UAE was Iran's second trade partner last year and this year and in the first three quarters, Iran's exports to the UAE have been \$3.3b while its imports from this Arab state have hit \$6.3, and their total trade volume has stood \$9.6, making the UAE the second trade partner of Iran after China.

Farzanegan went on to say that Iran and the UAE have always had considerable economic relations and despite the coronavirus pandemic and its effects on the trade of countries, Iran and the UAE trade has enhanced and this rise has not been significant but it shows their trade has found its way.

On the halt for issuing visa for Iranians by the UAE, he said although strictness against Iranian



traders are on the rise but it is expected by taking appropriate stands by both countries, the trade ties would become better in the future.

Farzanegan further said that since the UAE is considered as the trade hub of the region, in case Iran's market potentials join this hub, its regional exports will surge, adding that in the condition that countries like Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have taken steps for normalizing their ties, this is possible that better condition would dominate the regional trade.

He added that the UAE has its most trade with Saudi Arabia and therefore, the more Iran improves its ties with its neighboring countries like the UAE, the more it can have access to the market of Saudi Arabia which is the biggest market in southern part of the Persian Gulf and access to the North African markets via the UAE will be possible for Iran.

On replacing the UAE with other Persian Gulf states as a solution for Iranian traders, he said Iran's total exports to other countries of the Persian Gulf hardly touch \$1b while Iran's exports to the UAE last Year stood at \$4.5 and this year the figure has increased in terms of volume and value.

Farzanegan noted that EXPO 221 in the UAE will be the best opportunity for Iran to ease and boost relations with this country in order to expand trade exchanges with this state.

## Iran in No Rush to Fill Turkey's Void in Armenia

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Iranian trade official says the country is in no rush to fill a Turkish trade void in Armenia where public sentiments have turned against Ankara because of a war in neighboring Azerbaijan last year.

Hamid Zadboum, who heads Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), said on Saturday that Iran may be able to temporarily supply a relatively large volume of goods to Armenia after the country decided to ban imports from Turkey.

"But we do not necessarily have the capacity to supply all goods (previously) exported by Turkey to Armenia," Zadboum was quoted as saying by Iran's semi-official ILNA news agency.

The comments come amid unconfirmed reports from Armenia showing that the country wants to replace imports of all goods with Turkish origin, a list which covers 2,250 types of products, with goods from Iran.

The Armenian government announced in October it would suspend imports of goods from Turkey for a period of six months as of January 1 over security concerns related to Ankara's support for a crackdown against ethnic Armenians in neighboring Azerbaijan.

Zadboum's remarks came hours before Iran's trade minister Alireza Razm Hosseini signed an agreement with visiting Armenian Economy Minister Vahan Kerobyan to boost trade ties between the two countries.



### In the name of God

SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT



### Extension of International Two-stage Tender No. 9900805

Dear sir, Further to tender No.9900805 subject of purchasing Refractory Material for Tundish's Slide Gate of Casting Station, please be informed that the specified deadlines have been extended as follows:

		Previous Date	New Date
Deadline for submission of the offers	Confidential Secretariat of ESCO's Security Department	18.01.2021 at 12:00 a.m.	27.01.2021 at 12:00 a.m.
	Tehran Office	13.01.2021 at 12:00 a.m.	26.01.2021 at 12:00 a.m.
	Submitting through e-mail address toa@esfahansteel.ir	18.01.2021 at 12:00 a.m.	27.01.2021 at 12:00 a.m.
Date and hour of opening the envelopes		19.01.2021 at 10:00 a.m.	30.01.2021 at 12:00 a.m.

Thank you in advance for your nice attention.

To: Esfahan Steel Company

We hereby confirm the receipt of the extension.

Public Relation of Esfahan Steel Co.



## Italy Reports 488 Coronavirus Deaths

MILAN (Reuters) - Italy reported 488 coronavirus-related deaths on Saturday, up from 472 the day before, while the daily tally of new infections fell further to 13,331 from 13,633.

Some 286,331 tests for COVID-19 were carried out in the past day, against a previous 264,728, the health ministry said.

Italy has now registered 85,162 deaths linked to COVID-19 since its outbreak came to light last February, the second-highest toll in Europe after Britain and the sixth-highest in the world. The country has reported 2.46 million cases.



## Bulgaria to Ease Some COVID-19 Rules

SOFIA (Reuters) - Bulgaria will ease some coronavirus restrictions from February 4 though restaurants will remain closed for now due to concerns about the new coronavirus variant, officials said on Saturday.

The move as follows measures in place since late November which have tamed a surge in new infections.

Prime Minister Boyko Borissov said secondary school students will be allowed to attend classes under a special regime as of next month and will also be able to attend extracurricular sport and dance activities.



## Police Arrest Over 2,000 at Russia Protests Backing Navalny



MOSCOW (Reuters) - Police detained over 2,000 people and used force to break up rallies across Russia on Saturday as tens of thousands of protesters ignored extreme cold and police warnings to demand the release of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

Navalny had called on his supporters to protest after being arrested last weekend as he returned to Russia from Germany for the first time since being poisoned with a nerve agent he says was slipped to him by state security agents in August.

The authorities had warned people to stay away from Saturday's protests, saying they risked catching COVID-19 as well as prosecution and possible jail time for attending an unauthorised event.

But protesters defied the ban and, in at least one case in temperatures below -50 Celsius (-58 Fahrenheit), turned out in force. Leonid Volkov, a Navalny ally, called on them to do the same next weekend to try to free Navalny from what he called "the clutches of his killers". In central Moscow, where Reuters reporters estimated at least 40,000 people had gathered in one of the biggest unauthorised rallies for years, police were seen roughly detaining people, bundling them into nearby vans.

The authorities said just some 4,000 people had shown up, while the foreign ministry questioned Reuters' crowd estimate.

"Why not just immediately say 4 million?" it suggested sarcastically on its official Telegram messenger channel. Ivan Zhdanov, a Navalny ally, put turnout in the capital at 50,000, the Proekt media outlet reported.

Some protesters chanted "Putin is a thief", and "Disgrace" and "Freedom to Navalny!"

Navalny's wife Yulia was briefly detained at the rally before being released. Some of Navalny's political allies were detained in the days before the protest; others on the day itself.

At one point, protesters surrounded a sleek black car with a flashing light used by senior officials, throwing snowballs at it and kicking it. A group of policemen were also pelted with snowballs by a much bigger crowd.

The OVD-Info protest monitor group said that at least 2,250 people, including 855 in Moscow and 327 in St Petersburg, had been detained at rallies in nearly 70 towns and cities.

Navalny, a 44-year-old lawyer, is in a Moscow prison pending the outcome of four legal matters he describes as trumped up. He accuses President Vladimir Putin of ordering his attempted murder. Putin has dismissed that, alleging Navalny is part of a U.S.-backed dirty tricks campaign to discredit him.

Some protesters marched on the prison, where police were waiting to arrest them. Images of protesters with injuries such as bloodied heads circulated on social media.

## Hundreds Protest Corruption, Police Brutality in Tunisia

TUNIS (Dispatches) - Hundreds of demonstrators took to the streets of Tunisian cities on Saturday to protest police repression, corruption and poverty, following several nights of unrest marked by clashes and arrests.

Saturday's protests come as the North African nation struggles to stem the novel coronavirus pandemic, which has crippled the economy and threatened to overwhelm hospitals.

Over 6,000 people have died from Covid-19 in Tunisia, with a record 103 deaths reported on Thursday.

The government on Saturday extended a night-time curfew from 8 p.m. (1900 GMT) to 5 a.m. and banned gatherings until February 14. But protesters took to the streets in several parts of the country, including the capital Tunis and the marginalised interior region of Gafsa, to demand the release of hundreds of young people detained during several nights of unrest since January 14.

"Neither police nor Islamists, the people want revolution," chanted demonstrators in a crowd of several hundred in Tunis, where one person was wounded in brief clashes amid a heavy police presence.

Protests were also held in the coastal city of Sfax on Friday.

Much of the unrest has been in working class neighbourhoods, where anger is boiling over soaring unemployment and a political class accused of having failed to deliver good governance, a decade after the 2011 revolution that toppled long-time dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Economic misery exacerbated by novel coronavirus restrictions in the tourism-reliant nation have pushed growing numbers of Tunisians to try to leave the country.

"The situation is catastrophic," said Omar Jawadi, 33, a hotel sales manager, who has been paid only half his salary for months.

"The politicians are corrupt, we want to change the government and the system."

The police have said more than 700 people were arrested over several nights of unrest earlier this week that saw young people hurl rocks and petrol bombs at security forces, who responded with tear gas and water cannons.



## Johnson, Biden Discuss Deepening Alliance

LONDON (Dispatches) - Boris Johnson and Joe Biden on Saturday vowed to deepen ties and cooperate on tackling climate change in their first conversation since the US president's inauguration, the British prime minister's office said.

Johnson congratulated Biden on his inauguration and "the two leaders looked forward to deepening the close alliance between our nations", said the statement from Downing Street.

British newspapers reported that Johnson was the first European leader to receive a call from Biden, who earlier spoke to Canadian and Mexican counterparts.

The right-wing Sunday Telegraph reported that Johnson was the first leader outside North America to speak to Biden "after his scheduled call was brought forward two days in what will be seen as a major boost for the special relationship between the UK and US." Biden on Friday spoke to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in his first call to a foreign leader. The White House in a readout of the call said that Biden "conveyed his intention to strengthen the special relationship between our countries and also "noted the importance of cooperation, including through multilateral organizations, on shared challenges".

Johnson tweeted a picture of himself in shirt-sleeves laughing as he spoke on the phone. "Great to speak to President @JoeBiden this evening," he wrote.

The conversation appeared aimed at warming frosty relations after Biden in 2019 described Johnson as a "physical and emotional clone" of Donald Trump, his predecessor as US president. Biden has also been critical of Johnson's Brexit policy, but the Downing Street statement said the leaders "discussed the benefits of a potential free trade deal between our two countries". Johnson said he intended to resolve current trade issues "as soon as possible".

Biden, who has Irish roots, had warned ahead of his election that if Brexit damaged the 1998 Good Friday Agreement he would not consent to a trade deal. That agreement ended 30 years of violence in Northern Ireland.

## Brazil Indigenous Leaders Sue Bolsonaro for Crimes Against Humanity

PARIS (Dispatches) - Two top Brazilian indigenous leaders have asked the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate President Jair Bolsonaro for "crimes against humanity", accusing him of unprecedented environmental damage, killings and persecution.

Chief Raoni Metuktire, the leader of the Kayapo people, and Chief Almir Narayamoga Surui, leader of the Paite Surui tribe, filed the claim at The Hague-based body on Friday.

Since Bolsonaro became president in January 2019, "the destruction of the Amazonian forest has accelerated without measure," said the complaint to the ICC, reported by France's Le Monde newspaper on Saturday.

It said deforestation had rocketed "by 34.5 percent in a year, the assassination of indigenous leaders is at an 11-year high and environmental agencies have collapsed or faced threats."

The two leaders said killings, the forced transfers of local peoples and persecution constituted "crimes against humanity."

Bolsonaro's government has proposed legislation that would relax restrictions within Amazon regions

on commercial mining, oil and gas extraction, and large-scale agriculture.

Activists are pushing for ecocide to be added to the crimes prosecuted by the ICC, alongside genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The issue was raised by the Maldives and Vanuatu at the ICC general assembly in December 2019.

"This situation, the most dramatic in the last 10 years, is a direct result of the policies of Jair Bolsonaro", who wants to "lift all the barriers to plunder the wealth of the Amazon," the suit said, also singling out mining firms.

It said the "destruction of the Amazon forest... was a direct danger not only for Brazilians but for all humanity."

In July last year, health workers in Brazil had also urged the ICC to probe Bolsonaro for crimes against humanity over his handling of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A month earlier Chief Raoni had told AFP in an interview that Bolsonaro was trying to use the pandemic to eliminate indigenous people.

Brazil's immunisation program has been widely criticized for being late and chaotic, not least given Bolsonaro's opposition.



## Afghan Officials Welcome Biden Plan To Review U.S.-Taliban Deal

KABUL (AFP) - Top Afghan officials on Saturday welcomed the Biden administration's decision to review a landmark US deal with the Taliban and focus on whether the insurgents have reduced attacks in Afghanistan in keeping with the agreement.

Washington struck a deal with the Taliban in Qatar last year, to begin withdrawing its troops in return for security guarantees from the militants and a commitment to kickstart peace talks with the Afghan government.

But Biden administration officials are to re-evaluate the pact as violence across Afghanistan has surged despite the Taliban and Afghan government engaging in those talks since September in the Qatari capital of Doha.

Afghanistan's acting minister of state for peace said the outcome of the review should be a truce to end attacks in the war-ravaged country.

It is expected the review will lead "to the demand of the Afghan people, which is an immediate stop to violence and achieving permanent peace", Abdullah Khenjani said in a video statement Saturday.

President Joe Biden's newly appointed national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, spoke with his Afghan counterpart Hamdullah Mohib and "made clear the United States' intention to review" the deal, said National Security Council spokeswoman Emily Horne late Friday.

Washington wants to check that the Taliban is "living up to its commitments to cut ties with terrorist groups, to reduce violence in Afghanistan, and to engage in meaningful negotiations with the Afghan government and other stakeholders," her statement continued.

It added that Sullivan "underscored that the U.S. will support the peace process with a robust and regional diplomatic effort, which will aim to help the two sides achieve a durable and just political settlement and permanent ceasefire."

Sullivan also discussed the United States' support for protecting recent progress made on women and minority groups' rights as part of the peace process.

When contacted, the Taliban said they remained "committed to the agreement and honor our commitments".

"We expect the other side to remain committed to the agreement too," Mohammad Naem, the group's spokesman in Qatar, told AFP.







**Mahmoodieh (\$2000)**  
160sq.m, 2bdrs  
S/pool, S  
L.balcony  
marble fl  
Fully Furn

**Shanon (adviser)**

**Niavaran Villa (\$6000)**  
1000sq.m  
5bdrs, S/p  
S, Jacuzzi  
green yard  
Fully Furn

**Parsian**

**Farmanieh (\$1300) New**  
100sq.m, 2bdrs, S/p, F.F

**Elahieh bldg (\$7000)**  
4storey, 20bdrs, yard, pkgs

**Velenjak Apt (\$22400)**  
300sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, & F.F

**Sa'adat abad bldg (\$10000)**  
5storey, 10unites, pkg lots

**Jordan (\$1500)**  
180sq.m, 3bdrs, F.F

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

**Tajrish office (\$4000)**  
50sq.m, pkg, balcony



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

**Don't Waste Your Time**

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

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

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



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

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



# 2021 Declared in Uzbekistan as the Year of Support For Youth and Public Health Promotion

**Delivering Address to the Parliament by the President of Uzbekistan has become a tradition in the political life of this country since the election of Sh.M.Mirziyoyev as the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.**

The annual Address of the President, being the embodiment of the key principle of democracy, was the result of a wide dialogue between the authorities and the people of the country, and also demonstrates the accountability of the supreme power to its citizens.

It should be noted that the Address of President Sh.M.Mirziyoyev to the Oliy Majlis (Parliament) of the Republic of Uzbekistan on December 29, 2020, truly became one of the main political events of the past year in the life of this country. It is comprehensive and contains proposals, ideas and initiatives aimed at ensuring the development of the country, further improving the standard of living of the people, and bringing the reforms carried out in recent years to a new level.

According to estimates of the International Monetary Fund and international rating agencies suggest, Uzbekistan has managed to maintain positive rates of economic growth in 2020, despite the trials and among the few countries in the world.

In his Address to Parliament for 2021, the President of Uzbekistan put forward a number of relevant and important proposals concerning the political, socio-economic, public and other spheres of the country's life.

In particular, in the Address noted the need to use the available opportunities and potential, the experience gained during the pandemic, as well as advanced foreign achievements, to raise cardinal reforms in the field of protecting and strengthening the health of the population to a new level. At the same time, one of most critical priorities should be the widespread adoption of healthy lifestyle, especially among young people.

The President stressed that the systematic continuation of the fight against the coronavirus pandemic will remain among the most important tasks of the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2021.

Guided by the idea "New Uzbekistan starts from the doorstep of the school, from the system of education and enlightenment", large-scale reforms will be carried out in the country to create wide opportunities



for young people.

On the basis of modern knowledge and experience, national and universal values, young people will be brought up with independent thinking and the best human qualities. A continuous system of developing the abilities and potential of young people will be created.

In this regard, President Sh.M.Mirziyoyev suggested naming 2021 as the Year of Support for Youth and Public Health Promotion, which will be a logical continuation of the work begun in these important areas and will serve to raise it to a new, higher level.

The Address notes that in 2021 even more favorable conditions will be created for the development of entrepreneurship and small business.

For the convenience of entrepreneurs, 105 types of licenses and permits will be canceled, procedures for obtaining 115 types of such documents will also be simplified.

It is planned to revise about 5 thousand normative acts regulating entrepreneurial activity, reduce their number, and devise an Entrepreneurial Code.

In addition, one of the central places in the President's speech was taken by the issues of conducting an effective foreign policy capable of providing the necessary conditions for the implementation of a large-scale program of reforming and modernizing all spheres of life of

society and the state.

To this end, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev pointed out the need to improve the foreign policy strategy of the republic and adopt an updated concept of activities in this area. At the same time, the importance of ensuring the consistency of Uzbekistan's open, proactive and constructive foreign policy was especially emphasized.

**In the Address of the President Sh.M.Mirziyoyev to the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the following important initiatives were also announced:**

- Define the study of physics and foreign languages as a priority for the 2021 year;
- Create a Public Fund for Supporting Children, allocating 100 billion soums from the budget. To consolidate the activities of the fund at the legislative level;
- To empower the Business Ombudsman with the authority to bring to administrative responsibility managers who violate the property rights of entrepreneurs;
- Extend the moratorium on inspections of business entities for 2021 year;
- Create in 2021 the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund with a budget of 3 trillion soums. Its funds will be used to co-finance infrastructure projects proposed by local "Kengashes" (local deputies);
- To establish the Republican Public Women's Council, which will include active and initiative women who have life experience and are well aware of women's problems. Chairman of the Senate Tanzila Narbaeva was proposed to head this council;
- Create the institution of a permanent representative of non-governmental non-profit organizations in the Legislative Chamber;
- Directly grant the citizenship of Uzbekistan to stateless persons who arrived in the country before 2005 and reside here permanently;
- Create the "Vatandoshlar" Foundation to support and strengthen ties with compatriots living in many countries of the world;
- Celebrate July 30 in Uzbekistan as the Day of Friendship of Peoples.

In general, the implementation of each priority task outlined in the Address will open a new page in the history of Uzbekistan, will serve as a solid foundation for the people of Uzbekistan to reach new, even higher levels.

## European Central Bank's \$2.2 Trillion Stimulus Still on Track



BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - With more than a trillion euros in stimulus still in the pipeline to the economy, the European Central Bank (ECB) left its key bond-purchase programme unchanged Thursday as the 19-country eurozone endures a winter economic slowdown due to the coronavirus pandemic.

ECB President Christine Lagarde told a news conference that the economy likely contracted in the last three months of 2020 and the outlook going forward faces risks.

Coronavirus infections and deaths have risen during the winter, leading to new restrictions on businesses. Germany has extended its partial lockdown until February 14, France has imposed a 6pm curfew, and Portugal has hit multiple records in case numbers.

Lagarde said that while the start of vaccinations against the coronavirus was "an important milestone", the outbreak continued to pose "serious risk to the eurozone and global economies".

She said that the bank's outlook for growth of 3.9 percent in 2021 was "still holding as we speak".

"We had anticipated the continuation and the lockdown measures that are currently in place ... and that leads us to conclude that our own forecast for 2021 is still broadly valid at this time," she said, while cautioning that short-term risk was "tilted to the downside, no question about it".

She said that "an ample monetary stimulus remains essential" and that if things turn out worse than expected "all instruments can be adjusted and nothing is off the table" in terms of stimulus.

The economy is being propped up by massive support from the ECB, national governments, and the European Union (EU). The ECB's decision not to adjust its key programs was largely expected because it added a major dose of stimulus only last month, at its December 10 meeting.

The governing council added 500 billion euros (\$608bn) to its pandemic emergency stimulus bond purchases, bringing the total to 1.85 trillion euros (\$2.2 trillion), and extended the regular purchases through at least March 2022. More than half of that total is still waiting to be deployed.

## U.S. Factory Activity Near 14-Year High



WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. manufacturing activity surged to its highest level in nearly 14 years in early January, but bottlenecks in the supply chain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic are driving up prices and signaling a rise in inflation in the months ahead.

Other data on Friday showed an unexpected increase in sales of previously owned homes in December. Manufacturing and the housing market are helping to anchor the economy, which is being battered by a wave of coronavirus infections. But the pandemic is causing labor shortages at construction sites and factories, which could erode some of the strength in the manufacturing and housing sectors.

Data firm IHS Markit said its flash U.S. manufacturing PMI accelerated to a reading of 59.1 in the first half of this month, the highest since May 2007, from 57.1 in December.

Economists had forecast the index would slip to 56.5 in early January. A reading above 50 indicates growth in manufacturing, which accounts for 11.9% of the U.S. economy. Manufacturing is being supported by businesses rebuilding inventories and a shift in demand towards goods from services because of the pandemic.

The IHS Markit survey's measure of new orders received by factories raced to its highest level since September 2014. The surge in demand reflected both existing and new customers, "with some clients reportedly committing to orders previously placed on hold." That led to manufacturers hiring more workers early this month. The survey's factory employment index increased to 54.8 from 52.2 in December.

But the pandemic is gumming up the supply chain, resulting in manufacturers paying more for materials, and they are passing on the higher production costs to consumers. The survey's gauge of prices received by factories vaulted to its highest level since July 2008. This mirrored other manufacturing surveys, suggesting inflation could pick up and remain elevated beyond the anticipated boost from the drop of weak readings in March and April from the calculation.

The strength in manufacturing helped to lift business activity. The survey's flash composite PMI Output Index, which tracks the manufacturing and services sectors, rose to a reading of 58.0 early this month from 55.3 in December. While its flash services sector PMI increased to 57.5 from 54.8 in December, the pace of new business growth softened at the start of 2021.

## UAE Non-Oil Trade to See 12.9% Growth in 2021



DUBAI (Dispatches) - Dubai Chamber analysis points to expected recovery in UAE non-oil maritime transport and trade this year, supported by several positive global economic trends.

The UAE non-oil trade will post strong double-digit growth up to 12.9 per cent this year due to an expected uptick in maritime transport activity and other positive global economic trends, latest report shows.

Government policies and stimulus efforts, easing of lockdowns in key markets, the opening of global markets and China's resumption of commercial activity were also outlined as key factors that could positively impact the UAE's trade performance in the second half of 2020, according to new analysis from Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The analysis based on recent data from the IMF, the UAE's Federal Customs Authority and UNCTAD, projected 4.8 per cent growth in global maritime transport and trade this year, depending on developments in fighting Covid-19 and progress in vaccinating populations around the world.

"Trade activity has been more resilient throughout the pandemic, with spending shifting towards goods and away from services. The global accommodative policy backdrop should also remain supportive," Monica Malik, chief economist at Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank (ADCB), told Khaleej Times on Saturday.

UAE non-oil trade showed strong resilience in the face of economic obstacles in 2018 and 2019, as it recorded growth rates of 8.5 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively during those years, while maritime trade accounted for 83 per cent of total goods traded.

Nazim Munshi, director, Enterprise House, said UAE is expected to see a V-shape recovery in 2021. This is a conscious effort by the government of UAE to ensure that the economy is back on track at the earliest.

"Dubai and UAE are among the few states that have been extremely proactive to fight the pandemic and bring back the conducive business environment, the current vaccination drive is one such measure where UAE will be among one of the First Nations to have a near complete population vaccination for all its residents," she said.

## Biden Policy Means Higher Oil Prices



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Expect oil prices to rise under the new Biden administration.

In a recent note from Goldman Sachs, commodities analysts noted that Biden's initial executive orders – which included restrictions on hydrocarbon leasing in North America, drilling, and pipelines – support oil prices.

On top of that, the administration's comments "suggest no urgency in lifting sanctions with Iran," keeping that country's supply out of the market, keeping oil prices from falling.

The Trump administration's efforts to drill on federal land have been walked back, with the Department of the Interior imposing a 60-day moratorium on the sale of oil and gas leases on federal land. Goldman notes that this order is temporary but supportive of Biden's stated policies of halting the drilling on government-owned land. A more long-lasting moratorium could follow.

"As we argued ahead of the election, such actions point to both higher production and financing costs for shale producers in coming years as well as lower recoverable resources," Goldman analysts wrote.

There was a flurry of permitting before the Biden administration and as a result, Goldman expects aggressive drilling to occur while the existing leases are in place — so much so that priorities will shift from private to federal land to pump before the time is up.

Since the fall of 2018, oil prices have been in the \$50 and \$60 range; when the pandemic hit early last year, a lack of demand pushed prices down even further, at one point to under \$20 in the spring. Since fall 2020, prices have risen modestly from the \$40 range, almost back to 2019 levels of around \$50 per barrel.

If supply is slightly more constrained under the Biden administration, the demand side looks strong, with the post-Covid economy and ramped-up fiscal spending later this year to be bullish for oil prices.

Goldman argues that with more disposable income and government spending through stimulus measures and Covid-19 relief, economic activity will pick up and demand for oil should be stronger by around 200,000 barrels per day.

A better vaccination campaign would be a factor as well.



## Iran to Start Production Of 83 Types of Vessels

TEHRAN (IP) – The CEO of Iran Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) announced that the production of 83 types of indigenous vessels required for Iran's commercial ports would begin by September 2021.

Mohammad Rastad stated that over 90% of Iran's exports and imports were done through commercial ports. He noted that given the importance of commercial ports and in addition to the

development of port infrastructure, it was necessary to improve marine equipment so that commercial ports could provide maximum capacity and quality services. Rastad pointed out that as much as Iran's commercial ports were strengthened in terms of equipment and infrastructure, this would significantly impact Iran's maritime trade and competition with other commercial ports.



## Asia to Dominate Davos Virtual Forum as Virus-Hit West Struggles

PARIS (Dispatches) - Emerging stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic, Asia is set to dominate this year's virtual World Economic Forum as a virus-battered West struggles and a new US president faces particularly daunting challenges.

The 2020 WEF, which took place in its usual Swiss Alpine resort of Davos, saw the global elite just starting to worry about a pandemic that surfaced in China a month earlier.

While the coronavirus leaves a mounting death toll and upends economies, depriving millions of people of work, China and Asian countries in 2021 are making a strong comeback from the virus that hit them first.

In virtual format because of the pandemic, next week's event is headlined: "A Crucial Year to Rebuild Trust."

The spotlight will be on Chinese President Xi Jinping, who will give a speech on Monday, the opening day of the event that will last through next Friday.

The big names from Europe will be German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who heads the EU executive.

US President Joe Biden will not appear at the virtual Davos, which has never been a fixture on the White House calendar — even if the new administration has pledged to revive a US multilateral foreign policy after four years of Donald Trump's America First approach.

Trump had been an exception as he stopped in Davos twice, with the real estate billionaire enjoying mixing with the global business elite.

Before him, Bill Clinton was the only American president who had traveled to Davos, and that was just once.

Showing up from Asia are China's and South Korea's presidents as well as the prime ministers of India and Japan.

Following the first virtual session, Davos will move in May to Singapore, far from the luxury Swiss ski resort where it has taken place since it was launched in 1971, the brainchild of German professor Klaus Schwab.

The stated reason for the changes is health safety.

The big names from Europe will be German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who heads the EU executive.

But a virtual forum is not particularly attractive for the world's well-heeled movers and shakers, who value huddles behind closed doors in fancy hotels over meetings in formal settings.

French insurance-credit group Euler Hermes said in a study this month that the "world's economic center of gravity" (WECG) has been moving toward Asia since 2002.

"The COVID-19 crisis could accelerate the shifting global balance toward Asia," it added.



"By 2030, we forecast the WECG, could be located around the confluence of China, India and Pakistan," the study projected.

The speech by Xi, who addressed Davos back in 2017, seems almost to set the clock back, as if the business world seeks to erase the Trump era.

Four years ago, he presented himself as the champion of free trade, much to the joy of Davos participants who feared the newly elected Trump's protectionist moves.

Biden is nevertheless sending John Kerry, the special climate envoy who will be welcomed after the new Democratic president has brought Washington back into the Paris climate accord.

The agenda includes workshops titled: "Stakeholder Capitalism: Building the Future" as well as "Advancing a New Social Contract" and "Resetting Consumption for a Sustainable Future."

In a column published in mid-January, Schwab said 2021 could be a positive and historic year, 75 years after the original "Year Zero" following the devastation of World War II.

"We once again have a chance to rebuild," he said, calling for rethinking capitalism in the light of a pandemic that has worsened inequality.

He said "COVID-19 has delivered the final blow" to the post-war model where free markets and limited government produced prosperity and progress that now is "no longer sustainable, environmentally or socially."

## China Overtakes Germany With Largest Current Account Surplus



BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany's current account surplus shrank for the fifth year in a row in 2020 as China overtook Europe's biggest economy during the COVID-19 pandemic to run the world's largest current account surplus, a survey by the Ifo institute showed.

The data underlines a tectonic shift in world trade triggered by the coronavirus crisis as higher demand across the globe for medical protection gear and electronic devices boosted Chinese exports.

The Munich-based Ifo institute said China's current account surplus, which measures the flow of goods, services and investments, more than doubled to \$310 billion last year.

Germany's current account surplus shrank to \$261 billion in 2020 as demand for cars, machinery and equipment fell in many of its key export markets, the survey showed. Japan came in third with a current account surplus of \$158 billion.

Measured in relation to economic output, however, Germany's current account surplus remained unusually high at 6.9% last year, edging down only slightly from 7.1% in 2019.

Since 2011, Germany's current account balance has been consistently above the European Union's indicative threshold of 6%. The surplus hit a record high of 8.6% in 2015.

By comparison, China's current account surplus last year stood at 2.1% and Japan's at 3.2%, according to the survey.

The United States remained the country with the world's largest current account deficit which rose roughly by a third to \$635 billion in 2020 or 3.1% of economic output, it showed.

This suggests that former U.S. President Donald Trump failed to push down the trade deficit despite his 'America First' agenda of protecting industrial jobs by increasing import tariffs on foreign goods.

Ifo economist Christian Grimme said pandemic-related restrictions on travel and tourism pushed Germany's traditionally high deficit in services to a record low.

"In the past year, Germans took a lot less vacation abroad due to the coronavirus," Grimme said. As a result, they spent significantly less money in other countries like Spain, Italy or Greece.

## Yerevan, Tehran...

FROM PAGE 1

The Armenian Minister of Economy also stressed the need to facilitate trade and resolve the problems facing the two countries' businessmen.

Meanwhile, heads of a number of Iranian and Armenian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) discussed establishment of a technology exchange center. During the meeting, both sides also shared views on ways of promoting cooperation between the two countries' small and medium-size enterprises and the areas of cooperation between the two sides.

Meanwhile on Saturday and in meeting with Kerobyan, the governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has underlined the importance of enhancing cooperation with Armenia.

Abdonasser Hemmati also touched upon the age-old history of trade and cultural exchanges between the two countries.

"Currently, the volume of trade between the two countries is not reflecting the long history of mutual cooperation," said. "So, by holding similar meetings, we hope we will be able to further promote reciprocal ties and see [mutual] economic cooperation expand," said the Iranian official.

Hemmati then recalled that Iran and Armenia are both members of the Eurasian Economic Union.

"Using its geographical situation, Armenia can have a tremendous impact on the promotion of trade ties between the two countries and with the whole [Eurasian Economic] Union, especially when Iranian businesspeople have always been very interested in exporting goods to Armenia," added Hemmati, who is also the head of Iran's Money and Credit Council.

"Despite the heavy pressure of the U.S., the economic situation of Iran is improving and we have been able to secure a positive economic growth this year," he added. "Generally speaking, we believe the sanctions won't last, and currently, Iran's trade ties with certain countries are opening up, and it is a proper time for Armenia, as a friend and neighbor of Iran, to work towards boosting its relations with Iran," said the CBI director.

"Over the 10 months to January 2021, Iran exported \$260 million worth of goods to Armenia. However, Iran's imports from Armenia amounted to less than 30% of that figure," he said.

"These figures are not very high, and a solution should be worked out to strike a balance or to transfer excess trade resources, so that Iran will be able to increase its exports more than ever before," he said.

## Iran Has Lost...

FROM PAGE 1

"We stand ready to live up to all of our commitments under the JCOPA provided that the Americans make good on their obligations and lift the sanctions," the top diplomat said.

Araqchi added Iran has not made any contacts with the new U.S. administration and has no intention to.

"Naturally, we are waiting for them to be installed in their posts and begin work," he said.

As for whether or not Tehran will be ready to enter into talks with new U.S. President Joe Biden's envoys, Araqchi said any such negotiations should be within the framework of the JCPOA.

"I think there is still an efficient framework, which is the same framework envisaged in the JCPOA. It was they that left that framework, and can now return to it and resume talks," he said.

"At the moment, we are not interested in making any direct contacts and we believe the JCPOA is an appropriate framework and that negotiations should take place within the same framework," the top Iranian official said.

"Even before returning to the JCPOA, the U.S. can return to the framework of talks under the JCPOA in order to restart negotiations," he said.

Araqchi reiterated that Iran scaled down its commitments under the JCPOA after Europe failed to deliver on its commitments.

"We did not destroy the JCPOA. We saved it by scaling down our obligations and maintaining a balance between signatories to the deal," the top diplomat noted.

Meanwhile, Araqchi underscored that the JCPOA will not be renegotiated.

"The JCPOA should be implemented to the letter. There is no such thing as 'The JCPOA Plus' or any other agreement or any new talks on the deal," he said.

Araqchi also noted that Iran's missile program is not negotiable, either.

However, he explained, security in the Persian Gulf is an issue which could be a subject of talks among regional countries.

## Indonesia...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran, home to major oil and natural gas reserves, has seen its sales abroad deeply impacted by U.S. sanctions after former President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018. That cut a crucial source of government revenue in Iran's long-anemic economy.

In the time since, Iran has relied on black-market sales and deals with Venezuela to keep its sales going.

Iran's state-owned fleet of oil tankers routinely travel turn off their Automatic Identification System trackers to try and mask where they deliver their cargo. Those AIS beacons, a safety measure so other ships know what's around them, can be tracked. Analysts say those ships often transfer their oil to other ships, then sell the crude under false pretenses.

## Albeit Biden Positive...

FROM PAGE 1

The anti-Iran stands of the new U.S. administration are not merely limited to remarks of secretary of defense and secretary of state. New U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has emphasized that she would continue economic sanctions under the pretexts like human rights and sponsoring of state terrorism. She has said Biden and Kamala Harris administration would continue the policy of keeping and imposing sanctions against Iranian institutes which violate the human rights and they would continue reviewing the necessary tools for combatting the supporters of state terrorism. The very treasury secretary has notified that the Biden Administration intends to cooperate with its allies and partners in encountering with what she alleges Iran's destabilizing activities in the region. She has said, "Definitely, President Biden is committed to cooperate with the U.S. allies and partners to encounter with Iran's destabilizing activities in the region like Iran's violent proxies."

Now with such contradictions in behavior and words which are seen among the demand and Biden's hope on his friends in Tehran and in his team which considers no other goal but obeying the Zionist measures in the foreign policy, how we can sum it up, the time and future will prevail. U.S. Vice-President Harris in her speech with her own literature which has been recently published has announced and reiterated that the U.S. would remain beside Israel because of the reasons she listed. So this shows that the Biden Administration is not so free to be optimistic on the long term and effective thoughts in the ties between Iran and the U.S.; especially the media climate and political intellectualism in the U.S. directs the public opinion towards getting ready for a scheduled collapse.

This phenomenon partly and not fully in its current form that we see has been predictable even since decades ago and with mild steep; when some decades ago Muslim French philosopher Roger Garaudy wrote a book titled "Les Etats-Unis Avant- Garde de la Decadence" (The U.S. Pioneer in Degeneration) and in his book he studies the international and domestic condition of the U.S. and claims the U.S. is at the forefront of degeneration. Or 20 years ago, the French Jewish professor Emmanuel Todd in his book titled "After the Empire: The Breakdown of the American Order" pointed to the angles of degeneration of the U.S. and emphasized the U.S. fall has already begun but still time for it to be fully grounded.

Or 12 years ago, Fareed Zakaria, a famous Indian-American journalist, political commentator, and author, and one of the students of Samuel Huntington published a book "The Post-American World" and predicted a world where several countries and cultures play their roles and there will be no news about the U.S. according to the new world order theory; and finally six years ago, the American political scientist and Harvard University Professor Joseph S. Nye wrote the book "Is the American Century Over?" where he predicted the end of the U.S. hegemony.

The ground for American people's belief has also prepared the world people for a drastic change in the global management and that the 76-year old Biden with an almost full Zionist team can stand against this hegemonic steep by resorting to any measure is not comprehensible and calculable. But time is the best judge. We sit and wait and analyze the situations altogether.

## Health Minister...

FROM PAGE 1

Referring to the efforts to make the Iranian coronavirus vaccine, Saeed Namaki stated that vaccine import to the country would begin soon.

He noted that vaccination would begin for sensitive and high-risk groups as the vaccine was imported.

The Head of Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order (EIKO) public relations, Hojjatollah Niki-Maleki, also pointed out that after examining the health of 21 volunteers injected with the Iranian-produced COVID vaccine, the injection permission had been issued to 14 other volunteers.

The first phase of the first Iranian-made COVID vaccine human trial named 'COVO-Iran Barakat' began on volunteers in December. The Barakat Foundation, connected to EIKO, launched an executive research process to produce an Iranian domestic COVID-19 vaccine.





## Wolves Sign Striker Willian Jose On Loan from Real Sociedad

LONDON (Dispatches) - Wolves announced on Saturday they had completed the loan signing of Brazilian striker Willian Jose from Real Sociedad with a view to a permanent transfer. The deal, which is subject to a work permit and international clearance, takes the 29-year-old to Molineux until the end of the season. Wolves then have the option to make the switch permanent. Jose is not expected to be available for Wednesday's Premier League trip to Chelsea.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

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

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

## Dumoulin Jumps off the Professional Cycling Express Train

PARIS (Dispatches) - Former Giro d'Italia winner Tom Dumoulin announced on Saturday that, at the age of 30, he was taking a break from cycling. The Jumbo Visma rider, winner of the Giro in 2017 and runner up in the 2018 Tour de France, said in an interview on the team website that those results had made him "Tom Dumoulin the great Dutch cyclist" and he had been struggling "with the pressure that comes with it, the expectations". "It's as if a backpack of 100 kilos has been lifted off my shoulders," he said. "It feels good."

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

MONDAY JANUARY 25, 2021

## Man City Survive Huge FA Cup Scare, Arsenal Crash Out

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City were given a huge FA Cup scare by fourth-tier Cheltenham before a late blitz gave them a 3-1 win on Saturday after Southampton dumped holders Arsenal out of the competition.

Six-time winners City were minutes away from exiting at the fourth-round stage before goals from Phil Foden, Gabriel Jesus and Ferran Torres broke the hearts of the brave League Two side.

City boss Pep Guardiola made 10 changes for the trip to the southwest of England but his side was still packed with internationals.

The home team -- 72 places below City in the football pyramid -- produced a stirring defensive display but also sporadically threatened at the other end of the pitch.

Jesus hit the post shortly after the restart as City upped the tempo following a goalless first half but it was the home team who broke the deadlock.

The visitors failed to deal with the outstanding Ben Tozer's long throw and Alfie May fired in from close range just before the hour mark.

Guardiola threw on Ilkay Gundogan and Joao Cancelo in a desperate bid to find a way back into the game and was rewarded in the 81st minute when Foden volleyed in Cancelo's cross. Three minutes later Jesus made amends for his earlier miss and Torres made it 3-1 with the final kick of the game, turning in Gundogan's low cross.

The Catalan had warm words for Foden, who is the club's top-scorer in all competitions this season.

Cheltenham boss Michael Duff said he was "super proud" of his players, bemoaning the fact the match had to be played behind closed doors because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"It's a shame because (with fans) the place would've been bouncing," he said. "Would that have seen us through in the last 10 minutes? I'm not so sure -- but the key is to enjoy it."

Earlier, Arsenal, who have won the competition a record 14 times, went down 1-0 at Southampton courtesy of a Gabriel own goal.



earned a well-deserved lead in the 24th minute when Kyle Walker-Peters' ball across the six-yard area was inadvertently turned in by Gabriel.

The visitors went close to an equaliser through Eddie Nketiah's deflected shot but were forced to leave empty-handed. "We had a dream to do it again like last year (win the FA Cup) and the dream today is over," said Arteta.

"I am as well disappointed with the way we conceded the goal in an area where we know we shouldn't be doing that. At the same time I cannot fault the effort of the players."

West Ham, who will face either Manchester or Liverpool in the next round, crushed third-tier Doncaster 4-0 despite multiple changes from manager David Moyes while fellow Premier League sides Brighton and Sheffield United also progressed.

Pablo Fornals gave impressive West Ham an early lead at home to Doncaster as they dominated the League One side from the kick-off.

Andriy Yarmolenko doubled the lead before a second-half own goal from Andy Butler and a late strike from debutant Oladapo Afolayan.

Goals from Yves Bissouma and Steven Alzate were enough to seal a 2-1 win for Brighton against League One Blackpool. Chris Basham and Billy Sharp scored for Premier League strugglers Sheffield United against League One opponents Plymouth.

## Benitez Leaves China's Dalian Pro, Blames Virus



SHANGHAI (AFP) - Rafa Benitez abruptly left as coach of Chinese Super League side Dalian Pro on Saturday, saying it was for family reasons in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

The 60-year-old Spaniard, who took Liverpool to Champions League glory in 2005, had been in charge of Dalian since July 2019.

"Unfortunately, like so many things in the last year, Covid-19 has changed our lives and our projects," the former Liverpool, Real Madrid, Inter Milan, Napoli and Chelsea boss wrote on his blog.

"From today, both my coaching staff and I will sadly no longer be coaching the Dalian Professional F. C."

"It has been an incredible experience and for this I would like to thank all my staff, coaches, medical and club staff, as well as our players."

"Their commitment to us in the first place, their support during the time we were there, and their effort has been magnificent."

"The pandemic is still here, for all of us, and supporting our families has been a priority when making this decision."

## Goggia Claims

## Back-to-Back Crans-Montana Downhill Victories

ZURICH (Dispatches) - Reigning Olympic champion Sofia Goggia continued her remarkable podium-topping season with a back-to-back victory in the second World Cup downhill in Crans-Montana on Saturday.

Fresh from winning Friday's downhill, Goggia hit speeds of 108 km/h (67 mph) on her way to clocking another winning time of 1min 27.75sec.

It was the 28-year-old's 11th World Cup victory and her fourth straight in the downhill discipline this season, a feat not seen since now-retired American Lindsey Vonn back in 2018. Switzerland's Lara Gut-Behrami finished second, 0.27sec off the pace, with Italian Elena Curtoni rounding out the podium (+0.60).

Two other Italians finished in the top nine, Laura Pirovano coming fourth and defending overall World Cup champion Federica Brignone ninth, boding well for Team Italia ahead of the February 7-22 World Ski Championships in the Italian resort of Cortina d'Ampezzo.

After finishing an impressive fourth in Saturday's downhill, it was another good day for Petra Vlhova. The Slovak came in seventh to further consolidate her place atop the overall World Cup standings, on 861 points.

Switzerland's Michelle Gisin sits second on 741pts, with Goggia in third on 654.

## Marin Clinches Spot in Thailand Open Final

BANGKOK (AFP) - Spain's fifth seed and former world number one Carolina Marin breezed into the final of badminton's Thailand Open, beating South Korea's An Se-young 21-19, 21-15.

The 27-year-old Spaniard, ranked sixth in the world, is aiming for back-to-back titles in this week's tournament -- the second of three consecutive events in Bangkok that culminate in next week's World Tour Finals.

She came out on top last week against top-seeded Tai Tzu-ying, and continued her winning streak Saturday, maintaining her signature aggressive play against seventh-seeded An.

She spoke of the mental battle of motivating herself just days after being victorious.

Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta made seven changes from his team's 3-0 league win against Newcastle on Monday, with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and midfielder Emile Smith Rowe both absent.

Southampton, FA Cup winners in 1976,



## Murray Opts out of Australian Open

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former world number one Andy Murray said he had decided against competing in the Australian Open after failing to find a "workable quarantine" following his recovery from the coronavirus.

Murray has finished his period of self-isolation and had hoped to compete in the first Grand Slam of 2021 in Melbourne.

But the former Wimbledon and US Open champion said he could not find a way of getting to Australia and then quarantining ahead of the tournament's scheduled start on February 8.

Murray would have had to head to Australia by Saturday to ensure he could observe the mandatory two-week hotel quarantine period.

## Hazard Leads Real Madrid to Alaves Rout

MADRID (Dispatches) - Eden Hazard scored one goal and set up another as Real Madrid thrashed Alaves 4-1 on Saturday to ease the pressure on their coach Zinedine Zidane, who was absent after testing positive for Covid-19.

Zidane's position has come under scrutiny again after Wednesday's defeat by third-tier side Alcoyano in the Copa del Rey but Madrid responded at Mendizorroza without their coach, or their captain Sergio Ramos, who was out with a knee injury.

Goals from Casemiro, Karim Benzema and Hazard put Madrid three up at half-time and while Alaves briefly threatened a fightback when Joselu headed in, Benzema added a second to put the result beyond doubt.

The victory is only Real Madrid's second in six matches and leaves them four points behind Atletico Madrid, who have two games in hand and play Valencia at home on Sunday.

"The goals are good for the confidence, for everyone," said Benzema. "It's been a tough week for us because we always have to win, always have to be on the up. There's always pressure. Today it went well, not just for me, for everyone."

Zidane was confirmed to have tested positive on Friday, leaving his assistant David Bettoni to take charge in the dug-out, although Bettoni was pictured on the telephone in the second half.

"He was very happy with the attitude of the team," said Bettoni when asked what Zidane had told him after the game. "He told me to congratulate the players, as he would have done if he was with us."



## Guardiola Unhappy With Threat to Domestic Leagues

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said he is unhappy a proposed European Super League could put the future of domestic leagues and cups in danger.

A Times report said the 15 clubs mooted to be in the 20-team breakaway competition would be offered £310 million (\$424 million) each to join and up to £213 million per season.

The Premier League's 'big six' including City are reported to be among the planned founder members, with a scheduled start in 2022-23.

But Guardiola, who has also managed in Spain and Germany, expressed fears about how any continental league might impact on domestic action.

"I have the feeling we cannot lose the local leagues, what it means for the FA Cup, the leagues," Guardiola said.

"What we should do is make every single league in Europe stronger than what it is, less teams, better championships, better League One, better League Two, better Premier League with less teams in every competition. Go to the quality over quantity."

"To make a super Premier League, you have to reduce the teams, but we cannot kill the lower divisions or the Premier League itself."

Football's world governing body FIFA and the six continental confederations have publicly rejected the breakaway competition.

Earlier reports in the UK said that negotiations were nearing conclusion for the closed "European Premier League", backed by \$6 billion of financing from major banks.

