

Spokeswoman for Iran Health Ministry Sima Sadat Lari Said on Tuesday That Some 79 More Iranians Lost Their Lives Due to COVID-19 During the Past 24 Years as the Death Toll Hit 57,560

IRAN NEWS

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Up to U.S. to Take First Step Regarding JCPOA

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's UN ambassador says the ball is America's court regarding the nuclear agreement that it abandoned in 2018, adding that Tehran is waiting for the new US administration to take the first step to lift the unlawful sanctions and then rejoin the 2015 multilateral accord.

In an interview with NBC News on Monday, Majid Takht-Ravanchi said Tehran was not prepared to offer goodwill gestures or confidence-building measures until Washington removed its sanctions and returned to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"It's up to the US to decide what course of action to take. We're not in a hurry," he said.

In 2015, Iran and six world states — namely the US, Germany, France, Britain, Russia and China — signed the JCPOA which was ratified in the form of UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

Citing Biden's statements, Takht-Ravanchi said Iran wanted to see the new US president make good on his promises and if he did, Tehran would be ready to once again abide by the terms of the JCPOA.

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Iran Foreign Trade Balance Hits \$59b

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN — Head of Iran Customs Administration announced on Tuesday that the country's foreign trade during the past ten months of the current Iranian year (started March 20, 2020) reached 59 billion dollars.

The figure shows remarkable increase while being compared to the preceding month, Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi said.

The weight of the foreign trade in the mentioned period has been 122 million tons, the official added.

Despite the sanctions, Iran's trade exchange with the world countries has grown, Mir-Ashrafi said.

He further referred to China, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Turkey and Afghanistan as Iran's biggest export destinations, respectively.

The value of imports by the five countries from Iran has been 21.3 billion dollars, the official concluded.

Iran has different border transit roads with its neighboring states through which it can facilitate the states' access to the outside world.

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Tehran, Moscow Call for "Rescue" of JCPOA



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN — Iran and Russia called for the rescue of the Iran nuclear deal Tuesday, as their top diplomats held their first talks since Joe Biden's election raised hopes of Washington returning to the agreement.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said ahead of the talks in Moscow that "one of the most pressing topics is the task of rescuing the Joint Comprehensive Action Plan (JCPOA)".

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif thanked Moscow for its efforts to repair the JCPOA after the US exit in 2018 and for Russia's "constructive and principled" position on the deal.

Zarif urged unity between Moscow and Tehran "in order to save the JCPOA from the risks and fears that arose after the United States left this plan."

Meanwhile Iranian diplomat said that the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis was a joint concern of Tehran and Moscow, resolved through Russian mediation, and has now become an opportunity for peace and friendship in the region.

Zarif, who arrived in Moscow for the second destination of his trip to the region, met and held talks with his Russian counterpart, Lavrov.

Lavrov called the salvation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) issue one of the most acute topics on the agenda, saying that Moscow and Tehran are both interested in the complete restoration of the Iran nuclear deal.

"Both we and Iran are deeply interested in the full return of signatory states to fulfilling their obligations under the accord," Lavrov said.

Referring to the good relations between Tehran and Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister said that the two countries are also interested in expanding dialogue on a number of other issues, such as security in the Persian Gulf, the resolution of the domestic conflict in Afghanistan, and the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Zarif, for his part, expressed gratitude to Moscow for its constructive and unwavering position on the issue of the JCPOA.

Appreciating Russian President Vladimir Putin for bringing peace to Nagorno-Karabakh, Zarif said, "The Nagorno-Karabakh crisis was a joint concern of Tehran and Moscow, resolved through Russian mediation, and has now become an opportunity for peace and friendship in the region."

"We will look at regional issues, JCPOA, from which the United States unilaterally withdrew, and the expansion of bilateral relations in today's session," he added.

Then Zarif and Lavrov signed an agreement on the expansion of cyber security.

The agreement is a significant turning point in the bilateral relation relations between the two countries in the field of cyber security in the national and international arena and aims at the expansion of regional and international cooperation.

According to the new agreement, Iran and Russia will strengthen their cyber cooperation in terms of security, technical assistance, and the fight against cybercrimes.

Iran Developing Ultramodern Quantum Technology

TEHRAN (IP) - Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) said on Monday night that the country has started work on developing Quantum Technology as the technology becoming the engine of innovations in science, economics, and society in the 21st century.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the open space quantum communication achievement, Ali Akbar Salehi said that Quantum Technology is very important and that advanced industrial countries kicked off development in this technology from the onset of the 21st century. The AEOI began work on Quantum Technology in 2016, he said, adding that the organization is responsible for monitoring scientific developments throughout the world and prioritizing state-of-the-art technologies, IRNA reported.

The technology intertwines photons and separates a pair of photons and then dispatches the photons to a chosen destination, the official stated, noting that the photon, which remains in the first place, would be affected by the other photon that has been sent to the destination. Iran's nuclear chief went on to say that in 2019 the AEOI decided to carry out the experiment in farther distances; so, the test was implemented at a distance of 2 meters, trying to increase the rate of photon generation, which ended up in the production of several million pairs of intertwined photons. Salehi added that the distance increased to 300 meters in June 2020.

Salehi added that the AEOI plans to increase the distance to seven kilometers between the location of the organization and Milad Tower in Tehran next summer. He expressed hope that the organization will be able to utilize Quantum Technology in order to transfer codified data in different fields, including in telecommunications, defense, banking communications, medical and computer sciences, artificial intelligence, atomic clock, radars, biology, etc. Iran is the first country in the West Asia region that has conducted the test, Salehi said, noting that a few countries succeeded in investing in Quantum Technology, including Austria, the U.S., China, Russia, India, the UK, the European Union, and Canada.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Backstage of World Economic Forum

The World Economic Forum (WEF) was launched by Klaus Schwab for the first time on January 24, 1971 in Davos, a mountain resort in Switzerland, as a venue for gathering of economic leaders and famous investors of the East and West of the world and as a rival for UK's Chatham House for developing freemasonry structures.

Schwab who was a business professor at the University of Geneva at that time chose Davos for gathering of economists, politicians, capitalists, theoreticians and artists. His major goal for launching the World Economic Forum was that these people could gather together in one place in order to exchange views on the major latest issues and defining economic strategy for the West.

Perhaps Davos can be considered as the second biggest masonry city in the world after Monaco. In this resort town there are lawyers that each one run thousands of paper international companies. Banks of this town enjoy the strong legal nature of Swiss banks and their money circulation comparing to other cities in the world is hundreds of thousands time more.

The founder of WEF Mr. Schwab first launched the European Management Forum in Geneva, Switzerland, which was a nonprofit organization and through this platform he used to call on trade and industry leaders of Europe to gather together in Januarys in Davos. After the annual Davos meeting, holding regional meetings in different countries of the world was put on the agenda of the WEF. Events in 1973, including the collapse of the Bretton Woods fixed-exchange rate mechanism and the Yom Kippur War, saw the annual meeting expand its focus from management to economic and social issues, and, for the first time, political leaders - either they were members of freemasonry or they and their countries were supported by freemasonry to progress - were invited to the annual meeting in January 1974. From 1978 on, the WEF took the initiative for publishing report on world economic competition.

In 1987, European Management Forum changed its name to the World Economic Forum and sought to broaden its vision to include providing a platform for resolving international conflicts.

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Taliban Delegation In Tehran for Talks

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A high-ranking Taliban delegation led by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the group's top political leader, is visiting Iran for talks on the Afghan peace process and relevant topics.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said the Taliban political delegation had arrived in Tehran on morning Tuesday at the invitation of the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Khatibzadeh added that Taliban representatives are set to meet Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Iran's Special Envoy for Afghanistan Mohammad Ebrahim Taherian, among other officials, during their visit.

The Taliban's delegates have paid several visits to Iran over the past months. Iran strongly supports the realization of peace and stability in neighboring Afghanistan, which has been embroiled in decades of militancy fueled by foreign military intervention.

Accordingly, the Islamic Republic has been closely following the peace negotiations underway since last September between the Afghan government and the Taliban in the Qatari capital Doha, where the Taliban run a political bureau.

Given the religious, cultural, linguistic and historical commonalities of the two neighbors, Iran believes the stability, socio-cultural development and economic growth of both nations are intertwined, repeatedly expressing its willingness to help the Afghan government in that regard.

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Despite Sanctions, Iran Is Safe

TEHRAN (IP) - Interior Minister stated that the country's security situation is acceptable despite sanctions, economic problems, and coronavirus.

Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli stressed that in the fourth governors' meeting on Monday, the upcoming presidential elections was the other issue discussed at today's meeting, which fortunately there has been no problem but in comparison with last years' elections, it will be a little worrying.

Iran's economy, production, and production barriers were also discussed

during the meeting. Yet, there is no problem in the market to meet people's needs for the New Year. However, sanctions have caused some businesses to face innumerable problems, mainly in Khorasan Razavi, Esfahan, Qom, and Fars, which are touristic and pilgrimage cities, noted the minister.

Social harms were the other parts of the meeting's discussion. The coronavirus has impacted people's lives, so the government is trying nonstop to maintain people's health and security, Iran's Interior Minister stressed.

Opportunity for U.S. Not Everlasting

TEHRAN (MNA) – Government Spokesman Ali Rabie said the window of opportunity would not remain open forever for the U.S. and the European JCPOA parties to fulfill their obligations.

"We have not had any talks or contacts with the new US administration so far, and we are still awaiting the official positions of the U.S. administration to clarify on its return to its JCPOA obligations and on the lifting of the illegal sanctions that are an integral part of these obligations," the spokesman said in a press conference on Tuesday.

"There are currently no plans to negotiate with the United States," he noted, "Any progress in this regard will depend on the practical steps taken by the United States to return to its obligations under Resolution 2231."

"Of course, the United States will not have time forever, and the opportunity is very limited, not only for the United States but also for the European members of the JCPOA," Rabie added.

He expressed hope that before the issues become more complicated, the U.S. government



will take practical measures and decisions to prove good faith and build trust.

Regarding the time limit for the UAEA inspectors' access to Iranian nuclear sites, the government spokesman said, "According to the timetable set by the parliamentary law, the first steps of restricting the inspectors related to the Additional Protocol will begin in the first week of March."

He noted that inspections related to the IAEA safeguards regime will remain regular.

Judiciary Not Looking For Ban on Social Media

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaeili said on Tuesday that the body is not looking for ban on social media.

"The cyberspace is like the real space, it belongs to the citizens of the country. It is among the public rights to utilize social media so that the Government needs to exercise management on organization of the social media, Gholam-Hossein Esmaeili said in a press conference.

Nowadays, some crimes worse than COVID-19 are spreading in cyberspace, such as selling weapons, Drug sales in cyberspace, massive fraud and suicide propaganda, especially for the young generation, which is not acceptable, he said.

The spokesman added that the Judiciary believes that cyberspace needs to be organized.

He also said the brother of the country's senior vice president has been sentenced to two years in prison on corruption charges.

He said that the verdict for Mahdi Jahangiri, the brother of Eshaq Jahangiri, cannot be appealed. Mahdi Jahangiri was on the board of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce and was also the founder of the private Gardeshgari Bank. Charges against him included "professional currency smuggling" in the amounts of 607,100 euros and \$108,000. He was ordered to return the funds and fined four times the amounts in question. Jahangiri was arrested in October 2017 and released on bail in March 2018, pending trial.



Leader: Martyrdom Was Fakhrizadeh Reward



TEHRAN (IP) - The Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in a meeting with the family of Martyr Fakhrizadeh, said that the high position that God bestowed on the Martyr was the reward of his unparalleled efforts and sincerity.

The family of the prominent nuclear and defense scientist, Martyr Mohsen Fakhrizadeh met with the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei on Monday.

In this meeting, Ayatollah Khamenei praised the scientific and technical achievements of Martyr Fakhrizadeh and the hard work of the high-ranking scientist in the field of science and practice, saying: "The position he achieved is not comparable to any position in this world."

Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, head of the Research and Innovation Organization of Iran's Ministry of Defense and a leading scientist in the nuclear industry, was assassinated on November 27 in a terrorist attack. The attack took place on a highway in the small city of Absard in Damavand County, about 40 kilometers east of the capital Tehran.

Environmental Hazards Jeopardizing Iranian People's Social Health

TEHRAN (IFO) - The Iranian president says having a healthy environment is a social right and one of the fundamental principles of citizens' rights, but environmental problems imperil social health and security.

President Hassan Rouhani noted on Monday, "The protection of the environment is not a preferential matter; rather, it is an obligation and a duty."

Speaking at a meeting of the High Council of Environmental Protection, he underlined that his administration has secured good environmental achievements.

President Rouhani said the government has had environmental concerns and has paid due regard to the protection of the country's natural resources.

He said the government has adopted different measures to protect the environment and has had good accomplishments.

"The government has taken giant steps in this regard so far in the form of coherent programs, including measures to reduce atmospheric particulate matter, revive the Lake Urmia and lagoons, plant saplings and tackle flooding," he said.

He said measures have also been adopted to deal with air pollution.

"While seriously caring about environmental issues, the High Council of Environmental Protection seeks to facilitate the country's development, too," he said.

He underlined the coronavirus pandemic should not deflect attention from the key issue of the environment.

Iranian High-Tech Firms Offer Their Products and Services in Kenya

TEHRAN (IFP) - A delegation of Iranian high-tech companies, headed by Vice-President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari, has travelled to the Kenyan capital of Nairobi for talks on business collaboration between the two sides.

The Iranian knowledge-based companies will attend a business-to-business event with their Kenyan counterparts on January 27, 2021.

The delegation will also present a package, prepared by Iran's Official Development Assistance (ODA) with the support of Iran National Innovation Fund (INIF), says a senior official.

The package aims to strengthen mutual interactions in the fields of technology and innovation between Iran and Kenya.

The ODA package worth \$75,000 includes items such as ventilators, COVID-19 diagnostic kits, pulse oximeters, infrared thermometers, and facemasks.

Sohrab Assa, the international affairs manager of INIF, said,

"The global economy has undergone numerous extensive changes since the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic."

He then pointed to an unprecedented downturn in many industries and jobs and said, "INIF tried to supply the products needed in Iran by empowering TBFs and producers of anti-coronavirus products."

INIF international affairs manager added, "Today, the young generation of Iran has reached a good position in the field of production of many high-tech products. These valuable achievements can be made available to Iran's friendly countries for humanitarian purposes."

Assa then said, "During the visit of the high-ranking Iranian delegation to Kenya, headed by Iran Vice President for Science and Technology with the presence of Jafar Barmaki, Iranian Ambassador to Nairobi and representatives of INIF, the package of Iranian ODA will be presented to the officials of Kenyan ministry of health in Nairobi."

Iran Holds Talks With German, Russian, UN Envoys on Afghan Peace Process

TEHRAN (IFP) - Mohammad-Ebrahim Taherian, the Iranian foreign minister's special envoy for Afghanistan, has held extensive talks with a number of world diplomats on the Afghan peace process as a Taliban delegation arrives in Tehran.

Taherian discussed the latest Afghan developments in a Tuesday conversation with the UN secretary-general's special representative for Afghanistan Deborah Lyons.

During the talks, the two sides conferred on the latest status of intra-Afghan negotiations, the peace process in Afghanistan, and the establishment of sustainable peace through diplomatic solutions.

Earlier on Monday, Taherian had discussed the issue with Afghan Foreign Minister Mohammad Hanif Atmar as well as the German and Russian special envoys for Afghanistan.

In these conversations, the Iranian envoy underlined the necessity of reducing violence and the need for collaboration among the friends of Afghanistan in establishing sustainable peace through diplomatic solutions.

He also described intra-Afghan negotiations as the most appropriate way to end the crisis in Afghanistan and relieve the Afghan people's pains, and expressed Tehran's preparedness for any assistance in this regard.

France Opposes U.S. Policy on Restricting Access to Medicine

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - French Ambassador to Tehran Philippe Thiebaud says his country opposes the U.S. policies regarding Iran for restricting Iranian nation's access to medicines and medical equipment and emphasized cooperation between the two countries in fighting with coronavirus pandemic

In meeting with the head of Iran-France Parliamentary Friendship Group Mr. Mohammad Mehdi Mofatteh, Mr. Thiebaud pointed to the significant role of parliaments in developing the relations between the two countries, adding that parliament diplomacy is the major part of bilateral relation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and France.

He announced readiness of his country for online talks between parliaments of both states in the current condition affected by the pandemic. He further said that cooperation in the health sector between both states has been since the past that as an example he can point to the foundation of Pasteur Institute in Iran in 1920.

Thiebaud also pointed to the appropriate trend of economic cooperation between the two countries in the past years and emphasized continuation of trade and economic relations especially in the auto sector.

Mofatteh, for his part, pointed to defamation to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in France, and said this issue has angered and hurt Muslims in the world and also Iranian nation, and it is expected the French parliament and government to be sensitive in observing rights and dignity of Muslims and all Divine religions.

He then pointed to the historic relation of the two countries and shaping the popular uprising in Iran with the late Imam Khomeini's travel to Paris. He further said that since the first days after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the grounds were provided for Iranian and French nations that these capacities can be used for the interests of both nations.



Iran, Brazil Confer Expanding Economic and Trade Relations

IRAN (IP) - Diplomats from Brazil and Iran held the tenth round of bilateral negotiations on Monday, exchanging views on the expansion of economic and trade relations.

Brazil's Deputy Foreign Minister Kenneth Nobrega and Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Seyed Abbas Araqchi chaired the consultative talks during a virtual meeting.

They were accompanied by ambassadors of both countries.

The Brazilian and Iranian officials discussed mutual political and economic ties as well as regional and international cooperation, exchanging views on the expansion of economic and trade relations.

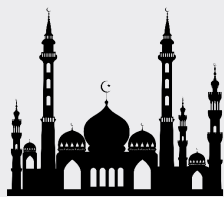
Tehran-Moscow-Beijing Ties, Strategic in Essence

TEHRAN (P) - Majlis Speaker's Special Advisor for International Affairs called Tehran's relations with Beijing and Moscow strategic and adding Iran's ties with its allies amid hardships would be based on friendship, cooperation, and mutual respect.

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian pointed out that in the 11th term of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, more than one hundred and seventy foreign meetings have been held at various levels, covering various areas of the world in which East to West is included.

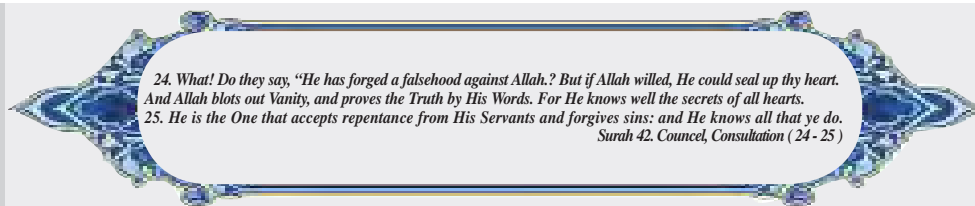
He added: "The approach of the Islamic Consultative Assembly to foreign relations in the field of parliamentary diplomacy includes interaction with the world and looking at balanced foreign relations and is in line with the national interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

He also said: "Iran's policy in the field of political independence, adherence to the policy of 'neither East nor West' and in the field of national interests, emphasis on cooperation and reciprocal relations with East and West within the framework of the path of relations with neighbors and having a special view of Asia are among Iran's priorities."



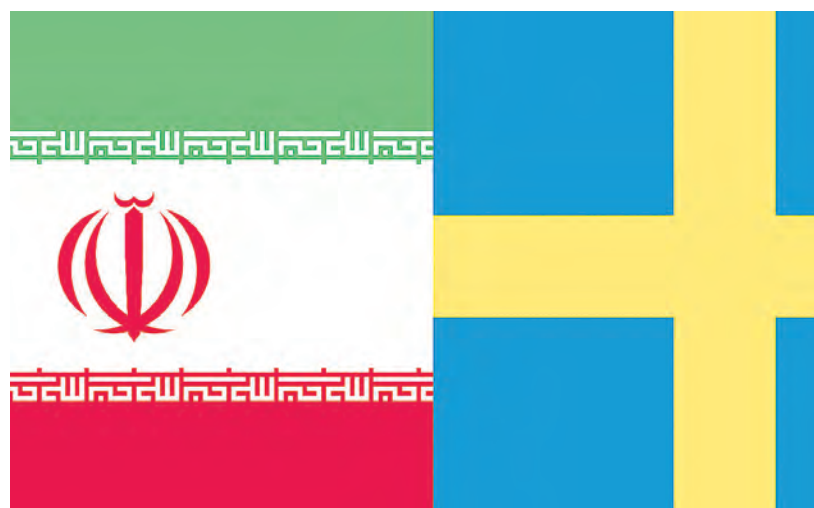
PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:17
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:45
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:40
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:07



Tehran-Stockholm Cooperation Concentrated On Capital Goods

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



TEHRAN – Head of Iran-Sweden Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ISCCI) believes beside banking sanctions, Iran's domestic economic problems play the most roles in the halt of exports and foreign investment, and regarding to the trade with Sweden after probable lifting of sanctions, he called for more attention on restoring trade relations with small and medium-sized enterprises of Sweden.

Speaking to ICCIMA website Abdolreza Rezaei Honjani, he blamed domestic economic woes as the major factor for slowing down or halts of foreign investments and exports. He also emphasized the approach of Swedish companies for improving the cooperation process for investment, and called the joint cooperation with this country in case of removing sanctions to be very important and effective.

He then pointed to the cooperation between Iran and Sweden which started some 70 years ago by the arrival of the first models of Volvo trucks in Iran and added the first economic relation between Iran and Sweden was set by importing heavy trucks of Swedish company Volvo and it gradually expanded to other fields and industries like mineral industries.

Rezaei pointed to the Swedish presence in Sarcheshmeh and Golgozar mines projects as an example for the joint cooperation between the two countries and then pointed to other fields of cooperation between the two countries like reinforcing telecommunication waves, building power plant, and packing industries in the field of dairy production.

He stated that the economic cooperation between Iran and Sweden has always been defined on joint investment and exports of different types of capital goods like technical knowhow and industrial machineries, and they have been less focused on export of consumer goods.

Rezaei reiterated the Swedish have entered Iran's market in a way that as well as improving the occupation in the country, they transfer the needed technology and

improve the level of quality of production; therefore cooperation and relation with this country has been important for Iran.

He admitted that Swedish companies do not seek risks in their business and since Sweden's trade with Iran accounts for only 0.5 % of Sweden's total exports, the companies despite eagerness to continue cooperation avoid it due to the sanctions, and for this reason the trade relation between Tehran and Stockholm has declined after the sanctions.

Rezaei also pointed to the cooperation of big Swedish companies with Iranian state companies, adding that since the past, relations between both countries have been focused on auto-making and mining industries and they have paid less heed to the small and medium-sized companies.

He went on to say that Iran's private sector is keen to restore the past relations as well as boosting relations between small and medium-sized enterprises of both countries.

He reiterated that economy does not move on commanding, and in order to boost international relations, new and upgraded methods away from commanding policies are required for presence in the markets.

Rezaei added that most of Iran's exports to Sweden are done by the baggage which is mostly related to the foodstuff sector, adding that Iranian carpet and pistachio are exported to Sweden via Hamburg market. He noted that the total direct export of Iran to Sweden stood at \$11m in 2019 and with including the unregistered exports, the figure can reach around \$16m. He also said that Iran's imports from Sweden stood at \$51m in 2019 while both countries' total trade volume was over \$370m in 2018 which shows it has declined by \$80m in 2019.

He reiterated that even the sanctions are lifted due to the banking problems and not approving FATF and CFT laws in the country, restoring banking ties with other countries is impossible or very difficult.

Number of Utility Projects To Reach 250 by Yearend

TEHRAN (IP) - Energy Minister said that utility projects of 4,800 billion Toman would be inaugurated in Southern Khorasan and Kurdistan in the coming month.

Emphasizing that the projects affect Iran's relations with neighboring countries, Reza Ardakanian added that about 10/000 human forces would be employed in these projects.

Sewage treatment systems are the signs of development and construction of the country and their number has increased from 168 to 269, Ardakanian noted in the 38th week of Iran's weekly inauguration of utility projects.

Ardakanian went on to say that these projects have been financially supported by private sectors, adding that Iran can implement its ability in these economic models and also can benefit neighboring countries with its science and experience.

Pointing to social justice, the energy minister highlighted that it was tried to endow both villages and cities with water and electricity, and providing the services to 9.3 million people.

Still referring to the 43rd anniversary of Iran's independence, Ardakanian said that these achievements were gained amid the hardest sanctions.

"We must try to have an effective role in consumption pattern as well as production since we have enough tools in this field too," the energy minister concluded.

Iran, Pakistan Underscore Cooperation in Transportation

TEHRAN (IP) - The Iranian ambassador to Islamabad and the Pakistani Minister for Communications stressed the need to increase cooperation between the two countries in transportation and road communications.

Ali Hosseini on Monday met with Pakistani Minister for Communications Murad Saeed, stressing the importance of relations between the two neighboring countries and the Pakistani government's commitment to strengthen relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed the bilateral economic and trade cooperation and the road transport between Iran and Pakistan.

Emphasis on opening new border crossings between the two countries, providing more facilities to traders and drivers, identifying problems, and solving them were other discussion topics between the two officials.

First Iran Bio Exhibition Kicks Off

TEHRAN (MNA) – The first International Conference and Exhibition on Medical Biotech products and Related Industries Iran Bio kicked off on Tuesday in the Olympic Hotel, Tehran.

The first International Conference and Exhibition on Medical Biotech products and Related Industries was opened on Tuesday, in order to introduce the capabilities and potentials of the national biotech industries, provide a platform for information and technology transfer, and present the latest achievements in various fields of biotechnology.

This exhibition with about 30 booths in the field of biotechnology, drug production, medical equipment and vaccine production is held by fully observing health protocols due to the spread of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, in the country

Iran Bio will run until January 28 at Tehran Olympic Hotel.

Kharg Terminal Fully Ready for Maximum Crude Oil Exports

TEHRAN (Shana) - The CEO of Iranian Oil Terminals Company announced the full readiness of Kharg Oil Terminal to maximize Iran's crude oil exports.

Speaking on the sidelines of the 25th Iran Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition, Abbas Asadrouz told Shana that his company used the opportunity of the sanctions to upgrade its infrastructure and prepare to maximization of export capacity of the terminal.

He continued: "9 berths of Kharg terminal (three berths of the western jetty and 6 berths of the eastern jetty) are in full readiness and the infrastructure of this company can even be responsible for the daily export of 8 to 10 million barrels of oil." The showcase wrapped up on Monday after 4 working days.

Afghanistan to Launch First Passenger Rail Service to Iran



TEHRAN (KABUL) - Afghanistan says it will launch its first passenger train to Iran this year, following on a landmark rail service which opened between the two neighbors last month.

The Central Asian country currently lacks a passenger rail service, but the new rail link from Herat to Khaf in Iran is being completed for both cargo and passengers.

"The contract for the first passenger train with a daily capacity of 1,100 tons to Iran and 1,300 tons for return has been finalized and the service will start operating at the earliest opportunity," acting minister of transport and head of Afghan railway authority Mohammed Yama Shams said on Monday.

Afghanistan has still to complete the remaining 85 km section of the Khaf-Herat railway line which was inaugurated as far as Rahzanak in its territory in December.

Officials say work is in progress on the line, which ends at Herat International Airport, the fourth major airport in Afghanistan.

About 2.5 million Afghan migrants reportedly live either legally or without documents in Iran.

The 225 km long railway to Iran has long been touted as the sole viable option to build Afghanistan's economy, connecting Herat to Mashhad in Iran and on to Turkey.

Last week, Iran and Turkey also signed three documents to expand transnational rail services linking them to Afghanistan as well as Pakistan and China.

Iran, Turkey sign accords for Pakistan, China railway link

Iran Building 30-Million-Barrel Strategic Reserves

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has decided to build strategic reserves for 30 million barrels of oil as a buffer against the impact of sanctions, the CEO of the Iranian company in charge of the project says.

Under the plan, 60 strategic petroleum reserves (SPRs), each with a capacity to store 500,000 barrels, will be built on the Qeshm island in the Persian Gulf, Panahsaz Iran Engineering Co's Gholamreza Zeynalpour told IRNA news agency. His company is a leading provider of infrastructure, technology and construction services in Iran, which has helped indigenize the construction of gas condensate reserves.

Several years ago, the company took up building cryogenic reserves for gas condensate, which requires storage at ultra-cold temperatures, after foreign companies shunned dealing with Iran under the threat of sanctions.

Panahsaz, which has built all the LPG reserves for the super-giant South Pars gas field, took advantage of cutting-edge services provided by knowledge-based Iranian companies to localize the technology, Zeynalpour said.

"With the measures taken, not only was there no disruption in the absence of foreigners, but specialized

workforce was trained in the company and the knowledge became localized with the saving of costs," he told a news conference in Tehran Monday.

According to Zeynalpour, the cost of building reserves by his company is about 40 percent lower compared to foreign companies. In South Pars, 50 million euros was saved in each eight phases of the field for construction of LPG reserves, he said.

Head of the company's board of directors, Amir Ebrahim-Afroz, said Iranian companies are now capable of competing with international rivals in designing and operating petroleum reserves.

"If sanctions are lifted, we will enter the export market of technical and engineering services," he said of the company, which has been qualified to vie for a project in Oman along with South Korea's Hyundai.

Ebrahim-Afroz said trust in domestic companies has increased under the sanctions.

When the Europeans intensified sanctions on Iran in 2012, Panahsaz started work on designing petroleum reserves - an area which was a monopoly of foreign companies.



"My Tehran" Book Presented at Italian Envoy Residence

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



On Monday and at the presence of Tehran Urban Council's President Mohsen Hashemi Rafsanjani, the newest book "My Tehran" by architect Amir Reza Farahbod was presented for the first time at the Italian Ambassador's Residence in Farmanieh.

Ambassador Giuseppe Perrone, in his opening remarks, has described this event as a unique opportunity to highlight the extraordinary significance of Tehran's architectural and cultural heritage that covers centuries of Iranian history. He also mentioned Italy's many contributions to Iran's architectural and cultural heritage, as shown by the feature of the Italian Residence in Farmanieh as one of the key highlights of the book.

Dr. Hashemi Rafsanjani praised the efforts by Dr. Farahbod and stressed the importance of the ties between Italy and Iran which he characterized as historical and extremely deep.

"My Tehran" is a unique compelling introduction of 340 cultural and historical buildings of Tehran registered in Iran's national heritage list and in UNESCO world heritage list (Golestan palace).

For the first time, all Tehran monuments are organically described in Farahbod's volume, and classified according to their location.

"My Tehran" vividly connects the history of the buildings to their dwellers, architects, builders, and historical events throughout centuries starting from the Safavid era up to the present time.

The author, Dr. Amir Reza Farahbod, is an architect and researcher in the field of cultural heritage. Author of "Peace Street" published in 2018 by Tehran's Urban Planning and Development Center and longtime Tehran Municipality's advisor, Dr. Farahbod has developed the book over 8 years of work with the contribution of Tehran municipality, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as many Iranian prominent experts, photographers and Tehran University's students.

U.S. Military in South China Sea Not Good for Peace

BEIJING (Reuters) - The United States often sends ships and aircraft into the South China Sea to "flex its muscles" and this is not good for peace, China's Foreign Ministry said on Monday, after a U.S. aircraft carrier group sailed into the disputed waterway.

The strategic South China Sea, through which trillions of dollars in trade flows each year, has long been a focus of contention between Beijing and Washington, with China particularly angered by U.S. military activity there.

The U.S. carrier group led by the USS Theodore Roosevelt and accompanied by three warships, entered the waterway on Saturday to promote "freedom of the seas", the U.S. military said, just days after Joe Biden became U.S. president.



Houthis Protest Against Trump's Terrorist Label

DUBAI (Reuters) - Tens of thousands of Yemenis marched in Sanaa on Monday, heeding a call by the Houthi movement to condemn the United States for labelling it a terrorist group and backing the Saudi-led military coalition that is battling it.

The protesters filled a wide avenue in the Houthi-held capital, many holding banners that read: "America is the mother of terrorism".

The Trump administration's designation of the group as a foreign terrorist organization took effect on Jan. 19 but is being reviewed by the new administration of Joe Biden.



Anger, Grief as UK's COVID-19 Death Toll Nears 100,000



LONDON (Reuters) - As the United Kingdom's COVID-19 death toll approaches 100,000, grief-stricken relatives of the dead expressed anger at Prime Minister Boris Johnson's handling of the worst public health crisis in a century.

When the novel coronavirus, which first emerged in China in 2019, slid silently across the United Kingdom in March, Johnson initially said he was confident it could be sent packing in weeks.

But 97,939 deaths later, the United Kingdom has the world's fifth worst official death toll - more than its civilian toll in World War Two and twice the number killed in the 1940-41 Blitz bombing campaign, although the total population was lower then.

Behind the numbers there is grief and anger.

Jamie Brown's 65-year-old father died at the end of March after it was suspected he contracted COVID-19 while travelling on a train into London for work. At the time, the government was mulling a lockdown.

Told by medics to stay at home, he awoke days later with a tight chest, disorientated and nauseous, and was taken to hospital in an ambulance. He died from a cardiac arrest five minutes after arriving.

His son said the virus had damaged his lungs to the point where his heart gave up. He was a month away from retirement. "For me, it has been terrifying and harrowing to see everything that you hope for taken away. He will never be at my wedding; he will never meet any grandkids," Brown told Reuters.

"Then, you watch the death toll rising whilst ministers pat themselves on the back and tell you what a good job they have done. It changes very quickly from a personal to a collective grief."

Some scientists and opposition politicians say Johnson acted too slowly to stop the spread of the virus and then bungled both the government's strategy and execution of its response.

Johnson has resisted calls for an inquiry into the handling of the crisis and ministers say that while they have not got everything right, they were making decisions at speed and have among the best global vaccination programs.

The United Kingdom's death toll - defined as those who die within 28 days of a positive test - rose to 97,939 on Jan. 24. The toll has risen by an average of over 1,000 per day for the past 7 days.

In a series of investigations, Reuters has reported how the British government made several errors: it was slow to spot the infections arriving, it was late with a lockdown and it continued to discharge infected hospital patients into care homes.

The government's chief scientific adviser, Patrick Vallance, said in March that 20,000 deaths would be a good outcome. Soon after, a worst-case scenario prepared by government scientific advisers put the possible death toll at 50,000.

Another Night of Riots in Netherlands Over Covid-19 Curfew

THE HAGUE (Dispatches) - Police arrested at least 70 people after rioting broke out for a third night around the Netherlands on Monday, after weekend protests that were initially linked to dissent over a government decision to implement a nighttime curfew.

But the motivation behind vandalism and other incidents Monday in cities ranging from Rotterdam and Amsterdam to smaller centres of Haarlem, Geleen and Den Bosch was no longer clear, with rioters overwhelmingly in their teens.

Police Chief Willem Woelders said on television that 70 arrests had taken place by around 10 pm local time. Water cannons were used against looters in Rotterdam and tear gas used to disperse crowds in Haarlem.

Prime Minister Mark Rutte had earlier on Monday condemned the riots over the weekend in which anti-lockdown demonstrators attacked police and set fires.

The curfew, the first in the country since World War Two, was imposed after the National Institute for Health (RIVM) warned a new wave of infections is on its way due to the "British variant" of COVID-19, though numbers of new infections in the Netherlands have been declining for weeks.

Some 4,129 new cases were reported on Monday, the lowest number since Dec. 1. Police said hundreds had been detained over the weekend as rioters threw rocks and in one case knives at police, and burned down a COVID-19 testing station.

Police said they issued more than 5,700 fines for breaking the curfew, which lasts from 9 pm to 4:30 am local time. "This has nothing to do with protest, this is criminal violence," Rutte told reporters outside his office in The Hague. Schools and non-essential shops in the Netherlands have been shut since mid-December, following the closure of bars and restaurants two months earlier.

There have been 13,579 deaths in the Netherlands from COVID-19 and 952,950 infections to date. The police trade union NPB said there could be more protests ahead as the lockdown drags on and the Netherlands' vaccination program has been among the slowest in Europe to get underway.

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Dozens Detained Protesting Against Nepal Parliament's Dissolution

KATHMANDU (AFP) - Police used batons and water cannon Monday to disperse hundreds of people protesting in Kathmandu against the dissolution of Nepal's parliament.

Political tensions have been rising in the Himalayan nation since Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli dismissed the legislature in December, accusing members of his Communist Party of non-cooperation.

Oli has called elections for April and May, but protests have spread across the country of 28 million people.

Police said they arrested 26 demonstrators who gathered near the prime minister's residence to call Oli's move "unconstitutional" and demand the reinstatement of parliament.

Police spokesman Basanta Bahadur Kunwar told AFP the 26 were detained after a clash as demonstrators moved towards a restricted area near the residence.

Police used batons and water cannons to disperse the crowd of about 500, witnesses said. Several were injured.

"We were moving forward peacefully to demonstrate.. but (the police) used force on us without any warning," said journalist Narayan Wagle, who participated in the protest, as he later addressed a crowd.

The Oli government came to power in 2018 with a two-thirds majority, aiming to end years of instability and short-lived governments made worse by a devastating earthquake in 2015.

The government has since weathered accusations of corruption and criticism of its handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

The dissolution of parliament came after months of clashes with former Maoist rebel leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who helped Oli come to power when their parties merged in 2018.

The spotlight is now on the Supreme Court which is hearing more than a dozen writs challenging Oli's dissolution.



Putin Calls Pro-Navalny Marches Illegal

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russian President Vladimir Putin condemned weekend protests demanding the release of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny as dangerous and illegal, as the opposition politician's allies said they planned a similar protest for Sunday.

Police detained more than 3,700 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 Navalny be freed from jail where he is serving out a 30-day stint for alleged parole violations he denies.

Putin, who avoids mentioning Navalny by name, told students on Monday that nobody should use illegal protest action to further their own political interests.

"Everyone has the right to express their point of view within the framework provided by the law. Anything outside the law is not just counter-productive, but dangerous," said Putin.

He cited upheaval caused by the 1917 Russian Revolution and the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union as examples of how illegal action could cause misery to people and should therefore best be avoided. As Putin was speaking, Leonid Volkov, a close ally of Navalny currently outside Russia, announced plans for a new protest this Sunday that would once again ask the authorities to free Navalny.

Putin, in a rare public rebuttal of something Navalny has accused him of, on Monday rejected an accusation made in a video last week that has since gained more than 86 million views on YouTube.

Navalny alleged in it that Putin owned an opulent Black Sea palace that the Russian leader's friends had paid for, sometimes using public money.

"I haven't watched the film, simply because I don't have the free time to watch such information, but I scrolled through video compilations," Putin said. "...Nothing of what was indicated there as my property belongs either to me or to my relatives and never has belonged (to us). Never," he said.

Tensions between Moscow and Washington have flared over the Navalny protests. Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Monday it had issued a diplomatic protest to U.S. Ambassador to Russia John Sullivan over what it said it regarded as interference in its domestic affairs.



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J, balcony
pkg, yard
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Zafar Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
marble floor
Fully Furn

Parsian

Zaferanieh (\$2400) 230sq.m, 4bdrs, S/p, F.F
Farmanieh (\$1800) 170sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, F.F
Gheitarieh (\$2000) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, F.F
Pasdaran (\$2500) 300sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, F.F

Elahieh Apt (\$2000)
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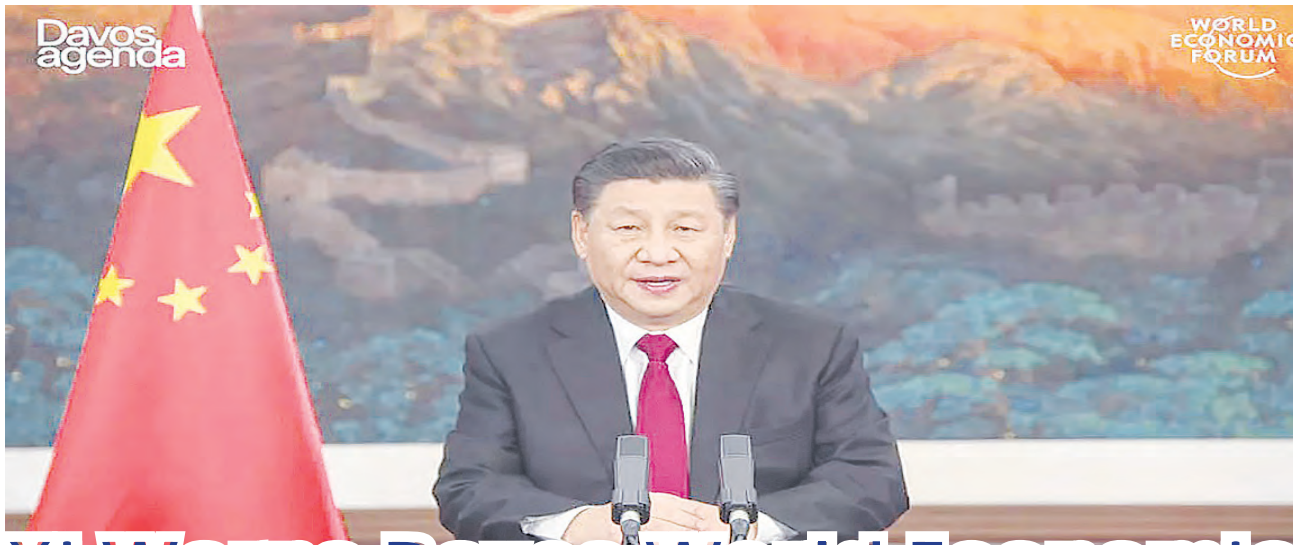
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Google Workers to Form Global Union Alliance

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Google employees from across the globe are forming a union alliance, weeks after more than 200 workers at the search engine giant and other units of parent company Alphabet Inc formed a labor union for U.S. and Canadian offices. Alpha Global was formed in coordination with UNI Global Union, a union federation that represents about 20 million workers globally, and includes unions from countries such as the United States, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, and the UK, UNI Global Union said.

"The problems at Alphabet - and created by Alphabet - are not limited to any one country, and must be addressed on a global level," UNI's General Secretary Christy Hoffman said.



Xi Warns Davos World Economic Forum Against New Cold War

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Chinese President Xi Jinping warned global leaders at an all-virtual Davos forum Monday against starting a "new Cold War", and urged global unity in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

Having largely curbed the spread of the pandemic within its borders, Xi wants to position China as a key player in a new multilateral world order as the US remains crippled by the pandemic.

"To build small cliques or start a new Cold War, to reject, threaten or intimidate others... will only push the world into division," said Xi in a likely veiled attack on U.S. President Joe Biden's plans to revitalize global alliances to counter China's growing influence.

In a swipe at moves targeting China launched by the previous U.S. administration under President Donald Trump, Xi said confrontation "will always end up harming every nation's interests and sacrificing people's welfare".

The Chinese leader also reaffirmed Beijing's ambitious climate pledges to slash carbon emissions by 65 per cent by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 -- both significant commitments as China emits a quarter of the world's greenhouse gases.

"Meeting these targets will require tremendous hard work from China. But we believe that when the interests of the entire humanity are at stake, China must step forward, take action and get the job done," he said.

Xi also called for stronger global governance via multilateral organisations, the removal of barriers to international trade, investment and tech exchanges, as well as stronger representation on the world stage for developing countries.

He stressed the importance of strengthening macroeconomic policies to combat the pandemic-induced global economic downturn. "We must build an open world economy, firmly safeguard the multilateral trade system, and refrain from making discriminatory and exclusive standards, rules and systems, as well as high walls that separate trade, investment, and technology," he said.

China saw its GDP increase 2.3 percent last year, according to official data -- the lowest growth rate since 1976 -- but it is nonetheless expected to be the only major economy to have expanded in the pandemic-ravaged year.

Its economy is also forecast to grow by 7.9 per cent in 2021, according to the International Monetary Fund -- trimmed down from initial predictions by a harsh geopolitical climate, global economic downturn and risks from a messy technological decoupling from the U.S. It also overtook the U.S. as the world's biggest recipient of foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2020, according to a UN report released Sunday.

Bolstered by confidence in his country's management of the pandemic, Xi has made ambitious climate pledges and vowed to uphold multilateralism as US-China relations entered their worst phase in decades under the Trump administration. But the Chinese government has been accused of mishandling the initial Covid-19 outbreak and covering up information, while a World Health Organization expert team is currently conducting a long-delayed probe into the origins of the virus. How Biden decides to handle the mounting tensions posed by China's rise will be one of the biggest strategic challenges he faces.

Under Trump, China and the U.S. traded blows on a wide range of issues ranging from the virus to trade, media freedoms, human rights and technology competition. Biden, busy handling several urgent domestic crises, did not participate at Davos and tasked US climate envoy John Kerry with representing Washington. Xi last addressed Davos in 2017, presenting himself as the champion of free trade on the eve of Trump's inauguration.

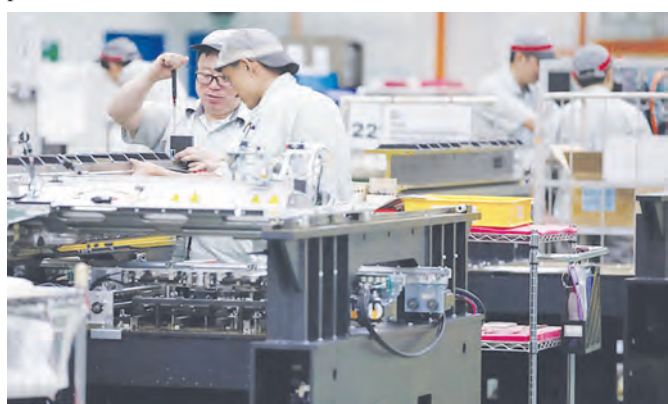
Singapore Has a 10-Year Plan to Ramp Up Manufacturing by 50%

SINGAPORE (Bloomberg) -- Singapore aims to grow its manufacturing sector by 50% over the next 10 years to maintain its competitiveness, with the pandemic highlighting its importance to the trade-reliant city-state's economy.

But the goal is ambitious as it will become harder to rely on foreign labor to supplement the local workforce, Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing said on Monday. To meet the aim, Singapore has to innovate and produce higher-value products rather than look to lower the cost of production or labor, he added.

The plan comes as the manufacturing industry emerged as one of Singapore's bright spots as it underwent its worst recession on record. The pandemic has created a demand for products from sectors such as biomedical electronics and precision engineering sub-sectors, which in turn generated demand for supporting sectors such as logistics.

The city-state's manufacturing sector contributes about 21%, or around S\$106 billion (\$80 billion), of total gross domestic product and accounts for about 450,000 workers, or around 12% of the workforce, according to the government figures.



Iraq Seeking Emergency Loans After Oil Price Plunge

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraq has requested emergency assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and talks are ongoing between the parties, the IMF said.

Iraqi Finance Minister Ali Allawi told the Bloomberg news agency earlier that Iraq was in talks with the IMF for a \$6bn loan package.

"The Iraqi authorities have requested emergency assistance from the IMF under the Rapid Financing Instrument, and indicated their intention to also request a longer-term arrangement with the Fund in support of planned economic reforms," an IMF representative said late on Sunday in an emailed statement.

"Discussions of the authorities' request for emergency assistance are ongoing."

The IMF's Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI) provides quick financial assistance, which is available to all member countries facing an urgent balance-of-payments need.

Financial assistance under the RFI is provided without the need for a full-fledged programme or review, according to the IMF website. Iraq may ask for an additional \$4bn in low-cost loans through another programme linked to government reforms, Allawi said on Sunday.

Iraq devalued its dinar currency last month after a collapse in global oil prices, an important source of Iraq's financial resources. Allawi told Bloomberg that Iraq also planned other types of funding to help plug the budget gap. Once the spending plan was approved, the government would move to issue \$5bn in domestic bonds to expand its financial base, he said.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) member's economy has only a small manufacturing base and almost all goods its imports are priced in U.S. dollars. A drop in the value of the dinar makes those imports more expensive.

Bangladesh to Buy Myanmar Rice

DHAKA (Reuters) - Bangladesh will buy 100,000 tons of rice from Myanmar, putting aside a rift over the Rohingya refugee crisis as the government races to overcome a shortage of the staple food for the country's more than 160 million people.

High rice prices pose a problem for the Dhaka government, which is ramping up efforts to replenish its depleted reserves after floods last year ravaged crops and sent prices to a record high.

Muslim-majority Bangladesh and mostly Buddhist Myanmar have been at odds over the more than 1 million Muslim Rohingya refugees in camps in southern Bangladesh. The vast majority of them fled Myanmar in 2017 from a military-led crackdown that U.N investigators said was executed with "genocidal intent" - assertions that Myanmar denies.

Bangladesh will import white rice in a government-to-government deal at \$485 a ton, including cost, insurance and freight (CIF) liner out basis, said Mosammat Nazmanara Khanum, the secretary at the country's food ministry.

"Our main priority is to bring down the prices of rice," Khanum told Reuters on Sunday, adding the government could buy as much as 10 million tons while private traders are allowed to buy another 10 million tons in the year to June.

The deal will be signed soon and the rice will be delivered by April in phases, she said.

Bangladesh is also buying 150,000 tons of rice from India's state-run firm NAFED in a government-to-government deal while it has issued a series of tender to buy the grain.

"We could buy more rice from India in state-to-state deals," Khanum said, adding that the Food Ministry was holding talks with several other Indian state agencies.

Bangladesh, traditionally the world's third-biggest rice producer with around 35 million tons annually, uses almost all its production to feed its people. It still often requires imports to cope with shortages caused by floods or droughts.

World Lost Equivalent of 255m Jobs in 2020

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The coronavirus pandemic took a huge toll on global jobs last year, the United Nations said Monday, with the equivalent of more than a quarter of a billion lost.

In a fresh study, the UN's International Labour Organization (ILO) found that a full 8.8 percent of global working hours were lost in 2020, compared to the fourth quarter of 2019.

That is equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs, or "approximately four times greater than the number lost during the 2009 global financial crisis," the ILO said in a statement.

"This has been the most severe crisis for the world of work since the Great Depression of the 1930s," ILO chief Guy Ryder told reporters in a virtual briefing.

Since surfacing in China just over a year ago, the virus has killed more than 2.1 million people, infected tens of millions of others and hammered the global economy.

The UN labor agency explained that around half of the lost working hours were calculated from reduced working hours for those remaining in employment.

But the world also saw "unprecedented levels of employment loss" last year, it said. Official global unemployment shot up by 1.1 percent, or 33 million more people, to a total of 220 million and a worldwide jobless rate of 6.5 percent last year.

Ryder stressed that another 81 million people did not register as unemployed but "simply dropped out of the labor market".

"Either they are unable to work perhaps because of pandemic restrictions or social obligations or they have given up looking for work," he said.

"And so their talents, their skills, their energy have been lost, lost to their families, lost to our society, lost to us all." The lost working hours shrank global labor income by a full 8.3 percent, the ILO said. That amounts to a drop of some \$3.7 trillion, or 4.4 percent of overall global gross domestic product (GDP), it added.

The emergence of several safe and effective vaccines against Covid-19 has raised hopes that the world will soon be able to rein in the pandemic.

But the ILO cautioned that the prospects for a global labor market recovery this year are "slow, uneven and uncertain." The organization pointed to the uneven impact the crisis had had on the world's workers, affecting women and younger workers far more than others.

Globally, employment losses for women last year stood at five percent, compared with 3.9 percent for men.

Women are more likely to work in the harder-hit sectors of the economy, and also have taken on more of the burden of, for instance, caring for children forced to stay home from school. Younger workers were also far more likely to lose jobs, with employment loss among 15-24-year-olds at 8.7 percent globally, compared with 3.7 percent for older workers.

Global Life Insurers Worried About Long-Term Pandemic Risks



LONDON (Reuters) - Global life insurers are taking steps to curb payouts stemming from the coronavirus pandemic, including long-term health consequences that are not fully understood, industry sources told Reuters.

Life insurers, including Prudential Financial Inc, and Aviva PLC, are now imposing waiting periods before COVID-19 patients, including those who have recovered, can apply for coverage, executives and spokespeople said. Some are also limiting coverage for certain age groups.

These changes come as some reinsurers demand new safeguards from life insurers they backstop, and as the industry struggles to ascertain the extent of problems caused by the novel coronavirus. COVID-19 has killed over 2.1 million people globally and infected nearly 100 million, according to a Reuters tally.

Some victims suffer long-term consequences including severe respiratory problems, organ damage, circulatory impairment and chronic fatigue. Three weeks after recovery, 10% of COVID-19 patients are still unwell and up to 5% feel sick for months, according to scientists at King's College London.

The pandemic has also caused a mental-health crisis for those who could not say goodbye to loved ones or have been isolated for months, while exacerbating substance-abuse issues for others.

It is too early to know how many people will file claims for death, long-term illness or disability as a result, but insurers worry the consequences could last for decades. "We have attempted as a company to strategize about modeling this and have made some headway but are far from the crystal ball that is able to predict this," said Dr. Paulo Bandeira Pinho, chief medical director of Optimum Re Insurance Co.

Optimum has met with life-insurer customers, including Prudential Financial, to map out long-term risks and possible financial impacts.

Prudential now imposes a minimum 30-day waiting period for recovered COVID-19 patients.

Iranian COVID-19 Vaccine Brings No Side Effect

SANANDAJ (IRNA) - Chairman of the Executive Office of the Order of Imam Khomeini Mohammad Mokhber said on Tuesday that feedback of the first phase of Iranian coronavirus human trial were satisfactory and it has caused no side effect so far.

Mokhber said that two to three million doses of vaccines will be produced in Iran by the end of the current Iranian year. He added that the first phase of the human trial phase on 21 volunteers is about to finish.

The vaccine will be available to the public next year, he noted



U.S. Oil Refiners Set for Worst Earnings Quarter of the Pandemic

NEW YORK (Reuters) - U.S. refiners are girding for a painful slate of fourth-quarter earnings, reflecting the pressure of rising crude prices, weak demand due to renewed COVID-19 travel restrictions, and higher costs of associated with blending of renewable fuels into their products.

Seven U.S. independent refiners are projected to post an average earnings-per-share loss of \$1.51, down from a loss of \$1.06 in the third quarter of 2020, according to IBES data from Refinitiv.

Both Credit Suisse and Tudor Pickering Holt cut lowered the price estimates of every U.S. independent refiner for the fourth quarter.

"[This] would mark the weakest quarter of the year," said Matthew Blair, analyst at Tudor Pickering Holt and Co.

In the fourth quarter, independent refiners including Marathon Petroleum, Valero Energy and Phillips 66 coped with uneven demand due to a resurgence of coronavirus cases worldwide.

Consumption of liquid fuels globally is estimated to have fallen by 9 million barrels per day in 2020, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Crude oil benchmarks rallied more than 20% in the quarter, which squeezed U.S. refining margins to less than \$10 a barrel on average - the threshold for which most refiners make money - for the majority of the fourth quarter.

Meanwhile, tougher restrictions on socializing and businesses clamped down on traffic in states like California, the most populous U.S. state and one of the largest driving markets in the world. Travel on U.S. roads fell by 11% in November from the year-ago period, after a 9% drop in October, according to the U.S. Transportation Department.

Lockdowns in various European countries suppressed international flights and jet fuel demand in the quarter.

Delta Airlines' refinery in Trainer, Pennsylvania, in early January posted a \$102 million refining segment loss in the fourth quarter, and a \$441 million loss on third party fuel sales.

In the fourth quarter, refiners also had to pay more for U.S. renewable fuel credits, which reached a three-year high earlier this month. The cost for Renewable Identification Numbers - the credits used for compliance with U.S. biofuels blending laws - increased by 47 cents per barrel from the third quarter due to rising ethanol and biodiesel prices.



Refiners are required, by law, to blend biofuels into their gasoline pool, or pay up so others can do the same. The pandemic has reduced blending activity generally, and as a result, fewer credits have been issued, increasing their costs.

Credit Suisse analyst Manav Gupta said Phillips 66 will lose \$1.16 per share in the quarter. He had originally anticipated a 30-cent loss, but changed that due to lower refining earnings in the Gulf Coast, West Coast and Midwest markets.

"Sales will also see earnings down as crude price rose sharply quarter over quarter and lockdowns impacted volumes," said Gupta in a note.

U.S. refining margins started to improve around the holiday season, and were around \$12.50 per barrel. Refining rates rose last week to their highest since March, government data showed. However, at about 80% of capacity, refiners are producing approximately 2 million fewer barrels than at the same time last year.

"While refiners may be getting paid the same amount for gasoline as last year, it's on much lower production," said Bob Yawger, director for energy market futures at Mizuho.

Backstage of World...

FROM PAGE 1

This year and on the eve of the forum and due to the concerns about the strategy of the forum about integrating economic axes in Europe and boosting the value of euro and devaluation of dollar, Americans with a smart initiative named the forum "the Great Reset" and have accused the forum of planning "Conspiracy Theory." So in order to clear the doubts, the Center for Research on Globalization in a report wrote, "The issue of the Great Reset which has gone viral in the cyber world and it has become a hot topic in the social networks and news websites, and even American newspaper "New York Times" by publishing an article calling it the conspiracy theory and rejected it, is a misunderstanding because this is definitely not a conspiracy theory."



Dear readers should know that the raised contents and claims in this report have been merely published for analysis of approaches and views of the Western think tanks, and probable claims and inductions of these reports and articles are never confirmed by eastern or European economists. Therefore, the Great Reset is a unique window of opportunity for the world leaders in order that they could shape the future state of global relations, direction of national economies, priorities of the societies, nature of business models and the management of a global commons. In a condition that it has provided a unique opportunity for shaping the trend of improvement, this initiative covers all views and points in line with helping all those who determine the future of global relations, direction of national economies, priorities of the societies, nature of business nature and management of global commons.

The Great Reset initiative due to the vision and vast expertise of the leaders engaged across the Forum's communities has a set of dimensions to build a new social contract that honors the dignity of every human being.

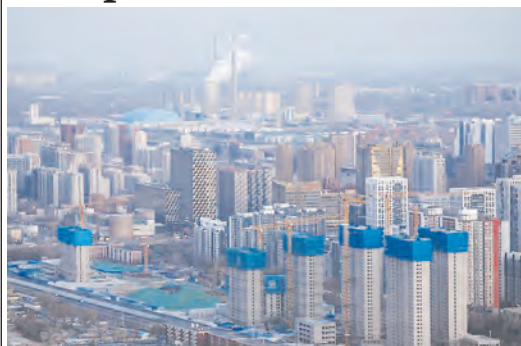
Schwab believes the Great Reset is comprised of three components: "First component is reform of own economic systems in a way to steer the market towards fairer outcomes. To this end, governments should implement reforms on steering the market towards the fairer outcomes which should have been implemented earlier. Depending on the country, these may include changes to wealth taxes, the withdrawal of fossil-fuel subsidies, and new rules governing intellectual property, trade, and competition."

"The second factor is the task of the Great Reset which guarantees that investments cause advancement of the shared goals like equality and sustainability. In this case, it would ensure that investments advance shared goals, such as equality and sustainability. Here, the large-scale spending programs that many governments are implementing represent a major opportunity for progress. The European Commission, for one, has unveiled plans for a €750 billion (\$826 billion) recovery fund. The US, China, and Japan also have ambitious economic-stimulus plans."

"The third factor of the Great Reset is to harness the innovations of the Fourth Industrial Revolution to support the public good especially addressing the current health and social challenges. During the COVID-19 crisis, companies, universities, and others have joined forces to develop diagnostics, therapeutics, and possible vaccines; establish testing centers; create mechanisms for tracing infections; and deliver telemedicine."

The new approach of leadership of world economy, with the collapse of this mentality "the U.S. cannot any longer", has been shaped and this process will definitely lead to the division in the two Western blocs.

China Was Largest Recipient of FDI in 2020



BEIJING (Reuters) - China was the largest recipient of foreign direct investment in 2020 as the coronavirus outbreak spread across the world during the course of the year, with the Chinese economy having brought in \$163 billion in inflows.

China's \$163 billion in inflows last year, compared to \$134 billion attracted by the United States, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said in a report released on Sunday.

In 2019, the United States had received \$251 billion in inflows and China received \$140 billion.

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

China's gross domestic product grew 2.3% in 2020, official data showed last week, making China the only major economy in the world to avoid a contraction last year.

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

Overall, global FDI had collapsed in 2020, falling by 42% to an estimated \$859 billion, from \$1.5 trillion in 2019, according to the UNCTAD report.

"FDI finished 2020 more than 30% below the trough after the global financial crisis in 2009", the UNCTAD said on Sunday.

FDI flows fell by 37% in Latin American and the Caribbean, by 18% in Africa, and by 4% in developing Asia, the report added.

East Asia accounted for a third of global FDI in 2020, while FDI flows to developed countries fell by 69%.

World Has Not Yet Reached Peak Oil Demand

LONDON (Dispatches) - Global demand for crude oil has yet to reach its peak, despite challenges to demand caused by the coronavirus pandemic, International Energy Agency Executive Director Fatih Birol told Al Arabiya.

Birol echoed statements that he gave last year in May, early in the pandemic. The oil and gas industry has been upended this year in the face of COVID-19, with demand falling at an unprecedented rate as appetite for petroleum products collapsed.

"With the economic recovery we will see oil demand rebound. If you want to have a concrete example look at the China. China was the first country which we have seen the coronavirus, first country which was effected from coronavirus impacts on the economy, but China was the first country getting out of the pandemic and economy rebounding," Birol said.

"Today, the Chinese economy is rebounding, and Chinese oil demand today is higher than the year 2019, so there is already with the rebound of the economy. We see an automatic rebound of the oil demand, so in my view it is premature to say that we have seen the peak oil demand in the absence of government policies put in place," he explained.

Experts have previously warned that global demand for oil will likely not return to 2019 pre-coronavirus highs by the end of 2021 or later until early 2022.

Birol likewise noted that the risk to any oil demand projections for the rest of this year are all dependent on how the pandemic will progress. In particular, he highlighted the importance of vaccination efforts as a key figure to watch.

"If vaccine efforts around the world are not successful, both in terms of the vaccinations of millions of people and also the effect of the vaccination, we may see that there is a significant downside risk ... in my view the downside risks here are slightly stronger than the upside risks," Birol said.

Despite COVID-19 vaccination drives have recently been plagued by repeated distribution and supply problems, the rollout of the vaccine has still been a net positive for the oil demand outlook. Birol noted that "as things stand now, we are slightly less pessimistic than we were a month ago" with regard to the IEA's oil demand forecast.

Governments around the world have been pushing harder to move their energy infrastructure towards renewable energy. Furthermore, US President Joe Biden's victory in the U.S. presidential election last year has renewed efforts to fight climate change, with Biden announcing the U.S. would rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement.

"As we speak now all European countries, UK, Japan, Korea, China, and, very soon, the United States, will commit themselves to net zero emissions by 2050, which means many things need to change in the energy sector because our climate challenge is essentially an energy challenge," Birol said.

This transition will have a drastic effect on the nature of the global oil market, Birol explained.

"I tell you no country oil producing, oil consuming, no company, will be unaffected from clean energy transitions," he said.

Up to U.S...

FROM PAGE 1

"The ball is in the U.S. court," he said. "It is totally up to the new administration. So as soon as they implement their obligations, Iran has said on numerous occasions that Iran will return to the full implementation of its undertakings."

Elsewhere in his interview, Takht-Ravanchi noted that Iran has not spoken to the Biden administration yet and has no plans to do so.

"No, there has not been any conversation between Iran and the US after Biden came into office," he said.

Asked if there were plans to open up direct or indirect dialog with Washington, Iran's UN ambassador said, "We are not planning to initiate anything."

Additionally, he emphasized that Iran would be open to an exchange of its

nationals jailed in the United States in return for American citizens detained in the Islamic Republic.

"We are ready to engage on a comprehensive exchange of all prisoners or detainees on both sides, in the United States, in Iran, and those that are waiting to be extradited to the United States. And this is a very simple and straightforward proposition," Takht-Ravanchi said.

He also reaffirmed Tehran's pledge that it would retaliate for the U.S. assassination of top Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

Trump "started a very dangerous game by assassinating General Soleimani. And we said that this cannot be unpunished. So this is our position," he said.

Iran Foreign...

FROM PAGE 1

Statistics show that \$1.38 billion out of total trade value exchanged between Iran and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is related to the export of foodstuff and agricultural products exported from Iran to EAEU member states.

According to the tables released by the Deputy Office of Economic Studies of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA), the Islamic Republic of Iran exported \$1.38 billion worth of foodstuff and agricultural products to EAEU's member states in the first nine months of the current year (from March 21 to Dec. 20).

Under the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) inked between Iran and EAEU on Oct. 26, 2019, 860 items of goods are exchanged between Iran and five EAEU's

member states including Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia.

Another statistic indicated that about \$1.627 billion worth of non-oil products were exchanged between Iran and EAEU's member states in the first nine months of the current.

In this period, Islamic Republic of Iran imported \$890 million worth of non-oil products from EAEU.

Of total about \$1.627 billion worth of trade exchanged between Iran and EAEU in this period, \$1.38 billion worth of agricultural and foodstuff products was exported to the Union, accounted for 54 and 72 percent share of exports and imports respectively.

In the same direction, Iran exported \$737 million worth of non-oil products to EAEU's member states from March 21 to Dec. 20, 2019.

Taliban...

FROM PAGE 1

The intra-Afghan talks started after the United States agreed to withdraw 12,000 U.S. troops from Afghanistan in exchange for the Taliban's halting of their attacks on international forces under a deal between the two sides in February 2020.

The deal was intended to result in the reduction of bloodshed, but violence continues to take a heavy toll in the country.

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Dardai Makes Return To Lowly Hertha Berlin

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Hungarian Pal Dardai has been named Hertha Berlin coach 19 months after leaving the position, the Bundesliga strugglers announced on Monday. Dardai stood down as Hertha boss in June 2019 but replaces the sacked Bruno Labbadia with the side two points away from the relegation play-off spot after just two wins since December. The 44-year-old had been in charge of the U16s and holds the club record of 373 appearances.

Neuer Sets New Bundesliga Record

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich goalkeeper Manuel Neuer set a new Bundesliga record with the 197th clean sheet of his career in the German top flight as the league leaders thrashed Schalke. The 34-year-old, voted FIFA's best goalkeeper of 2020, bettered the previous record set by former Bayern and Germany goalkeeper Oliver Kahn. Kahn needed 557 Bundesliga matches, for Bayern and Karlsruher, to reach the old mark, which current Germany 'keeper Neuer has usurped after 423 league games for the Bavarians and former club Schalke.

Brady, Mahomes Set Up Dream Super Bowl

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers made NFL history to set up a dream home Super Bowl against Patrick Mahomes and the defending champion Kansas City Chiefs.

Brady, the 43-year-old widely regarded as the greatest quarterback in the history of the sport, led the Buccaneers to a 31-26 upset of the top-seeded Green Bay Packers at Lambeau Field.

It means the Buccaneers will become the first team in NFL history to play in a Super Bowl at their own arena, with the February 7 showpiece taking place at the Raymond James Stadium in Tampa.

Brady threw for three touchdowns and 280 yards as he punched his ticket to an incredible 10th Super Bowl appearance, 19 years after his playing in his first championship game with the New England Patriots in 2002.

"It's been a long process for the whole team, and today was just a great team effort," Brady said afterwards.

The victory represented a stunning vindication of Brady's decision to leave the Patriots in March last year after a glittering two-decade career in New England that yielded six Super Bowl wins.

"It's been a great journey thus far," Brady said. "We put the work in. I just made a decision. I've loved coming to work every day with this group of guys. I'm just so proud of this whole team."

Brady had helped the Bucs race into a 28-10 lead early in the second half after touchdowns from Mike Evans, Leonard Fournette, Scotty Miller and Cameron Brate as the Packers offense failed to fire.

Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers -- bidding to reach a second Super Bowl -- then led a stirring second half fightback with touchdowns from Robert Tonyan and Davante Adams that got the score to 28-23. But the Packers' challenge fizzled after they controversially opted to kick a field goal late in the fourth quarter instead of going for a potentially game-tying touchdown.



"This one definitely stings and is going to for a long time, especially the way it played out and the chances we had," a downcast Rodgers said.

"The finality of it all, kind of hits you like a ton of bricks. It's a gutting feeling in your stomach."

Packers head coach Matt LaFleur later defended the decision to kick a field goal, saying he felt the Green Bay defense could win the ball back.

While the Buccaneers-Packers game went to the wire, there was no such drama in Kansas City, where the Chiefs outclassed the Buffalo Bills 38-24 to reach the Super Bowl for a second straight year.

The Bills started brightly with a field goal and a touchdown from Dawson Knox to take a 9-0 lead.

But once the Chiefs' offense cranked into life, there was only going to be one winner, with Mahomes showing no ill-effects from the concussion that knocked him out of last week's divisional round win over Cleveland.

The Chiefs rattled off 21 unanswered points with touchdowns from Mecole Hardman, Darrel Williams and Clyde Edwards-Helaire to take a 21-12 lead at half-time.

Mahomes produced a cheeky underarm flipped pass to tight end Travis Kelce in the third quarter to help make it 31-15.

Kelce then added his second touchdown of the game midway through the fourth quarter to make it 38-15.

The Bills rallied with a touchdown from Isaiah McKenzie to cut the Chiefs lead to 38-21 and then recovered an onside kick to raise hopes of an improbable comeback.

The Bills challenge wilted though in an indisciplined finale as the Chiefs closed out a deserved victory.

Chelsea Sack Lampard, Linked To Tuchel

LONDON (AFP) - Chelsea sacked manager Frank Lampard on Monday after 18 months in charge, with former Paris Saint-Germain boss Thomas Tuchel reportedly set to replace him at Stamford Bridge.

Sunday's 3-1 FA Cup fourth-round win against Championship side Luton was not enough to save Lampard, whose team have slumped to ninth place in the Premier League.

Chelsea said it had been a "very difficult decision" to part ways with the 42-year-old, who replaced Maurizio Sarri in July 2019.

"We are grateful to Frank for what he has achieved in his time as head coach of the club," Chelsea said in a statement.

"However, recent results and performances have not met the club's expectations, leaving the club mid-table without any clear path to sustained improvement."

The club's Russian owner Roman Abramovich said: "This was a very difficult decision for the club, not least because I have an excellent personal relationship with Frank and I have the utmost respect for him."

"He is a man of great integrity and has the highest of work ethics. However, under current circumstances we believe it is best to change managers."

Bale Must Battle To Earn His Spurs

LONDON (AFP) - Gareth Bale must learn his place in the Tottenham team on the training pitch and will not be picked so he can boost his match fitness, said manager Jose Mourinho.

The 31-year-old Wales international is back at Spurs on a season-long loan deal from Real Madrid. But the forward, hampered by fitness issues, has mostly been confined to Europa League games, playing just 45 minutes of Premier League football since early November.

Bale came on in the FA Cup third-round win over non-league Marine earlier this month and may get more time on the pitch in the fourth-round clash against Championship side Wycombe later on Monday.

But Mourinho said playing time was not a gift.

"I cannot give players minutes," said the Portuguese manager. "Minutes on the pitch is not something that I can give."

"I am going in this direction. We all know the difficulties he had in the last couple of seasons, we all know that he arrived injured and we all know that even this season a little bit up and down with small things."

Bale is desperate for game time, with Wales involved in the European Championships, due to start in June.

"The most important thing for him is to be consistent (in) training without problems," said Mourinho.

England Add New Zealand Tests, Sri Lanka T20s to Schedule

LONDON (Dispatches) - England are to begin their 2021 home schedule with two Tests against current world number one side New Zealand in June, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced Monday.

Three Twenty20 internationals against Sri Lanka have also been added to the program, with the ECB having previously announced England will play a one-day series against the same opponents.

New Zealand climbed to the top of the International Cricket Council (ICC) rankings for the first time following a 2-0 series win over Pakistan earlier this month.



Champions League and AFC Cup club tournaments on Monday, as it continues to battle coronavirus disruption.

The Asian Football Confederation cancelled its U16 and U19 championships in Bahrain and Uzbekistan respectively, along with the regional futsal tournament in Bahrain and beach soccer cup in Thailand.

The events were axed "taking into consideration the uncertainty and risks in view of the current pandemic", a statement said.

Asia Football Body Axes Tournaments, Centralizes Champions League Groups

HONG KONG (AFP) - Asia's football body cancelled several tournaments and announced centralized group stages for the

The newly expanded, 40-team Champions League, which took place in "bubble" conditions in Qatar last year, will stage group games in one West Asian and one East Asian hub from mid-April, the AFC added.

The round-of-16 and quarter-final matches will be played on September 13-15 and September 27-29 as single matches. The two-legged semi-finals are on October 19-20 and 26-27, while the final, also a double-header, is on November 21 and 27.

Meanwhile, the group phase of the second-tier AFC Cup will take place in five regional hubs starting from mid-May.

No venues were announced for the games, with bids accepted after the draw for the Champions League and AFC Cup group stage on Wednesday.

Leonard Scores 34 As Clippers Stretch NBA Win Streak

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Kawhi Leonard scored a game-high 34 points as the Los Angeles Clippers extended their season-high NBA win streak to seven games with a 108-100 victory over the Oklahoma City Thunder on Sunday.

Leonard shot 14 of 24 from the floor and finished with nine rebounds and eight assists while Ivica Zubac came off the bench to score 10 points and grab 11 rebounds for the Clippers, who beat Oklahoma City for the second time in three days.

Serge Ibaka tallied 17 points, Reggie Jackson finished with 14 and Paul George scored 11 for the Clippers, who matched the LA Lakers for the best record in the league at 13-4.

George spent two seasons with the Thunder before being traded to the Clippers prior to the 2019-20 season. Nicolas Batum, whose wife gave birth to a baby girl on Friday, scored seven points in the win.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 23 points, seven assists and six rebounds for the Thunder, who lost their third in a row after having last Sunday's game against Philadelphia postponed.

George Hill scored 22 points and Hamidou Diallo had 14 points for Oklahoma City.

The Thunder cut the Clippers lead to six points, 102-96, with just under two minutes left on a basket by Gilgeous-Alexander. But Leonard helped clinch the victory by scoring on a dunk with 42 seconds remaining. The Clippers grabbed a big lead early just like they did in Friday's win over the Thunder. Los Angeles compiled a 17 point lead in the opening quarter before the Thunder reduced that to eight with just over four minutes left in the second. The Clippers regained control to take a 56-45 lead into the half.



Kriechmayr Wins Kitzbuehel Super-G

VIENNA (AFP) - Austria's Vincent Kriechmayr won the men's World Cup super-G in Kitzbuehel on Monday as Frenchman Alexis Pinturault earned some valuable points in his bid for the overall title.

It was the 29-year-old Austrian's seventh World Cup victory, as the early starters benefited from clearer conditions.

Kriechmayr, who won super-G silver and downhill bronze at the 2019 Are world championships, hit speeds of 130km/h (81mph) as he timed 1min 12.58sec, finishing 0.12sec ahead of Switzerland's Marco Odermatt.

Another Austrian, double Olympic gold medallist Matthias Mayer, bagged his third podium of the Hahnenkamm race weekend, completing the podium to go with second and third-placed finishes in Friday and Sunday's downhills. Pinturault consolidated his lead in the overall World Cup standings, his 11th-placed finish in the super-G seeing him move up to 802 points.

Odermatt's 80pts for finishing runner-up to Kriechmayr saw him leapfrog Norway's Aleksander Aamodt Kilde, out for the season with a knee injury, into second in the overall, on 607pts.

Defending champion Kjetil Jansrud had a run to forget, skiing out high up the 2.15km-long Streif course to bring the curtain down on a disappointing weekend of racing for the Norwegian. And there was no three-peat for Swiss racer Beat Feuz, the winner of the two downhills also skiing out.

After two heavy crashes on Friday's downhill, organisers shaved the final jump in a bid to improve safety. The super-G passed largely without incident, Austrian Daniel Danklmaier, however, hitting the netting after badly judging a landing.

France's Nils Allegre also slid out on an increasingly rutted track, but both skiers were able to walk away from their respective crash sites.

