

**Spokeswoman for Iran Health Ministry Sima Sadat Lari Said On Wednesday That Some 91 More Iranians Died of COVID-19 Over the Past 24 Hours as the Number of Death Toll Reached 57,651**

# IRAN NEWS

**Iran Expressed Hope the Inauguration of the Iran House of Innovation and Technology (IHIT) in Nairobi Will Become a Turning Point In Bilateral Economic Cooperation Between Iran and Kenya**

**2 DOMESTIC**

**Tehran to Return to Its Commitments One Hour After U.S. Does So**



> SEE PAGE 2

**3 DOMESTIC**

**Iran-UAE Trade Is A Win-Win Trade**



> SEE PAGE 3

**4 INTERNATIONAL**

**Conte Quits in Tactical Bid To Build New Majority**



> SEE PAGE 4

**8 SPORTS**

**LeBron James Nets Season-High 46 At Cleveland**



> SEE PAGE 8

## Iran Will Never Recognize Military Power in Afghanistan

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) says the Islamic Republic will never recognize any entity that would grab power in neighboring Afghanistan through war and armed conflict.

Ali Shamkhani said in a Wednesday meeting with the visiting Taliban's top political leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in Tehran that the United States is not seeking peace and security in Afghanistan, and that Washington's policy is to prolong militancy and bloodshed among various Afghan factions. Heading a high-ranking delegation, Baradar arrived in Tehran on Tuesday morning at the invitation of Tehran for talks aimed at speeding up the peace process in neighboring Afghanistan.

During the meeting, Iran's security chief said "the United States is pursuing sham peace negotiations in order to bring intra-Afghan talks to a deadlock, and blame the parties involved for insecurity and instability.

Shamkhani said Iran never recognizes any entity that would seize power in Afghanistan through war, stressing the need for the participation of all ethnic Afghan groups in determining the fate of the country in a completely peaceful manner.

**See Page 7**

## Iran Trade With EAEU a Smart Action to Encounter Sanctions



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian in his video message to the Iran-Eurasia Economic Diplomacy Forum said Iran's preferential trade agreement with Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) was a smart action in alignment with the current world economic trend and national economic goals as well as in encountering the U.S. sanctions.

He said using the regional trade experience is a must for boosting exports and Iran's presence in the EAEU and the way it can accept its commitments in accordance with the country's development goals should be put on the agenda of the custodians of the country.

Islamic Republic of Iran exported \$594 million worth of non-oil products to Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)'s member states.

Meanwhile speaking in the inaugural ceremony of the forum, Chairman of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) Masoud Khansari said that the country exported \$594 million worth of non-oil products to Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)'s member states and imported \$396 million worth of non-oil products from EAEU in return.

In a competitive economy, countries grow, he said, adding, "Accordingly, unions were set up in east Asia and could settle both security and economic challenges."

He then pointed to the issue of transport as the most important issue in economic relations between Iran and Eurasia, and added, "Given the suitable situation of road fleet, we can increase the transport via land among countries."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Khansari pointed to the issue of exchanging technology and technical knowhow between Iran and Eurasian Economic Union and stated, "In the field of training, we enjoy high capability to expedite bilateral exchanges and communications."

Turning to the issue of single currency unit between EAEU member states, Khansari added, "Using a currency pact instead of U.S. dollar can reduce monopoly of dollar, so that it will be benefit of all member states of the Eurasian Economic Union."

He then referred to the initiative of "One Belt One Road" that can be a successful model between countries for the development of regional peace and stated, "It is hoped that Islamic Republic of Iran would enhance its ties with EAEU's member states in line with realizing most economic objectives."

Meanwhile addressing the forum, the chairman of the Board of Directors and Managing Director of the Export Guarantee Fund of Iran Abdollah Sajjadi said that Iran's Export Guarantee Fund to Eurasian Economic Union countries covers up to \$800 million.

**See Page 7**

## Germany Urged to Account For Supplying Saddam With Chemical Arms

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran has lambasted Germany for not being accountable for its role in equipping former Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein's regime with chemical weapons.

Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations Esmail Baghaei Hamaneh recalled that Germany provided the former Baghdad regime with chemical arms, and said the German government has a responsibility to seriously look into the issue.

Speaking at a United Nations' plenary session on disarmament held in Geneva, the top diplomat reiterated that all natural persons and legal entities that had a role, in whatever manner, in arming the former Iraqi dictator with chemical weapons are accomplices to Saddam Hussein's war crimes, and this fact will not slip into oblivion with the passage of time.

He blasted remarks by the German ambassador to the UN, who had said that the issue goes back four decades and that Iran's bringing up the issue is unjustifiable.

"The issue of Saddam Hussein's regime using chemical arms and German companies' complicity with him will not fade away in Iranian people's memory," he said.

**See Page 7**

## Deception, Key Element of Israel's Foreign Policy

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's Permanent Representative to the United Nations called deception and oppression the main element of the Israel's foreign policy and stressed that the Islamic Republic reserves the right to defend itself against such threats.

At a UN Security Council meeting on Palestine on Tuesday, Iranian ambassador to the UN Majid Takht-Ravanchi said that Israel, in clear violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231, has not missed any opportunity to overthrow the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in the past five years.

He added: "Deception and shamming are fundamental elements of Israel's foreign policy."

"They are being used to cover up its atrocities and crimes against the Palestinians and to hide destabilizing actions in the region, so the UN Security Council must be aware of the Israeli's malice and lies," Takht-Ravanchi said.

He stressed: "We reserve the inherent right to self-defense and to respond strongly to any threat, including the threat posed by Israel today which is in clear violation of Article 2 of the UN Charter, and of course the Security Council must respond to such threats."

**See Page 7**

## Iran Oil Exports Rise in January Despite Sanctions

LONDON (Reuters) - Iranian oil exports are climbing in January after a boost in the fourth quarter despite U.S. sanctions, three assessments showed, in a sign that the end of Donald Trump's term as U.S. President may be changing buyer behavior.

Iran's exports have shrunk since Trump in 2018 withdrew the United States from a nuclear deal with Iran and reimposed sanctions. New President Joe Biden has said if Tehran resumed compliance with the deal, Washington would too. Figures from SVB International and two other firms that estimate Iranian supply by tracking tankers indicated exports are rising.

SVB International estimated Iranian crude exports increased to 710,000 barrels per day (bpd) in December from 490,000 bpd in October, and that shipments and production so far in January were moving up.

"Iran and customers are expecting an easier approach from the Biden administration," said Sara Vakshouri of SVB. "Iran has already started increasing its production and exports in anticipation of negotiations with the U.S."

**See Page 7**

## 14m Indigenous Covid-19 Vaccines to Be Manufactured in June

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - A senior public official has said that Iran is moving towards solving its inoculation problems as it looks to mass-produce its first vaccine after very early trial data suggest the jab is effective against Covid-19.

Speaking on Wednesday, Mohammad Mokhber, Chairman of the Headquarters for Executing Imam Khomeini's Order (HEIKO), said the country would start upscaling manufacturing capacity for indigenous Covid-19 vaccines immediately, following positive interim data from human trials.

"Work is going well in the field of production of the Iranian Covid vaccine and, according to forecasts, we will reach production of 1.5 to 3 million doses per month within the next 15 days," Mokhber said.

"We will reach the production of 12 to 14 million doses of Covid vaccine in May and June next year [the Iranian year ends on March 20] as planned and solve the problem of producing this vaccine," he added.

Mokhber said the first phase of human trials would finish in three weeks and the second phase would begin in March. The interim data, which is based on only 21 people receiving the jab, will be published in the spring.

**See Page 7**

## Cargo Carried on Turkey-Iran Railway Set to Reach 1m Tons in 2021

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey aims to increase the cargo transportation with its southern neighbor, Iran, this year, as some 1 million metric tons of cargo is expected to be transported via rail between the two countries, the local authorities said Tuesday.

The Transport and Infrastructure Ministry said in a statement that a recent memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed at a gathering of railway representatives in Turkey's capital Ankara on Jan. 12-13 would open a new era for the transit railway.

Despite the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, three train services ran daily between Turkey and Iran in 2020, transporting 564,000 tons of cargo, according to the statement. The pandemic initially impacted the transportation between the two countries, especially for trucks. Meanwhile, the border closures prompted new solutions for import-export businesses like contactless trade to minimize the spread of the virus.

The statement also announced that freight trains will run between Turkey and Pakistan via Iran on a common tariff agreement between the three countries. It added that talks are still ongoing to set this tariff.

With a recently completed railway between Iran and Afghanistan, it will now also be possible to transport freight between Turkey and Afghanistan.

"After the railway connection between Iran and Afghanistan was completed on Dec. 10, 2020, it became possible for a wagon loaded in Turkey to transit Iran to Afghanistan," the statement said.

The railway administrations of Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan will come together in the coming months to set a course for rail transport between Turkey and Afghanistan.

The statement added that efforts are underway for a cargo transportation corridor between Europe and China through Iran.

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## 7th Person Infected With British Coronavirus Identified

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's health minister said that the 7th person infected with British coronavirus was identified in southern Iran.

Saeed Namaki stated that fortunately their relatives were not affected by the novel coronavirus first detected in England. Contrary to what has been said about the contagiousness of the so-called virus which is 70%, the virus seems to be more highly infectious, and there has been a record of more deaths due to British coronavirus. Giving the latest report and statistics on the coronavirus outbreak, Namaki stated that the U.S., England, Brazil, Germany, and South Africa were on the top of the list of the world countries infected with the coronavirus.

## Tehran to Return to Its Commitments One Hour After U.S. Does So

**TEHRAN (IFP) -The Iranian president says Iran will live up to all of its commitments as soon as the United States returns to its obligations.**

President Hassan Rouhani further said all countries around the world agree that Washington should make good on its commitments.

"All countries are of the opinion that the United States should return to its obligations. There is a consensus on that across the world," he said.

"The whole world is unanimously telling the U.S. to return to its obligations as soon as possible," the president noted.

He recalled that Tehran scaled down its commitments under the Iran nuclear deal because the U.S. unilaterally pulled out of the agreement and Europe failed to fulfill its obligations under the deal. Elsewhere in his remarks, the president highlighted the failure of the economic war imposed by the White House on Iran.

"Not only has the economic war on Iran failed, but its days are numbered as well," said President Rouhani. He also said the situation has improved tremendously for Iran's



economic cooperation with regional countries as former U.S. President Donald Trump is gone. "That wicked criminal who annoyed people is gone," he said.

He also criticized the judiciary over last week's prosecution of the country's telecommunications minister.

Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi was released on bail after he was summoned for prosecution. Judiciary officials cited his refusal to block Instagram and impose limitations on the bandwidth of other foreign social media and messaging systems.

Speaking in the Cabinet meeting, Rouhani said improving the bandwidth of the Internet was done on his orders. "If you want to try someone, try me. It was my order," he said.

Rouhani said increasing bandwidth would help improve business and an anti-corruption campaign. However he said both a "lack of control on content" as well as "closure" of social media are wrong.

## Zarif Stresses Respecting Int'l Law, Minorities Rights

TEHRAN (MNA) - In his meeting with Armenian Prime Minister, Iranian Foreign Minister stressed respecting international law, the rights of minorities and territorial integrity.

Mohammad Javad Zarif, who arrived in Yerevan for the

third destination of his trip to the region today, met and held talks with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

"Armenia is a very good neighbor of the Islamic Republic of Iran and our relations are very close. You are highly respected in Iran," Zarif said.

"We have common regional concerns with your country, and we have been in contact with you and other countries in the region since the recent conflict, and we are interested in continuing the contacts for the future of cooperation and peace in the region," he added.

Iranian foreign minister highlighted, "Respecting international law and the protection of the people,

respecting the rights of minorities and territorial integrity, and not resorting to force are the main and strategic positions of our foreign policy."

"Iranian Leader stressed the need for a dignified life with security for all Armenians in the region," he added, saying, "We also host a large number of Armenian compatriots and we have a long-standing relationship with them and we insist on this principle."

Iranian Foreign Minister had previously met with his Armenian counterpart Ara Aivazian.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed the latest regional issues, as well as bilateral cooperation.

## Tehran Hails Kuwait's Push for Persian Gulf Compromise

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Seyed Abbas Araqchi has praised Kuwait's efforts to establish compromise and understanding among the Persian Gulf states.

The Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al Mohammad Al Sabah in the Arab country on Tuesday.

In the meeting, Araqchi praised Kuwait's efforts to develop understanding and compromise among the Persian Gulf countries.

He also described dialogue and non-interference from the extra-regional countries as two main elements in collective security across the region.

Deputy Foreign Minister Araqchi then stressed the need for constant consultations between Iran and Kuwait on the bilateral and regional issues, expressing the Islamic Republic's determination to strengthen ties with Kuwait and the other regional countries.

Considering the existing potential in the region, cooperation among the Persian Gulf countries in various fields could lead to a bright and promising future for the region, he noted.

The Iranian diplomat also emphasized that regional security and stability should be ensured by the region's own



countries, noting that it requires collective cooperation among the countries and non-interference from foreigners.

"From the viewpoint of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Persian Gulf security is an issue relating only to the regional countries, and Iran is ready to hold talks only with the regional states about it," Araqchi added.

Elaborating on the Islamic Republic of Iran's policy on the possible return of the U.S. to the JCPOA, Araqchi dismissed any negotiations about the JCPOA or the subject beyond the nuclear deal, but noted that discussions can be held on how the whole parties would resume implementing the JCPOA within

"Firstly, the Islamic Republic of Iran will not hold talks with the 5+1 countries on any subject other than the way to implement the JCPOA, and, secondly, it (Iran) is ready to hold talks about the Persian Gulf security only with the regional countries and without any foreign interference," Deputy Foreign Minister Araqchi stated.

For his part, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister welcomed the continuation of consultations with Iran, describing dialogue and negotiations among the regional countries as the only appropriate solution to the disputes.

Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al Mohammad Al Sabah also highlighted Kuwait's resolve and willingness for the expansion of relations between the two countries in various fields.

## Armed Forces Fully Prepared for Any Israeli Attack

TEHRAN (IFP) - The chief of staff of the Iranian president's office has dismissed the Zionist regime's threats against Iran as psychological warfare, but at the same time stressed that the Iranian Armed Forces are fully prepared to protect the country.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a weekly cabinet session on Wednesday, Mahmoud Vaezi said the threatening remarks from the Israeli officials are nothing but a psychological war.

"Our people and people of the region are familiar with the language that the Zionist regime's officials have used so far," he noted, adding that the Zionists have neither a plan nor the capability to take action against Iran.

The Iranian Armed Forces, including the Army and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), are seasoned forces defending the country, he added. Vaezi also described the recent military exercise staged by the Iranian forces as a sign that "we have no intention of launching an offense and no intention of war, but we are serious in defending the country."

"However, a number of the Zionist regime's officials think that Washington will accept whatever they say. There was once someone called Trump with a son-in-law, who was practically and actually the henchman of Zionists that did a series of jobs in Washington, and imposed a series of Zionist regime's views," he added.

He also urged the new U.S. administration to preserve its independence and ignore the psychological warfare by Israel and others. "The U.S.' return to the JCPOA and lifting of the sanctions is an issue that is strongly opposed by the Zionist regime and some Arab countries in the region which are hostile to us, such as Saudi Arabia. They are attempting hard. They have also launched lobbies in Washington. They are constantly trying to prevent it (U.S.' return to JCPOA)," Vaezi stated. The chief of staff of the president's office finally noted that Iran does not take such psychological war and propaganda campaign seriously.

## U.S. Should Show Goodwill Gesture First

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian foreign minister says it is the United States, not Iran, that should show a goodwill gesture with regards to its commitments under the 2015 Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA).

Mohammad Javad Zarif said Tuesday Washington should make up for its mistakes.

"Why on earth should Iran—a country that stood firm & defeated 4 years of a brutal US economic terrorism imposed in violation of JCPOA & UNSC Resolution—show goodwill gesture first?" wrote Zarif in a tweet.

He noted Iran "It was the U.S. that broke the deal—for no reason. It must remedy its wrong; then Iran will respond," he added.

He made the remarks in reaction to the French presidency's claim that Iran must first return to its commitments before the US rejoins the JCPOA.

## COVID-19 Creates Opportunities Worldwide

TEHRAN (IP) - The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) President's Representative to the Islamic Republic of Iran said that COVID-19 has created opportunities to have a greener environment, though restrictions are imposed.



"We must cooperate more to innovate and thrive the cities, Claudio Providas said at the 5th Tehran Golden Adobe Award on Tuesday.

Providas stressed that the event creates opportunities to exchange new experiences worldwide even amid the coronavirus and health crisis.

Digitalization and modernity increase adaptable and greener buildings, he noted.

As the next keynote speaker, the Chairman of the City Council of Tehran Mohsen Hashemi Rafsanjani said that the coronavirus has engulfed the world for nearly 400 days which is an unprecedented challenge during the century.

"Though coronavirus has caused innumerable challenges and problems, it also has effective sides like caring more about the environment we are living in and getting closer together," Hashemi added.

He stressed that the coronavirus has changed the word's face, so designers, builders, and other city activists to make resilient cities and provide people with calmness.

Tehran Golden Adobe Global Award is an innovative urban management initiative that was established by the Municipality of Tehran and has been held annually since 31 October 2014 coinciding with World Cities Day.

## All-Inclusive National Talks Only Lasting Solution to Afghan Conflict

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry says all-inclusive intra-Afghan talks are the only sustainable solution to restore stability and peace to the war-ravaged country.

Speaking to reporters, Saeed Khatibzadeh said Iran believes that stability would be ensured in Afghanistan if all groups can play a role in the country.

Pointing to the current visit by a high-ranking Taliban delegation to Tehran, he said talks will be held on ways to promote lasting peace in Afghanistan.

"We have made a huge investment for Afghanistan's peace and hosted millions of Afghans over the past decades," the Iranian spokesperson said.

He expressed hope that stability would be established in Afghanistan, and that the neighboring country's people would have peaceful coexistence regardless of religious and ethnic issues.

Khatibzadeh further said Iran's stance on Afghanistan has always been independent from that of the United States, no matter who is at the helm in the White House.

"The U.S. has no option but to end years of interference and aggression in Afghanistan and reduce the sufferings it has inflicted on regional nations through its responsible withdrawal," he added.

A high-ranking Taliban delegation led by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the group's top political leader, arrived in Tehran on Tuesday at the invitation of the Iranian Foreign Ministry for talks on the Afghan peace process and relevant topics.

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.

### New Delhi Seeks Developing Cooperation With Tehran



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Indian Ambassador to Tehran Gaddam Dharmendra during meeting with Majlis Speaker's Special Aide for International Affairs Hossein Amir Abdollahian emphasized that his country is keen to develop its ties with Tehran, noting that both countries have common views on the regional and international issues.

In the meeting, Dharmendra said Iran is a country with social and political stability, adding that Iran emphasizes sustainable security in the region and plays vital role in this regard.

He went on to say that cooperation between Iran and India in the regional and international levels indicate the common views of both countries in the regional and global issues.

He also said talks between parliaments of both countries especially in the level of speakers are very effective and important on bilateral relations.

Amir Abdollahian, for his part, pointed to the historic relations of Iran and India and their cultural and social commonalities of their nations, adding that relations between Tehran and New Delhi have always been friendly and growing and it is expected that their ties would develop more without caring the unconstructive behavior of others.

He also pointed to the improvement of bilateral relations in different political, cultural and economic passages, saying that cooperation between the parliaments of both countries and specialized commissions of their parliaments are very crucial for boosting ties.

He then pointed to Iran's constructive and focal role in the region, saying that Iran has always stretched its friendship hand for cooperation with its friendly countries and all of its neighbors.

Both sides in the meeting, exchanged view on the latest regional developments, the post-Trump era and also the future of ties between Iran and India.



## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:17
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:46
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:40
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:06

26. And He listens to those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, and gives them increase of His Bounty; but for the Unbelievers their is a terrible Penalty.  
27. If Allah were to enlarge the provision for His Servants, they would indeed transgress beyond all bounds through the earth; but He sends (it) down in due measure as He pleases. For He is with His Servants Well-acquainted, Watchful.  
Surah 42. Counsel, Consultation (26 - 27)

## Iran-UAE Trade Is A Win-Win Trade

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - Deputy Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) for International Affairs Mohammad-Reza Karbasi believes the trade between Iran and the UAE is a win-win one for both sides, adding both sides are fully aware of it and they should take advantage of capacities desirably.**

The ICCIMA hosted a meeting on reviewing trade opportunities and capacities between Iran and the UAE with economic activists, members of the joint Iran-UAE Chamber of Commerce and representatives of economic bodies in presence.

In the meeting, the participants explained the major hurdles in way of developing trade activities between Iran and the UAE and the private sector raised their suggestions for developing relations.

Addressing the meeting, Karbasi said that neither is the UAE willing to ignore Iran's market nor is Iran to miss the good trade capacities with the UAE. He then pointed to the trade volume between Iran and the UAE in the past, saying that once their trade volume had touched over \$30b but unfortunately because of sanctions and other restrictions, the trade volume of both states has declined sharply.

Karbasi added that he believes the trade capacity of Iran and the UAE is more than \$30b provided that the ground for trade is laid. He went on to say that the trade between Iran and the UAE is a win-win one and both sides are aware of it and all capacities should be used desirably.

He noted that fortunately there is no restriction from both Iran and the UAE officials for bilateral trade and even despite the UAE's normalization of ties with the Zionist regime, Iran is keen to develop its trade with the UAE and as soon as the coronavirus pandemic is contained, the exchange of trade delegations will start. He then pointed to the problems which Iranian traders have faced, and called for resolving them through political and economic diplomacy.



Karbasi further said that the trade volume of Iran and the UAE was \$14b last year and the trade balance was in favor of the UAE but the trade volume has declined to \$9b in the first three quarters of the current year and statistics show that again the trade balance has been 60 to 40 percent in favor of the UAE.

Meanwhile Head of Iran-UAE Chamber of Commerce Farshid Farzanegan, for his part, pointed to the global changes and the need for having relations with the neighboring states, and explained major economic capacities of both countries.

He called for integration of regional economies, adding that the UAE, Turkey and Russia are three neighboring states of Iran with high capacity for attracting Iranian goods among the neighboring states and underscored development of relations with these countries, especially with the UAE as the country has exported diverse Iranian goods and it is a good chance for Iran for developing ties.

Farzanegan also said no issuance of trade and tourism visas and revoking visas and stay permits of Iranians, the UAE's strictness on Iranians' banking accounts, weakness of road transportation, and the customs tariffs are of the major hurdles in way of developing bilateral trade between the both countries.

Participants in the meeting called for launching a banking brokerage and resolving the logistics and visa problems and suggested Iran's embassy to launch a commercial section in Dubai.

## Developing, Boosting Production In Gas Fields Need \$50b Investment

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Managing Director of Pars Oil and Gas Company believes development of gas fields and boosting production needs investment of \$50b, adding that the company has two plans for providing consumer gas for the next 20 years.



Addressing the first panel in the 6th Iran Petroleum and Energy Congress (IPEC) with the title of "Future of Gas Production and Consumption and Today's Priorities", Mohammad Meshkinfam highlighted the process of developing gas fields in South Pars in the past two decades and said excavation of gas from South Pars fields began in 2002 with 12b cubic meters of gas and currently the amount of the excavated gas has reached 220b cubic meters per year.

He also pointed to the amount of gas being excavated from the shared gas fields and said it is around 1,861b cubic meters of rich gas which is valued at \$335b.

Meshkinfam said Iran has outpaced Qatar in gas excavation from the shared fields of South Pars and currently 27 gas blocks of South Pars are in the network and two more blocks of Phase 11 are under development.

He further said the company has devised two plans for developing the gas fields in the next 20 years and it is estimated it needs \$50b of investment.

He also said Iranian output from shared gas field with Qatar in the Persian Gulf stood at 220 billion cubic meters a year.

Meshkinfam said that Iran's annual excavation from the field used to stand at 12 billion cubic meters a year when the project was inaugurated in 2002.

The field is now providing some 70% of the gas for the country's domestic consumption, while it covered just 10% of the domestic consumption in 2002, the official said.

He said that Iran is now excavating some 700 million cubic meters a day (mcm/d) of gas from the South Pars Field.

## Tehran, Muscat Discuss Promotion of Bilateral Banking, Trade Ties



TEHRAN (IFP) - The governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has discussed the promotion of trade and banking cooperation with Oman during a visit to Muscat.

Abdolnasser Hemmati was accompanied by a delegation of senior Iranian officials in his visit to the Persian Gulf state.

"At the invitation of the governor of the Central Bank of Oman, I arrived in Muscat on Tuesday, January 26, 2021, on a two-day visit, accompanied by the deputy minister of industry, mines and trade, of health, and the deputy CBI governor for forex affairs," said Hemmati. "In the first meeting, we had extensive talks with Oman's foreign minister," he said.

"He was very much interested in boosting strategic economic relations between the two countries," Iran's CBI governor noted.

As Hemmati explained, the top Omani diplomat highlighted the importance of Iran's role and status in the region and enhance mutual trade and economic ties.

"In these meetings, areas of, and obstacles to, and ways of promoting mutual banking and trade cooperation was reviewed in detail and the necessary decisions were adopted," he said.

Hemmati said the expansion of bilateral commercial relations was also on the agenda of the talks.

"In the second meeting, we had lengthy discussions with Oman's minister of industry and trade," he noted. "The meeting attended by authorities from Oman's Chamber of Commerce as well," said the CBI governor.

Given the existing opportunity for the expansion of mutual cooperation, said Hemmati, the potential of both countries' private sectors can be tapped to upgrade the level and volume of mutual trade.

"I emphasized that we seek to further promote our trade relations with Oman as a trade partner," he said.

"So, this trip is an opportunity to enhance our cooperation given the international developments," he noted. "I also emphasized that the United States' 'maximum pressure' policy has failed, and it is necessary that the two sides further expand their trade transactions given the long historical background of relations between the two countries," he said.

"We will continue our talks with Omani officials and the governor of the Central Bank on Wednesday January 27, 2021, focusing on banking and financial issues," Hemmati explained.

## Impact of Current World Conditions On Future of Iran Oil Assessed



TEHRAN (Shana) - "The Impact of Global Conditions on the Future of Iran's Oil and Energy" was examined on the first day of the 6th Iran Petroleum and Energy Congress (IPEC).

Amir Hossein Zamaninia, Deputy Minister of Petroleum for International Affairs and Trading, chaired a specialized panel, which was held on Tuesday, January 26, 2021, in the presence of representatives of the Ministry of Petroleum, Energy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Contact with Mohammad Sanousi Barkindo, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and Massoud Nili, Dean of the School of Management and Economics and a member of the faculty of Sharif University of Technology, was not established due to technical problems.

Assistant Secretary-General and Director General for Asia-Pacific at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Reza Zabib noted that in the economic competition of great powers, China is approaching the world's first economic position, relying on production capacity, and this gradual change of position will be possible as of 2030, considering various scenarios. He added: "A review of crude oil consumption figures in China shows that in a 30-year period ending in 2019, China's annual crude oil consumption growth was about 6 percent, while in the decade ending 2019, this growth was decreased to 3.7%."

According to Mr. Zabib, statistics show that China's oil production in 2019 and 2020 was slightly more than 4 million barrels per day and the country's imports were about 11 million barrels per day. China's demand horizon

in various models for 2030 to 2040 will increase in a limited fashion and less than one million barrels per day, so although China's crude oil consumption has always been on the rise, its acceleration has been and will be slow.

The Assistant Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued: "This is while in the case of gas, the situation is completely different. Annual demand growth in the Chinese gas market from 1990 to 2000 was more than 3.1 percent and the average annual growth between 2000 and 2019 was 13 percent. China's gas consumption in 2019 reached about 300 billion cubic meters, half of which was imported."

Zabib stated: "Crude oil consumption in China will have a downward trend after 2030. In analyzing the reasons for this trend, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that according to the current plan, the share of transportation in crude oil consumption in China will increase from 80% in 2020 to 52% in 2050."

"There is potential in the Chinese gas market and we should not expect too much from the Chinese crude oil market," he said. "Exports of crude oil to China from physical exports will become a new kind of export, and this is a great potential for Iran to transport crude oil to China by converting it into a product."

Suleiman Ghasemiyani, head of economic affairs at the Ministry of Petroleum's Asia-Africa-Pacific Directorate, held another speech during the panel.

At the end of this specialized panel, Amir Hossein Zamaninia read Mr. Barkindo's speech, which was not presented due to connectivity problems.

## Iran, Top-3 in Terms of Growth in Steel Output

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran stood the top-3 in terms of growth in steel output in 2020, the official website of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization said on Wednesday citing the latest report by World Steel Association.

The report puts Iran in the third place after Uzbekistan and Moldavia.

Iran still maintains its place as world's 10th biggest steel producer by producing more than 29 million tons of the products in 2020, the report said.

Iran has been world's 10th biggest steel producer and the main steel producer of the Middle East region over the past years.

World Steel Association put the average steel production growth of its member countries in 2020 at 0.9%, while Iran's steel production growth in this year has been reported to be 13.4%.

## Trade Between Iran, Armenia Can Reach \$1b Annually

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Finance Minister Farhad Dejpasand said on Tuesday that the volume of trade between Iran and Armenia currently stands at \$300 million, which, given the export and import capacity of the two countries, can raise to \$1 billion a year.

In a meeting with his Armenian counterpart Vahan Kerobyan late on Tuesday, he stressed the need for developing communication and financial infrastructures of the two countries, saying that trade exchanges can be increased up to one billion dollars, if mutual cooperation is promoted.

Reiterating that problems pertaining to structures should be solved, Dejpasand added that customs relations should be enhanced and such issues should not create obstacles in deep economic ties.

As to banking and insurance cooperation between the two countries, he said, "We should define new models for cooperation in this regard and have bilateral monetary, banking and financial exchanges in the framework of bilateral agreements."

Dejpasand also proposed establishment of a joint bank to help solve financial problems in the way of financial development.

He pointed to foreign investment in the two countries, given the existing opportunities and capacities, especially in the fields of oil, gas and mineral industries, adding, "We can produce a special product with a specific brand for the countries of the region and the Eurasian Union."

Armenian economy minister, for his part, hailed his Iranian counterpart's ideas, saying that insurance of exports will help raise investment and exports.

Calling for developing trade exchanges between the two countries, he said that a group of Armenian entrepreneurs and businesspeople will be sent to an exhibition to be held in Isfahan next month, and plans have been made to hold economic conference in Armenia.

Armenia is the main negotiator in Iran's full membership in Eurasia, he said, noting that the negotiations will be held next month and Armenia favors the issue be materialized soon.

## Uganda Withdraws Troops From Opposition Leader's House

KAMPALA (AFP) - Ugandan soldiers stood down their positions around the residence of opposition leader Bobi Wine on Tuesday, a day after a court ordered an end to the confinement of the presidential runner-up.

Wine, a popstar-turned-MP whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi, had been under de-facto house arrest at his home outside the capital Kampala since he returned from voting in January 14's election.

For 11 days heavily armed soldiers and police officers surrounding the property had prevented members of Wine's household, including his wife Barbie, from leaving their compound, as well as denying access to visitors.



## Colombia Defense Minister Dies of COVID-19

BOGOTA (Reuters) - Colombia's Defense Minister Carlos Holmes Trujillo has died from viral pneumonia related to COVID-19, the government said on Tuesday.

Trujillo was reported infected with coronavirus earlier this month and was transferred to an intensive care unit. He died in the military hospital in Bogota aged 69. "The death of Carlos Holmes fills me with pain," a visibly moved President Ivan Duque said. "Colombia has lost one of its best men."

Before serving as defense minister, from where he coordinated military and police operations in the fight against drug trafficking, illegal armed groups, illicit mining and other criminal acts, Trujillo served as foreign minister in Duque's government.



## Conte Quits in Tactical Bid To Build New Majority



ROME (Reuters) - Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte handed in his resignation to the head of state on Tuesday, hoping he would be given an opportunity to put together a new coalition and rebuild his parliamentary majority.

The deepening political crisis is playing out against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed more than 85,000 Italians -- the second highest death toll in Europe after Britain and the sixth highest in the world.

Conte lost his absolute majority in the upper house Senate last week when a junior partner, the Italia Viva party headed by former premier Matteo Renzi, quit in a row over the government's handling of the coronavirus crisis and economic recession.

Efforts to lure centrist and independent senators into the coalition to fill the hole left by Renzi have met little success, leaving Conte no choice but to resign and open a formal government crisis that will give him more time to find a deal. President Sergio Mattarella will start a rapid round of consultations with party leaders on Wednesday afternoon to test the political waters, his office said. If he thinks Conte can secure the necessary backing to pull together a new administration, the president will likely give him a few days to try to finalize a deal and draw up a new cabinet.

Financial markets edged higher despite the latest political tumult, with investors hopeful that Conte might eventually emerge with a more stable government.

Until now the main coalition parties -- the anti-establishment 5-Star Movement and center-left Democratic Party (PD) -- have backed Conte's efforts to stay in power.

"Conte is the essential element and we need to broaden and relaunch the government's action," Debora Serracchiani, the deputy head of the PD, told state broadcaster RAI.

However, if Conte cannot find new allies, Mattarella will have to come up with an alternative candidate deemed capable of piecing together a workable coalition.

If all else fails, the president will have to call an election, two years ahead of schedule, although political analysts say this is the least likely scenario.

Italy's coronavirus crisis has triggered its worst recession since World War Two and the government has been struggling to draw up a plan on how best to spend some 200 billion euros (\$240 billion) of European Union funds to help the economy recover.

Renzi has accused Conte of lacking a strategic vision, saying he risked squandering the unprecedented EU bonanza on hand-outs rather than long-term investments.

Conte is a lawyer with no direct political affiliation, but is close to 5-Star, the largest party in parliament.

He first came to power in 2018 after 5-Star formed an unexpected coalition with the far-right League. When that pact unravelled a year later, he stayed on as head of a new administration involving the 5-Star and leftist parties.

## Russia Suggests Mideast Ministerial Peace Conference

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Tuesday backed a Palestinian proposal for a Middle East peace conference, saying at the UN that it could be held at ministerial level in spring or summer.

Recalling that Moscow had backed Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas' idea for international talks in early 2021 when he first proposed it in September, Lavrov offered ideas about who could be invited.

"We propose holding an international, ministerial-level meeting in spring-summer 2021," Lavrov told a videoconference UN Security Council meeting about the Middle East.

Participants would include Israel, the Palestinians, the four members of the so-called Middle East diplomatic quartet (Russia, the United Nations, the United States and the European Union), along with four Arab states -- Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, Lavrov said.

"It would also be important to invite Saudi Arabia, which is behind the Arab peace initiative," he added, without offering a specific date or site for the eventual conference.



## U.S. Senate Confirms Blinken as Secretary of State

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The U.S. Senate on Tuesday easily confirmed Antony Blinken as secretary of state, with key members of the rival Republican Party backing him.

Blinken, a longtime adviser to President Joe Biden who has vowed to repair US alliances, was approved by a vote of 78-22. His easy confirmation is in contrast with former president Donald Trump's two secretaries of state, Mike Pompeo and Rex Tillerson, who both scraped by with most Democrats opposed.

Republican senators who supported Blinken included two close Trump allies on foreign policy -- Marco Rubio, a fervent critic of the leftist governments in Cuba and Venezuela, and Lindsey Graham, known for his hawkish views on Syria and Iran.

Senator James Risch, the top Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, urged colleagues to back Blinken even while acknowledging some disagreements. "We need a secretary of state. This is the person for the job," Risch said on the Senate floor.

"Of the many, many issues that we discussed, there was very little, in fact, no daylight between us on some of them," he said.

He noted that he did not back Blinken's support for returning to the Iran nuclear accord, from which Trump withdrew the United States.

But Risch pointed to Blinken's stated willingness to take on Turkey, a NATO ally that has upset many lawmakers by buying a major weapons system from Russia.

Blinken in his confirmation hearing last week also said he would reverse Trump's tough approach to China and said he would not reverse Trump's landmark decision to move the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

Senator Robert Menendez, the committee's top Democrat, pointed to Blinken's ability to engage lawmakers across the political spectrum.

"I believe he is the right person to repair and restore our alliances to reinvigorate the relationship between the State Department and Congress," Menendez said. The stepson of a Holocaust survivor, Blinken, 58, is known for his passion for humanitarian causes but also his calm demeanor.

## Dutch Gov't Not to Bow to Curfew Riot Scum

THE HAGUE (AFP) - The Dutch government will not back down on its coronavirus curfew despite three nights of rioting by "scum", ministers said on Tuesday after the worst unrest to hit the Netherlands for four decades.

Dutch police arrested a further 184 people overnight, taking past 400 the number detained after the Netherlands imposed its first nationwide curfew since World War II.

At least 10 police officers were also injured in the latest clashes on Monday night, which left a trail of looted shops and burned cars in cities including Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Den Bosch.

Several cities granted police extra powers amid reports that fresh protests were being organised on social media for Tuesday night against the 9:00pm to 4:30am curfew.

"You don't capitulate to people who smash shop windows," Finance Minister Wopke Hoekstra told ANP national news agency.

"Scum does this," and not genuine protesters, he added. Justice Minister Ferd Grapperhaus also said the

government would keep the curfew in place. It is meant to last until at least until February 9 in what the government says is a vital step to bring down Covid-19 cases.

Police unions called it the worst rioting in four decades, referring to clashes with squatters in the 1980s as they were evicted from illegally-occupied buildings.

Dutch police chief Henk van Essen condemned the violence, saying "it has nothing to do any longer with the right to demonstrate".

Prime Minister Mark Rutte said on Twitter that "Criminal violence has to stop."

The government announced the curfew last week and it was supported by a majority of MPs.

Exemptions are allowed, for example for people having to work, attend funerals or walk their dogs, on condition that they present a certificate.

The protests began on a small scale on Saturday night, with a single riot in the northern village of Urk in the conservative protestant "Bible Belt".

But on Sunday they spread, with police using water cannon, tear gas and horses against rioters in the southern city of Eindhoven and in Amsterdam.



## Tunisian Protesters March on Parliament Amid Cabinet Reshuffle



TUNIS (Dispatches) -

Tunisian anti-government protesters on Tuesday marched toward the parliament which was guarded by riot police as lawmakers inside held a heated debate on a cabinet reshuffle.

Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi told the assembly that by naming 11 new ministers to the interior, justice, health and other key portfolios, he aimed to create a "more effective" reform team.

He faced opposition from President Kais Saied, however, who said he was not consulted, charged that one of the proposed ministers was "involved in a corruption case" and that three others were suspected of conflicts of interest.

Tunisia, mired in a political and economic crisis worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic, has been rocked by a wave of social unrest a decade after the Arab Spring protests overthrew autocrat Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Security forces have carried out mass arrests during more than a week of night-time riots and daytime protests against police repression, poverty, inequality and corruption.

Tunisia has often been praised as a rare success story for its democratic transition after the Arab Spring regional uprisings sparked by its 2011 revolution.

But many Tunisians are angered at a political class seen as obsessed with power struggles and disconnected from the suffering of the poor, amid high unemployment and spiralling prices.

"Poverty is growing, hunger is growing," read one sign carried by the protesters, while another demanded "Dignity and freedom for working-class neighbourhoods".

The session came a day after protesters clashed with police in the town of Sbeitla, in Tunisia's marginalised centre, after a young man hit by a tear gas canister last week died in hospital.

Hundreds of protesters Tuesday gathered near the parliament, heeding a call from almost 30 civil society groups to demonstrate there against police repression.

A group of protesters walked from the capital's outer district of Ettadhamen, but police forces stopped the demonstrators from gathering at the usual square in front of the parliament.



## Aramco May Sell More Shares If Market Is Right

DUBAI (Reuters) - Saudi Aramco may consider selling more shares if market conditions are right, the head of Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund told a news briefing on Tuesday. The Saudi government sold more than 1.7% of Aramco in a 2019 initial public offering that raised a record \$29.4 billion, triggering more IPOs in the kingdom, which is also seeking to deepen its capital markets to reduce its reliance on oil. Yasir al-Rumayyan, who is governor of Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF), made the comments during a media briefing to give details on the PIF's five-year plan.



## IMF Forecasts Global Economy To Grow 5.5% in 2021

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The world economy will grow by 5.5 per cent this year, reversing the 3.5 per cent contraction that it saw in 2020, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects in its latest global economic forecast.

Growth will also be boosted by the continued strong economic rebound in China, as well as by policy support in large economies such as the United States and Japan. In addition, the roll-out of Covid-19 vaccines could boost economic activity in the second half of the year.

The 2021 growth forecast was revised up 0.3 percentage points from its previous forecast in October, while last year's economic contraction was 0.9 percentage points less than previously projected, according to the World Economic Outlook update, published on Tuesday.

However, economic activity remains well below pre-pandemic levels. "Even with the anticipated recovery in 2021-22, output gaps are not expected to close until after 2022," the IMF report says.

While the U.S. and Japan are projected to regain late-2019 activity levels in the second half of 2021, activity in the Eurozone and the United Kingdom is expected to remain below end-2019 levels into 2022, according to the global financial body.

China, the world's second-largest economy, is expected to maintain its "strong recovery", with growth seen hitting 8.1 per cent this year following its "effective containment measures, a forceful public investment response, and central bank liquidity support", the IMF said. The new forecast is 0.1 percentage point lower than it was in the October forecast.

China returned to the pre-pandemic activity levels in the fourth quarter of 2020, well ahead of the other countries as a result of strong infrastructure spending and aggressive credit provision from the central bank, said Malhar Nabar, division chief at IMF's research department, said at a press conference introducing the report.

"In terms of securing that recovery path, its likely important [for China] to ensure that the rebalancing towards private consumption continues and perhaps even accelerates to an extent," said Nahar, adding that strengthening the social security net to bring down households' precautionary savings so that they increase spending and enacting structural reforms to deregulate key sectors to bring in more private investment would also help China to lift its growth in the medium term.

The U.S., the world's largest economy, which has lost more than 400,000 lives to the pandemic, is expected to grow 4.3 per cent in 2021, up 0.4 percentage points from the IMF's last forecast. The IMF wrote approvingly of the latest economic stimulus plans from the US, Japan and the European Union, which it said would "help lift economic activity among advanced economies with favorable spillovers to trading partners".

These plans include US President Joe Biden's new US\$1.9 trillion stimulus package proposal and the US\$900 billion rescue package approved in December; Japan's deployment of US\$3 trillion worth of economic packages; and the unlocking of the European Union's stimulus plan, a 900 billion euro (US\$857 million) war chest set up by the bloc to support economies hammered by the coronavirus crisis, the IMF said.

## South Korea Q4 GDP Beats Expectations

SEOUL (REUTERS) - South Korea's economy grew at a faster-than-expected pace in the fourth quarter as it ended the coronavirus-stricken year solidly poised for a recovery in 2021 thanks to surging exports.

Gross domestic product (GDP) grew a seasonally adjusted 1.1 per cent in the December quarter from the third quarter, the Bank of Korea said on Tuesday (Jan 26), faster than the median estimate of 0.7 per cent in a Reuters poll and following a 2.1 per cent expansion in the September quarter.

That limited the contraction over the whole year to 1.0 per cent, which is likely to be the smallest GDP slump among the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in the year of the pandemic that killed more than 2 million worldwide. "Recovery momentum should gather pace from the second quarter onwards, led by strong export prospects as global growth and 5G deployment pick up speed," said Lloyd Chan, an economist at Oxford Economics.

"A vaccine rollout around February should also stimulate domestic demand, as it would reduce the need for stringent containment measures," he said.

South Korea's economy has been rebounding sharply since the second quarter when it experienced its sharpest downturn since 2008. But the recovery from the virus-hit downturn has been uneven.

December exports rose 12.6 per cent from a year earlier, the sharpest expansion in 26 months.

Underlining the optimism, shares of Samsung Electronics has surged about 50 per cent in the fourth quarter alone as it reported a 26 per cent jump in its fourth quarter profit.



## WB Preparing \$10b-\$12b Help Portfolio for Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - The World Bank (WB) is preparing a new Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for the next five years from fiscal year 2022 to 2026 with possible portfolio of \$10 to \$12 billion for different sectors of economy of Pakistan.

The Pakistani authorities are expecting that the World Bank Group will extend lending of around \$12 billion for five years period under the CPF. "Although, the WBG has not officially communicated the exact size of portfolio but it should be around \$12 billion," a top official of the PTI led government confided to The News here.

The WB's CPF for five years is in the process of finalization that is expected to be presented before the Executive Board of WB in May/June 2021. "The consultation with relevant stakeholders is underway and the next CPF will be ready by end of the ongoing financial year," said one official.

According to an official announcement made here on Monday, Minister for Economic Affairs, Makhdum Khusro Bakhtyar, held a consultative meeting with Country Director World Bank Pakistan, Najj Benhassine, on Monday in the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

The meeting was aimed at discussing the development priorities of the Government of Pakistan for the next five years and to seek guidance and views of Minister for Economic Affairs to appropriately accommodate those priorities in the next World Bank Country Partnership Strategy for the period FY 2022-26.

## IMF Sees Turkey Growing at 6% in 2021

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's economy will grow by about 6% in 2021 before settling back to a growth rate of about 3.5% annually from 2022, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said, but it urged Ankara to deploy additional targeted stimulus to address the COVID-19 pandemic needs.

The 6% gross domestic product (GDP) growth projection in the preliminary findings of the IMF's annual review of Turkey's economy on Monday compared with a previous 2021 growth projection of 5% for the country issued in October as part of

the IMF's last World Economic Outlook.

The spread of COVID-19 vaccines will power a stronger global economic recovery in 2021, it forecast Tuesday. After sinking 3.5% in 2020, the worst year since World War II, the global economy will grow 5.5% this year, the 190-country lending organization predicted. The new figure for 2021 is an upgrade from the 5.2% expansion the IMF forecast in October and would mark the fastest year of global growth since the 2010 snapback from the financial crisis.

The vaccines should contain the spread of the virus and allow governments around the world to ease lockdowns and encourage a return to normal economic activity.

But the IMF also says economies worldwide will need support from their governments to offset the damage from the pandemic and warns that coronavirus mutations could cloud the outlook for global health and economic growth.

The positive forecast supported the Turkish lira, which fared better than most of its peers in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA), trading 0.2% higher to the dollar.

Turkey's GDP soared to a more-than-expected 6.7% growth rate in the third quarter after contracting by 9.9% in the previous three months when lockdowns were imposed to curb the initial COVID-19 wave. According to the new economic program, announced last September, Ankara projects 2020 growth to come in at 0.3%. It expects a rebound of 5.8% in 2021.

The IMF said the more optimistic forecast is due to the rollout of a vaccine, recovery of trading partner growth and carryover of positive momentum at the end of 2020.

Turkey received 6.5 million further doses of the COVID-19 vaccine developed by China's Sinovac Biotech on Monday, allowing a nationwide rollout to continue. The new shipment added to an initial consignment of 3 million doses, which Turkey received nearly a month ago. It has so far vaccinated more than 1.3 million people, mostly health workers and elderly people, according to Health Ministry data.

The latest shipment is part of a second consignment, which will total 10 million doses.

## Biden Signs "Buy American" Order

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - President Joe Biden vowed on Monday to leverage the purchasing power of the U.S. government, the world's biggest single buyer of goods and services, to strengthen domestic manufacturing and create markets for new technologies.

The Democratic president signed an executive order aimed at closing loopholes in existing "Buy American" provisions, which apply to about a third of the \$600 billion in goods and services the federal government buys each year. The order will make any waivers more transparent and create a senior White House role to oversee the process.

"I don't buy for one second that the vitality of American manufacturing is a thing of the past," Biden told reporters before signing the order. "American manufacturing was the arsenal of democracy in World War Two and it must be part of the engine of American prosperity now."

Biden reiterated plans announced on the campaign trail to replace the fleet of federal cars with U.S.-made electric vehicles. Revitalizing the manufacturing sector, which accounts for about 12% of the U.S. economy, is a key part of Biden's broader push to drive up wages, create more union jobs, support minority-owned businesses and strengthen U.S. supply chains, White House officials say.

Boosting U.S. manufacturing has proven a vexing challenge for previous administrations, including that of former President Donald Trump. "America can't sit on the sidelines in the race to the future. Our competitors aren't waiting," Biden said. "To ensure the future is made in America, we need to win not just the jobs of today, but the jobs and industries of tomorrow."

Manufacturers have been attracted by lower wages and weaker environmental standards in China and other countries in recent decades. This exodus has resulted in critical gaps that have been laid bare during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the making of medical equipment.



China overtook the United States as the world's top manufacturer in 2010, and was responsible for 28% of global output in 2018, according to United Nations data.

The AFL-CIO federation of trade unions welcomed Biden's order. "This order is a good first step in revitalizing U.S. manufacturing, which Trump's policies failed to do over the past four years," AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said.

Major U.S. retailers, including Walmart Inc, have launched high-profile "Made in America" campaigns, only to court foreign manufacturers afterward.

Rebuilding supply chains and developing new ones is key to U.S. economic growth, trade experts say.

The U.S. trade deficit surged to \$68 billion in November, its highest level in 14 years, as businesses filled shelves with foreign goods and supplied domestic factories reliant on foreign parts, offsetting a rise in exports.

## India Retains Ban On 59 Chinese Apps



NEW DELHI (Reuters) - India has decided to retain its ban on video app TikTok and 58 other Chinese apps after reviewing responses from the companies on issues such as compliance and privacy, two sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters on Tuesday.

When it first imposed the ban in June, India's ministry of electronics and information technology (IT) gave the 59 apps a chance to explain their position on issues including whether they censored content, worked on behalf of foreign governments or lobbied influencers.

The companies, which include ByteDance's popular video-sharing app TikTok, Tencent Holdings' WeChat and Alibaba's UC Browser, were asked in July to respond to 77 questions amid rising tensions between India and China following a border clash between the two nations.

A government panel looking into the app ban decided, after reviewing the responses, that there will be no change in the country's position for now as the ban was in the interest of India's national security and sovereignty, one source said.

The government has sent notices to the companies informing them of its decision, the source said.

It was not immediately clear until when the ban would be in place. The Times of India newspaper reported late on Monday that the ban is permanent.

India's IT ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

TikTok said in a statement it is evaluating the notice and will respond to it.

"We continually strive to comply with local laws and regulations and do our best to address any concerns the government may have. Ensuring the privacy and security of all our users remains to be our topmost priority," it said.

# Cities Forced To Get Smart

TEHRAN (IP) - Tehran's mayor said that making cities smart as a priority is what the coronavirus has imposed on the country.

As one of the keynote speakers in the 5th edition of the Tehran Golden Adobe Award on Tuesday, Pirouz Hanachi stressed that Iran has an old and long-lasting civilization in the world, so efforts are being made to improve its ranking globally especially in Tehran, the capital.

Hanachi mentioned public transportation, citizens' participation in improving the city's culture, smart city management especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, economy, and entrepreneurship have been the pivots of the 5th editions of the Tehran Golden Adobe Award to participate in.

"93 percent of registered historical heritage are mainly made of adobes considered as the fundamental base for construction," said Hanachi.



# Chinese Majors to Struggle to Extend Shale Gas Boom Beyond 2025

SINGAPORE (Reuters) - Chinese oil majors will struggle to extend fast growth in shale gas production beyond 2025, as complex geology and failure to draw in more investors make it expensive to develop the unconventional resource.

That would be a blow to China's efforts to cut its reliance on gas imports, presently 42% of total consumption. It would also mean Beijing will have to step up development of other costly gas resources in its remote northwest to meet demand, as the country steers away from coal to achieve climate goals.

The world's top energy consumer started producing shale gas in southwest Sichuan in 2012, inspired by a U.S. shale push, and has doubled output in the past two years to 20 billion cubic metres (bcm) - or about a tenth of its 2020 natural gas output.

But that is a fraction of its proven geological reserves of 1.8 trillion cubic meters by end-2019, and far behind the United States which helped by a shale boom has overtaken Saudi Arabia and Russia to become the world's top oil producer.

State majors PetroChina and Sinopec have pledged to lift shale gas production by 75% to 35 bcm in next five years, but experts say output could peak at around 50-55 bcm by 2035 unless companies drill deeper that requires further technological breakthrough.

China could produce 30 bcm in 2025 by developing recent discoveries like the Weirong project at depths of 3,500-4,000 metres, but formations at a greater depth will be harder to access, noted Zou Caineng, shale expert and deputy director of PetroChina's Research Institute of Exploration and Development.

It is tougher to apply technologies like horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing in Sichuan's mountainous terrain, versus the United States where fields are much larger and flatter, said Zhang Xianhui, gas researcher at consultancy Wood Mackenzie.

It is also hard to replicate factory-model drilling, which helped America cut costs, in the densely populated province.

"There are a lot of uncertainties beyond 2025 over further ramp up of shale gas production," Zhang said.

The failure to get investments is further stymieing China's shale push. BP in 2019 became the last international oil major to leave China's shale scene, after a flurry of exits by global and local explorers amid disappointing results despite ploughing in billions of dollars since 2012.

China's majors, left with the responsibility to develop shale, have scooped up half a dozen commercial projects in Sichuan such as Sinopec's flagship Fuling and PetroChina's Changning-Weiyuan and Zhaotong.

But output at Fuling has plateaued while discoveries like Weirong and Luzhou are more costly to develop, analysts said.

Sinopec, which developed China's first major commercial find, declined to comment.

PetroChina, China's top explorer, however has seen faster growth in output and more discoveries thanks to its larger acreage.



PetroChina officials said exploration and production costs for shale gas are 20-30% higher than conventional resources, state-run China Energy News has reported.

Beijing has since 2016 handed out over \$2 billion in subsidies to the shale sector.

China will need to step up the development of conventional resources such as high-pressure, high-temperature reservoirs in the Tarim basin, in the remote northwest Xinjiang region, or low-yielding but shallower tight gas in Ordos basin, in the north, to fill any gap left by a slowing shale gas expansion, analysts noted.

These may be better assets to develop from a capital allocation perspective, said Angus Rodger, Woodmac's research director.

IHS Markit consultant Zhu Kunfeng says it can be more costly sinking wells into projects like the Keshen, 8,000-9,000 metre below the Gobi Desert, but per-unit cost will be lower owing to its much sizeable output.

China's shale gas output could peak around 2035 at 50 bcm, a Beijing-based government geologist said. Parul Chopra, a Rystad Energy analyst, forecast a peak of near 55 bcm.

China has drilled under 2,000 shale gas wells, versus thousands in a single U.S. project. Chinese shale gas production was equivalent to only 3% of U.S. 2020 output.

"Highly complex above and below-ground challenges mean that the Chinese shale gas journey will continue to look very different from that in the U.S.," Woodmac's Zhang said.

## Iran Will...

FROM PAGE 1

He said Iran attaches paramount importance to the security of Afghanistan, especially in the provinces bordering Iran, calling for Taliban's cooperation with the Afghan government in the face of prevalent insecurity and activities of the Takfiri Daesh terrorist group on Afghan soil.

Mullah Baradar, for his part, briefed Shamkhani on the peace process in war-torn Afghanistan and pointed to the broken promises of the administration of former U.S. president Donald Trump.

"We do not trust the United States an inch, and will fight any party that serves as its mercenary," he said.

The Taliban leader added that all ethnic groups and tribes should play a role in shaping the future of Afghanistan, voicing his group's readiness to help maintain the security of the border between Afghanistan and Iran.

Iran strongly supports the realization of peace and stability in neighboring Afghanistan, Afghanistan has been the scene of rampant violence and militancy since 2001, when the U.S. and its allies invaded the country under the banner of fighting "terrorism."

Accordingly, the Islamic Republic has been closely following the peace negotiations underway since last September between the Afghan government and the Taliban in Qatar.

## Germany...

FROM PAGE 1

"Rather, it is felt wholeheartedly by the oppressed victims of these weapons, who are still suffering from the complications of the wounds caused by these arms," Iran's envoy added.

However, he welcomed comments by the Germany envoy who claimed his country is prosecuting German firms involved in selling chemical arms to the former Iraqi regime. Meanwhile, Iran's ambassador stressed that Tehran will never abandon efforts to follow up on this "blatant tyranny."

He said Iran expects the German government to publicly announce the outcome of its probes, including investigations into German officials' involvement or failure to prevent the illegal transfer of chemical arms to Iraq. It is noteworthy that the German ambassador expressed surprise at the Iranian envoy's bringing up the issue of Germany's complicity with the former Iraqi regime in producing chemical weapons.

The top German diplomat claimed that back then, German judicial authorities looked into accusations of chemical arms transfers to Iraq and successfully handled the case. In response, the Iranian ambassador reminded the German envoy that Tehran has, time and again, brought up the issue of Germany's involvement in supplying Saddam Hussein's regime's with nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, he added, crimes against humanity and war crimes will not fade away with the passage of time. He also criticized the German envoy for introducing Iran along with North Korea as proliferation threat.

## Deception...

FROM PAGE 1

The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations emphasized: "While the Palestinian issue has been on the agenda of the General Assembly and the Security Council as the longest crisis in the world since the founding of the United Nations, the Security Council has failed to end decades of occupation, to defend the fundamental right of millions of oppressed Palestinians and counter with the occupying Israel, which has shamelessly committed international crimes not once but several times.

Takht-Ravanchi said it goes without saying that the Security Council's failure to fulfill its responsibilities stems from the full and systematic support of the United States for Israel, which is in conflict with international law and moral and human principles.

He added that the inefficiency of the United Nations, especially the Security Council, which is responsible for maintaining international peace and security, has seriously diminished trust in the council and led to a crisis in its credibility and legitimacy.

Takht-Ravanchi, meanwhile, stressed that this passivity could not last forever and must be stopped.

Iran's Permanent Representative to the United Nations also called on the international community to do everything in its power to address this crisis, preventing its further deterioration and its negative consequences for regional and international peace and security.

Takhtarvanchi reiterated the Islamic Republic of Iran's support for the ideal of the Palestinian people and the full realization of all their rights, including the inherent right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state throughout Palestine with al-Quds as capital. 219

# Global Ice Sheets Melting At Worst-Case Rates



LONDON (Dispatches) - The rate at which ice is disappearing across the world matches "worst-case climate warming scenarios", UK scientists have warned in new research.

A team from the universities of Edinburgh and Leeds and University College London said the rate at which ice is melting across the world's polar regions and mountains has increased markedly in the last three decades.

Using satellite data, the experts found the Earth lost 28 trillion tons of ice between 1994 and 2017.

The rate of loss has risen from 0.8 trillion tons per year in the 1990s to 1.3 trillion tons per year by 2017, with potentially disastrous consequences for people living in coastal areas.

"The ice sheets are now following the worst-case climate warming scenarios set out by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)," said Dr Thomas Slater, a research fellow at Leeds' Centre for Polar Observation and Modelling.

"Sea level rise on this scale will have very serious impacts on coastal communities this century."

Input from United Nations' IPCC has been critical to forming international climate change strategies, including the 2015 Paris Agreement under which the majority of greenhouse gas emitting nations agreed to mitigate the impact of global warming.

The universities' research, published Monday in the European Geosciences Union's journal The Cryosphere, was the first of its kind to use satellite data.

It surveyed 215,000 mountain glaciers around the globe, polar ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica, ice shelves floating around Antarctica, and sea ice drifting in the Arctic and Southern Oceans.

The survey found the largest losses in the last three decades were from Arctic Sea ice and Antarctic ice shelves, both of which float on the polar oceans.

While such ice loss does not directly contribute to sea rises, its destruction does stop the ice sheets reflecting solar radiation and thus indirectly contributes to rising sea levels. "As the sea ice shrinks, more solar energy is being absorbed by the oceans and atmosphere, causing the Arctic to warm faster than anywhere else on the planet," Dr Isobel Lawrence said.

"Not only is this speeding up sea ice melt, it's also exacerbating the melting of glaciers and ice sheets which causes sea levels to rise," she added.

## Iran Trade...

FROM PAGE 1

Referring to the limitations of Iran's banking system due to outrageous U.S. sanctions, he stated that the issuance of mutual guarantees with the help of peer institutions is one of the new strategies of this supporting institution to secure foreign trade.

Pointing to the allocation of \$800 million to Eurasian Economic Union countries, including Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Belarus, he said that supporting exports through covering Eurasian political and commercial risks will be the fund's top priority.

Meanwhile Kazakhstan ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran called for setting up a joint bank between Islamic Republic of Iran and Republic of Kazakhstan.

Addressing the forum, Askhat Orazbay stated that unjust and unilateral sanctions imposed against Iran should be lifted.

Setting up a joint bank between Iran and Kazakhstan as well as launching a bartering system between the two countries is mandatory, he added. As long as sanctions are not lifted, the two countries should focus on the products that are not subject to sanctions, the envoy stipulated.

Turning to the adverse effects of sanctions, he said that sanctions have reduced volume of trade and business between the two countries extremely, he said, adding, "Under such circumstances, customs duties o the products that are not subject to sanctions should first be reduced and secondly, a bilateral trade agreement should be inked between the two countries regarding free trade zone, so that Kazakhstan welcomes the two options wholeheartedly."

He lashed out at the lack of a banking system between Iran and Kazakhstan and reiterated, "Lack of an integrated banking system was one of the main problems between the two countries, so that it is proposed to set up a joint bank between Iran and Kazakhstan."

Attended by senior officials including the TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari, the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Head Hamid Zadboum, and the Head of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Reza Mir-Ashrafi, the event was held in collaboration with Persian Gulf Studies Center (PGSC) and the Iran-Russia, Iran-Kazakhstan, and Iran-Armenia Joint Chambers of Commerce.

## Iran Oil...

FROM PAGE 1

Tehran and some of its crude buyers such as China have said U.S. sanctions are illegal.

Geneva-based Petro-Logistics said Iranian crude exports were set to exceed 600,000 bpd this month for the first time since April 2019, after rising by 100,000 bpd in the fourth quarter.

"We've seen a steady increase in Iranian exports over the past months," Petro-Logistics said in an email to Reuters.

While still a fraction of the pre-sanctions rate of about 2.7 million bpd in May 2018, that level of January exports represents a sizeable boost.

Refinitiv Eikon tracked just 370,000 bpd of Iranian crude exports in December. In some months of 2020, exports fell to as little as 100,000 to 200,000 bpd.

Iran's oil minister, Bijan Zanganeh, last week said crude exports had recently risen "significantly" without giving figures. Elias Naderan, an Iranian lawmaker, was quoted by Mehr news agency as saying they had reached 900,000 bpd.

There is no definitive figure for Iranian exports. Tankers have satellite tracking but this can be switched off, and adjustments to schedules and week-by-week variations complicate the task.

A deal that officially allows higher exports does not look imminent. Biden's choice for U.S. secretary of state, Antony Blinken, says the United States is some way from a decision on resuming the Iran nuclear accord.

A source at a third company that tracks Iranian exports put January shipments at no more than 500,000 bpd, still an increase from December, and said the behavior of key buyers could change in coming months.

"Now Trump is gone the question arises whether China and India will continue to restrain purchases," he said.

## 14m Indigenous...

FROM PAGE 1

On Tuesday, the official said the interim trial data showed no side effects and the vaccine, named Coviran Barekat, is effective on the Covid-19 mutations identified in Britain and South Africa.

He added that two to three million doses will have been produced before the end of the Iranian year, and claimed the jab would be cheaper than foreign products and would allow Iran to become self-sufficient in Covid-19 vaccines.

On Tuesday, Iran approved Russia's Sputnik V vaccine - the world's first registered jab for Covid-19, adding that it would also be getting vaccines from China and India.

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## Tuchel Set to Accept Massive Chelsea Challenge

LONDON (Dispatches) - Thomas Tuchel is set to be named Chelsea manager on Tuesday several years after he first spoke with the Premier League giants about the job. The 47-year-old German replaces the sacked Frank Lampard and will be the 15th change of manager since Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich bought the club in 2003. Tuchel follows some noteworthy predecessors in Jose Mourinho and Carlo Ancelotti, who have also fallen foul of Abramovich in the past -- the Italian was fired a season after delivering the domestic double.

## Koepka Looking for New Swing Coach

LONDON (Dispatches) - Brooks Koepka, who was the world's top-ranked golfer last February, is in the market for a new swing coach after parting ways with longtime swing coach Claude Harmon III a couple of months ago. The duo started working together in 2013, when the Koepka was playing on the European Challenge Tour. The partnership paid immediate dividends, as Koepka won three tournaments on the Challenge Tour in 2013, then again as a European Tour rookie in 2014.

## LeBron James Nets Season-High 46 at

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - LeBron James scored a season-high 46 points, including 21 in the fourth quarter, to lift the visiting Los Angeles Lakers to a 115-108 win against the Cleveland Cavaliers.

James scored 13 points in the final 4:41 to help the Lakers pull away and improve to 10-0 on the road this season. Anthony Davis had 17 points and 10 rebounds for the Lakers, and Montrezl Harrell scored 15 off the bench.

Andre Drummond had 25 points and 17 rebounds, Cedi Osman scored 20 points and Collin Sexton finished with 17 for the Cavaliers.

James shot 19 of 26 from the field, including 7 of 11 from 3-point distance, and added eight rebounds and six assists. It was his second game back in Cleveland since leaving the Cavaliers for the second time.

In Denver, Michael Porter Jr. scored a season-high-tying 30 points, Nikola Jokic had 20 points and 10 rebounds and visiting Denver Nuggets beat Mavericks Dallas 117-113.

JaMychal Green had 17 points and eight rebounds while Jamal Murray scored 16 before being ejected for Denver, which has won the first three games of a five-game road trip.

Luka Doncic amassed 35 points, 16 assists and 11 rebounds, Hardaway scored 19 points, and Kristaps Porzingis and James Johnson had 16 apiece for the Mavericks.

Stephen Curry overshadowed Andrew Wiggins' reunion with his former team, scoring a game-high 36 points as Golden State Warriors thrashed visiting Minnesota Timberwolves 130-108 in San Francisco.

Curry shot 11-for-21 overall and 7-for-12 on 3-point attempts en route to his fifth game this season with 35 or more points. Wiggins complemented his 23 points with six rebounds, three steals and three blocks for the Warriors.

The game pitted the top picks of last year's draft, with No. 1 selection Anthony Edwards of the Timberwolves and No. 2 pick James Wiseman of the Warriors playing on near-even terms. Edwards finished with 15 points while Wiseman, demoted from the starting lineup Monday, had 13.

Malcolm Brogdon scored 19 of his career-high 36 points in the second half and



added nine assists as Indiana Pacers defeated Toronto Raptors 129-114.

Indiana's Domantas Sabonis scored 11 points before leaving with a knee contusion at the end of the first quarter after going knee-on-knee with Toronto's Kyle Lowry. He did not return. Jeremy Lamb added 22 points off the bench for the Pacers. Myles Turner had 21 points and grabbed 10 rebounds.

Fred VanVleet led the Raptors with 25 points. Norman Powell, starting with Pascal Siakam (left knee swelling) out for the second straight game, added 24 points for Toronto. Lowry, returning after missing two games with an infected toe, scored 12 points before being ejected in the final minute.

### Oklahoma City Thunder 125 - Portland Trail Blazers 122

Mike Muscala made a career-best six 3-pointers and scored a season-high 23 points to help Oklahoma City Thunder post a 125-122 victory at Portland Trail Blazers.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored a team-high 24 points and added nine rebounds and six assists as the Thunder improved to 1-3 on a five-game road trip. Darius Bazley had 19 points and seven rebounds and Isaiah Roby scored 16 points for Oklahoma City.

Anfernee Simons established season highs of 26 points and six 3-pointers for Portland. Damian Lillard notched 26 points and 10 assists, Carmelo Anthony scored a season-best 22 points and Gary Trent Jr. also had 22 points. Enes Kanter had 13 points and a season-best 22 rebounds.



MILAN (AFP) - Inter Milan coach Antonio Conte received a two-match ban and fined 20,000 euros (\$24,000) on Tuesday for verbally threatening the referee after last weekend's Serie A stalemate at Udinese.

The former Juventus and Chelsea manager saw red after 90 minutes in the goalless draw, believing referee Fabio Maresca had not added on enough stoppage time.

The Lega Serie A punished Conte for "disrespectful phrases towards the referee that continued off the pitch".

"In the tunnel that leads to the changing rooms (Conte) confronted the referee in a threatening manner, screaming at him a seriously offensive expression," Lega Serie A said in a statement.

Inter team technical manager Gabriele Orioli was also fined 5,000 euros, and given a one-match ban.

Inter missed the chance to move level on points with leaders AC Milan.

Conte will miss their next two league games against Benevento and Fiorentina.

## Europe's Top Clubs Face 2b Euro Coronavirus Hit

LONDON (Dispatches) - The coronavirus pandemic could cost Europe's 20 highest-earning football clubs over two billion euros (\$2.4 billion, £1.4 billion), according to forecasts from financial experts Deloitte.

Deloitte's latest Football Money League report shows that revenues of the top 20 clubs analysed fell by 1.1 billion euros in the 2019/20 season due to closed stadiums and television rebates.

Some of that revenue will be recouped in the accounts for the 2020/21 season. The financial year at most clubs ends on June 30, meaning some prize money and broadcast income for domestic leagues and European competitions that completed beyond that date is not included in last season's figures.

However, the ongoing effects of the virus will make an even bigger dent on club finances in 2020/21 with stadia largely shut to supporters across the continent for the entire season so far and little sign of restrictions being eased.

Even as the games have gone on behind closed doors, broadcasters have been compensated for a disruption to the original schedule and the lack of atmosphere produced by empty stadiums.

Rebates for Europe's 'top five' leagues in England, Spain, Germany, France and Italy, and UEFA's Champions League and Europa League competitions already total almost 1.2 billion euros.

"We usually release our money league and talk about the growth in revenue but of course football is not immune to the Covid-19 pandemic," said Tim Bridge of Deloitte's Sports Business Group.

"The revenue that's been missed out on is driven by the lack of fans in the stadium, the lack of interaction on a matchday -- fans spending in the club shop and buying food and drink -- and there is an element that relates to revenue that broadcasters have either clawed back or deferred to next year."

Spanish giants Barcelona maintained their position at the top of the revenue table despite their income falling 15 percent to 715 million euros.

## Gomez "Sad and Happy" to Leave Atalanta



MILAN (AFP) - Out-of-favour Atalanta captain Alejandro 'Papu' Gomez described his mixed emotions on Tuesday as he prepares to leave the Serie A club he helped take to the Champions League for the first time.

The Bergamo outfit have reportedly reached an agreement with La Liga's Sevilla for the sale of the attacker who has fallen out with coach Gian Piero Gasperini.

"It's a mixture of feelings, after so many years in this city," the 32-year-old Argentine told Sky Sport Italia.

"I'm sad, and also happy. Sometimes things happen and go a certain way, but I

would do it all again because we wrote the history of this club. I leave Atalanta at the top in Europe."

Gomez joined the side in 2014 from Ukrainian outfit Metalist Kharkiv, and skippered them to the Champions League quarter-finals on their competition debut.

He has scored 59 goals in 252 games for Atalanta.

Gomez fell out with Gasperini after a clash of opinions during half-time in an European match this season.

The club went through to the last 16 for the second consecutive season where they will play 13-time winners Real Madrid.

"The fans? I'll miss them a lot, Bergamo is in my heart. We will surely see each other again soon," added Gomez, who has scored one goal in five appearances for Argentina.

## Man United Suit Fernandes Winning Mentality

LONDON (Dispatches) - Bruno Fernandes says Manchester United suit his mentality because they are "a club who wants to win everything" as he marks his one-year anniversary at the Premier League leaders this week.

The 26-year-old Portuguese international has transformed the fortunes of Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side since joining from Sporting Lisbon in January 2020.

His winner in Sunday's thrilling 3-2 win over Liverpool in their FA Cup fourth-round tie was his 28th goal for United.

"I come to the club because I knew I will come to a club who wants to win everything -- and my mentality, my way to be in my life and football is about winning," Fernandes told the Press Association news agency. "And so you have to be confident, you have to trust your team-mates, you have to trust yourself, and you have to believe."

"And I will believe until it's not more possible, you know? Like when I see someone get the trophy before me, then I will (have) lost my belief."

Fernandes' winning mentality is fuelled by his hatred of losing.

"I don't conform with losing games is normal stuff," he said. "For me, losing is not normal so my mentality comes from that."

United have lost four semi-finals since the Portuguese arrived at Old Trafford, the latest earlier this month in the League Cup to Manchester City.

The club have not won the league since Alex Ferguson's retirement in 2013 and they last won silverware in 2017.

Fernandes, who has faced criticism over his recent performances, came off the bench to score with a thumping free-kick against Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool on Sunday.



## Nadal Takes Veiled Swipe At Djokovic

MADRID (Dispatches) - Rafael Nadal has taken an apparent swipe at Novak Djokovic over his requests for quarantined players preparing for the Australian Open, saying not everyone felt the need to "advertise" how they were trying to help.

The Serbian world number one issued a list of suggestions to Tennis Australia last week on behalf of 72 players unable to leave their Melbourne hotel rooms after Covid-19 cases were detected on their planes to Australia.

They reportedly included moving players into private homes with tennis courts and getting them better meals.

But his requests fell on deaf ears, while Australian media portrayed players as petulant and selfish and fellow star Nick Kyrgios called Djokovic a "tool".

Djokovic later issued an open letter to say his "good intentions for my fellow competitors in Melbourne have been misconstrued".

"We all try to help each other," Spanish great Nadal told ESPN Tuesday from Adelaide, where he and Djokovic are quarantining ahead of the year's opening Grand Slam in Melbourne on February 8.

"Some need to make public everything they do to help others," he added, in remarks widely seen as referring to Djokovic. "Others... do it in a more private way without having to publish or advertise everything we're doing."

While most players are undergoing a mandatory 14 days of quarantine in Melbourne, Nadal, Djokovic and other superstars of the game including Serena Williams and Naomi Osaka jetted into Adelaide, where they are due to play an exhibition on Friday. It sparked mutterings about preferential treatment, and Nadal admitted it had been smoother sailing.

