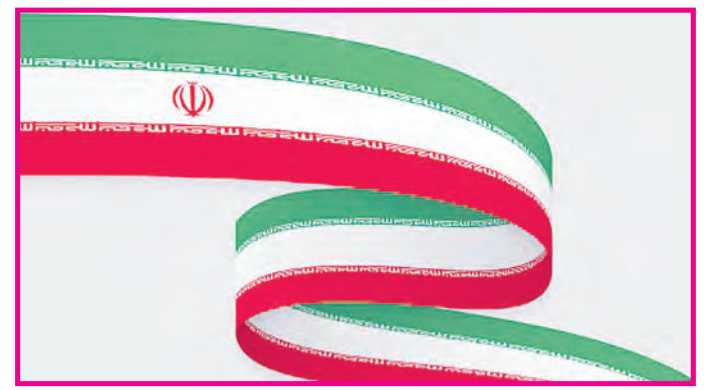


**Spokeswoman for Iran Health Ministry Sima Sadat Lari Said On Tuesday Said That Some More 72 Deaths Died of COVID-19 Over The Past 24 Hours as the Death Toll Reached 58,110**

# IRAN NEWS



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## Majlis Rejects Gov't's New Draft Budget

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Majlis rejected President Hassan Rouhani's draft state budget of about \$33.7 billion for the Persian year of 1400 which begins on March 21.

Members of parliament dismissed the general outlines of the budget bill by 148 votes to 99 on Tuesday during a stormy session. Twelve lawmakers abstained.

President Rouhani did not attend the parliament's reading of the draft budget, sending his deputy in charge of economic planning Mohammad Baqer Nobakht instead.

Nobakht had his microphone unceremoniously muted during his defense of the bill, with Parliament speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf explaining that his 20-minute time was up.

The government presented the draft budget to parliament early last year, promising less reliance on oil revenues and higher growth, but it took not long before critics described it as too generous on government spending and short on development. **See Page 7**

## Borrell Can End Iran-U.S. Dispute Over JCPOA Return

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell can resolve the "Mexican standoff" between Iran and the US over the two sides' return to compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal in his capacity as the JCPOA coordinator.

Zarif made the remarks in an exclusive interview with CNN's Christiane Amanpour on Monday evening.

"Clearly there can be a mechanism to basically either synchronize [Iran and US moves] or coordinate what can be done. The JCPOA has a built-in mechanism, which is the joint commission. The joint commission has a coordinator ... who can sort of choreograph the actions needed to be taken by Iran and the U.S.," Zarif said.

He said Iran's moves have always been monitored and verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and Iran has shown that it fulfils its promises. "The side that has not been able to show that it fulfils its promises has been the United States. So the U.S. needs to prove its bona fide. Iran has already proven its bona fide," he added. **See Page 7**

## Iran Launches Zoljanah Satellite Launch Vehicle



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's Defense Ministry has unveiled a new domestically-designed and manufactured satellite launch vehicle capable of putting satellites into an orbit of 500km above the ground.

Ahmad Hosseini, a spokesman for the Iranian Defense Ministry's Space Department, said on Monday that the new satellite launch vehicle is based on the most powerful solid fuel engine technology attained by the country's specialists for the first time.

"For the first time in the field of space science, the first test launch of Zuljanah satellite launch vehicle has been carried out after achieving the most powerful solid fuel engine technology with the goal of conducting suborbital test," he added.

The three-phase satellite launch vehicle, which is comparable with the most state-of-the-art ones in the world in technical aspects, enjoys two solid thrust phases and one liquid thrust phase, he added.

The official noted that the launch carrier is capable of carrying a satellite weighing 220kg to an orbit of 500km above the ground.

Hosseini said one of the most important achievements of this test is making operational the country's most powerful solid fuel engine enjoying a 750-tonne thrust.

The spokesman said Iran has now three operational satellite carriers, namely Zoljenah, Sarir, and Soroush.

Sarir is capable of carrying a payload of one ton into a height of 1,000 km and is going to replace Simorgh, he added.

The satellite launch vehicle will be ready to put operational satellites into orbit after the completion of research tests, he noted, adding that reducing costs and increasing the speed of achieving objectives are among its main features.

Iran has used various fluid-fuel satellite launch vehicles to put satellites into orbit.

The elite force fired the satellite — dubbed Nour (Light)-1 — aboard Qased (Carrier) satellite launch vehicle during an operation that was staged in Dasht-e Kavir, Iran's sprawling central desert.

The satellite was placed into the orbit 425 kilometers above Earth's surface.

It came after Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami said in February last year that Iran's satellite launch vehicles have nothing to do with its military activities and lie completely outside the country's defensive practices.

"The satellite launch vehicles have nothing to do with the subject of missiles, and constitute a completely non-defensive and non-military issue," Hatami said.

## EU Seeking Ways for U.S. Return to JCPOA

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The spokesman for the High Representative for Security and Foreign Policy in the European Union said that the EU is working on returning the United States to the JCPOA.

Speaking in a press conference on Monday, Peter Stano stated that EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell's talks with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was the first practical step in maintaining the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and efforts in this regard are underway.

He referred to Borrell and Blinken's telephone conversation, stressing that the issue would be pursued at a relevant level. The European Union weighs up the U.S. and Iran's return to the nuclear agreement signed in 2015 requires Brussels to make major diplomatic efforts.

The spokesman for the High Representative for Security and Foreign Policy in the European Union said that the Union has always wanted to work with the United States on the Iranian nuclear case, indicating the need to find a way for Washington to return to the agreement and push Tehran to respect its commitments, and this will require persistent diplomatic efforts. Earlier, the spokesman had said that Josep Borrell would continue to make all possible efforts to ensure that Washington returns to the agreement and urge Tehran to respect its obligations within the nuclear agreement.

Stano's stated the issue in response to statements by the new US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken. He stipulated that Iran should respect its obligations before talking about the possibility of lifting sanctions.

Last week Stano had also underscored that maintaining the JCPOA required maximum diplomacy.

"The European Union is ready to work with the United States on the Iran issue. In particular, with the change of the U.S. government, it is essential that we find a way for the United States to return to the JCPOA because the agreement is a key element for the world," he told reporters on Thursday.

He also said that we must find a way for Iran to return to the full implementation of its obligations in the JCPOA.

The European official noted that resolving the issue was "not an easy task," adding that all 27 EU member states issued a statement last month "expressing their support for intensive diplomacy to facilitate the return of the United States to the JCPOA and for Iran to fulfill its commitments under the nuclear deal."

## ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

### We Should Make Helicopter

Today having helicopter, whose name has been changed into a Persian name, means possibility for rapid transportation in the short distances. In this very Tehran or some towns and capitals of the provinces, we see buildings where that they have predicted some places "helipad" on their roofs for landing of helicopters and this means urban transportation with air taxi is a necessity for the populous cities.

The chopper is employed in those activities that need pace in transportation or in passing from the traffic and above all in relocation of facilities out of the urban areas, and this is just some part of understandable necessity in the industrial management. When you can make cars, you are easily able to make various kinds of choppers with various applications.

Fortunately recently in the news it has been reported that the CEO of the Iran Aviation Industries Organization of Defense Ministry Mr. Amir Khajehfard has said, "Manufacture of a chopper named Saba is in the design and manufacture stage." He has said Saba is a powerful chopper that can meet the needs of the country and also the Islamic and friendly countries in the best way. Khajehfard added that manufacture of Saba is in line with supporting the domestic production, national authority and move on course to materialize resistance economy, and reiterated implementation of this project will lay the ground for activating the wheel of industry, creating incentive among producers and craftsmen in the chain of provision and improving the condition of occupation.

Khajehfard by pointing to the history of PANHA Company (acronym of Iran Helicopter Support and Renewal Company) in the country says, "The background and history of PANHA dates back to 50 years ago and ever since the company has done great and important valuable services in different fields. Iran is the biggest fleet in the region and ranks third in the world after the U.S. and Russia in terms of its military helicopter fleet and PANHA despite all restrictions and sanctions has been able to support and supply equipment and renew this broad and diverse fleet.

Speaking in a meeting on the synergy for adopting important decisions for entering the mass production of Saba choppers he explained, "Today we have gathered here to organize utilization of an indigenous chopper in different organization which has passed successfully different stages of tests in order to meet the needs of the country in the helicopter field. All of us are fully aware that we have roles in forming the future of production, development and using a domestic production; all of us talk about production but if we have no production in any industry, we cannot attain development and sustainable progress. Production of air equipment and using it is an issue that always exists and after the production, both support and after-production services are very important and considerable." **See Page 7**

## Zarif's Trips to Islamabad Proof of Amicable Ties

ISLAMABAD (PressTV) - Pakistan's foreign minister says his Iranian counterpart has made four trips to Islamabad in less than three years, and that proves Iran and Pakistan have maintained great relations.

Shah Mahmood Qureshi made the remarks in a Monday address to his country's Parliament, where he elaborated on the level of Pakistan's relations with its neighbors, including Iran.

"Pakistan enjoys very good relations with all its neighbors, especially the Islamic Republic of Iran," Qureshi said.

"Mohammad Javad Zarif, the foreign minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, paid four official visits to Islamabad [since less than three years ago when the new Pakistani government took office]," the Pakistani top diplomat said.

"That indicates our good ties with this neighboring country," he added. **See Page 7**

Sokhan Gostar Institute

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## Iran Emerged Victorious in U.S. Economic War With Bare Hands

TEHRAN (IFP) - A senior Iranian official says documents pertaining to the United States' economic war against Iran should be collected for the generation to come so as to prove how Iran won with bare hands.

Mahmoud Vaezi, the chief of staff of the President's Office, said the enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran failed to achieve their objectives during the economic war they imposed on Iran over the past three years as well as during the eight-year

Iraqi-imposed war on Iran in the 1980s.

He said Washington used every tool available to bring Iran to its knees in maximum three months.

"These three months became three years and the Americans retreated at the end," he noted.

"The three-year resistance by the people showed that it is possible to win against the enemy even with bare hands," Vaezi said.

## President Hopes COVID-19 Vaccination Will Begin by Yearend

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Hassan Rouhani has expressed hope that vaccinations against the COVID-19 disease will kick off in the coming weeks, before the end of the current Persian calendar year in March.

"As soon as vaccinations start in Iran, we will definitely have better conditions. I hope we can start before the end of the 1399 [Persian calendar] year and even by the month of Bahman," which ends on February 18, Rouhani said on Tuesday.

"After medical staff and high-risk people are vaccinated, the situation changes completely, and later, the rest of the public will use it," he added. "Millions of doses of foreign vaccines will be imported and then from the summer, we hope domestic vaccines will enter the market and people can use it."

Iran has purchased 16.8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines from COVAX, a multi-agency group dedicated to assuring fair access to vaccines for low- and middle-income countries.

President also stated that a total of more than 2,200 tourism projects have been inaugurated in the Twelfth Government, stating: 22,000 billion tomans of projects have been inaugurated in this government. Today we also saw that 135 projects were inaugurated.

Rouhani added: "Currently, 670 hotels are under construction, some of which will be completed in this government, and the number of projects will increase tremendously."

Iran's president added: "My prediction is that in the coming months there will be better conditions for our educational space as well as for tourism spaces."

He referred to the reports presented at the meeting regarding the changes made in the government budget bill in the Integration Commission of the Parliament and the negative impacts of these changes on the country's economy, noted: "The government has repeatedly stressed the need to maintain the main pillars of the budget bill, and



issues such as fighting special privileges, reducing inflation, strengthening the national currency and supporting people's livelihood and providing basic goods have been the government's main focus.

The President said that the next Iranian year budget bill has been prepared to manage the country's economy in the conditions of economic war and to manage the development path, adding: "According to the government, changes in the structure and main points of the next year's budget bill can seriously damage people's livelihoods and development path."

Following the meeting, the Central Bank's report on the foreign exchange and commodity markets was presented and the necessary decisions were taken to strengthen the movement towards reducing inflation expectations.

The President said: "The process of providing foreign exchange for basic goods and medicine by the government continues continuously and this process is being followed seriously so that people do not have to worry about the supply of medicine and basic goods. From now on, the necessary planning must be done for the last days of the year and New Year's holidays so that people can be sure of the supply of basic goods during these days."

## Judiciary Renews Allegiance With Ideals of Imam Khomeini



TEHRAN (IP) - Judiciary Chief and other judiciary officials renewed allegiance with the ideals of the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran by attending Imam Khomeini's mausoleum.

In this ceremony, which was held on Tuesday on the occasion of the 10-Day Dawn and on the occasion of the forty-second anniversary of the glorious victory of the Islamic Revolution, Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi, attended Imam Khomeini's mausoleum.

During the ceremony, Raisi talked about various dimensions of Imam Khomeini's revolutionary, religious, scientific, and political personality.

42 years ago, on February 1, 1979, Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Revolution, set foot on the soil of Iran amidst the enthusiastic welcome of the people after fifteen years of exile.

Ten days after his arrival in Iran, on February 11, 1979, Iran's glorious Islamic Revolution embraced victory.

## U.K. Muslims Urged to Act Against "Divisive" Film

### IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's ambassador to London has condemned a film produced by a U.K.-based company, claiming that the film undermines the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The film, titled The Lady Of Heaven, revolves around the story of an Iraqi child who learns the importance of patience by discovering the story of Fatima Zahra, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

"In a letter to the Shi'ite and Sunni Islamic centers in the U.K., I categorically condemned the film...as a divisive action, and expressed concern over attempts to create division and hatred among Muslims at this sensitive time," Ambassador Hamid Baeidinejad tweeted on February 1.

Baeidinejad urged the both Shi'a and Sunnis to "be vigilant and act in unity to condemn this film and resort to legal steps to ban the film in the U.K."

Several senior Iranians clerics have reportedly

condemned the movie, saying it promotes discord between Shi'a and Sunnis.

It has been also condemned in Pakistan, where the telecommunications authority last month ordered social-media platforms to block all content related to the "sacrilegious" movie.

## Women Main Leaders, Main Bases of Education in Society



TEHRAN (IP) - While congratulating on the occasion of Mother Day and the birthday of Hazrat Zahra (AS), the Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly stressed that the happiness or misery of any society depends on the women of that society because they are the leaders and the main basis of education in the society.

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, at the beginning of the open session of the parliament while congratulating on the occasion of the birth of Hazrat Zahra (as), said: "I congratulate all women of our country on this happy birthday occasion and Mother's Day. Undoubtedly, the happiness or misery of any society depends on the women of that society; because women and mothers are the main leaders and the main basis of education in society, our culture, our material, and spiritual education is also rooted in this important fact."

He added: "The victory of the revolution, as well as the continuation of the revolution, the era of sacred defense, and the difficult economic conditions today showed that Iranian women were able to play a role at the height of their companionship."

"We understand and appreciate the silent struggles of our dear Iranian mothers and we appreciate the sacrifice and efforts of these loved ones for the people and the revolution, we wish success to all of them, and on this occasion, we especially congratulate the honorable women of the parliament," the official concluded.

## Iran Trying to Get Its Stranded National Out of Myanmar

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh says the Iranian embassy in Thailand is trying to help an Iranian woman stranded in Myanmar to get out of the country following the recent coup d'etat in the country.

In a statement on Monday, Khatibzadeh said the embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Thailand, which is also accredited to Myanmar, has been in touch with the small number of Iranian nationals in this country during the coronavirus pandemic, and helped them get out of Myanmar.

"The last remaining national is an Iranian woman, and the embassy is trying to make sure of her health and safety and to provide the assistance needed for her departure from Myanmar," the spokesman said.

Khatibzadeh advised Iranian nationals to avoid travelling to the country until proper health and security conditions are restored, and strongly advised other Iranian nationals who might be still in Myanmar to inform the Iranian embassy in Thailand of their situation and possible requests as soon as possible, so that the embassy would provide the assistance needed.

## VP Lauds Growth of Revenues of Knowledge-Based Companies

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Vice-President for Science and Technology Affairs Sourena Sattari said that the knowledge-based companies are flourishing in Iran with 5,684 entities and over 120,000 billion tomans income last year.

Speaking in a TV program on Monday night, Sattari said from 5,684 knowledge-based companies in Iran, 1,400 ones are innovative and have so far made valuable innovations.

He added that the number of startups increased to over 6,000, accelerators to 144 companies and innovation centers to over 247 entities in Iran.

Iran has invested 1,000 billion tomans for creating capacity in risky investment over the last three years.

Earlier, Sattari said that Iran has put on top agenda to set up and develop Iranian innovation houses to advance technology diplomacy with target countries for export of the knowledge-based products.

The proposal for setting up Iranian innovation and technology house centers in the form of technology diplomacy in target centers (countries suitable for export) has been proposed, he noted.

PERMIT NO : 55/99/26457

DATE : 2021-2-3

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT



### INVITATION TO RENEWAL OF ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER



#### AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, affiliated to Ministry of Agriculture-Jahad of I.R of Iran, is considering the purchase of the below item of technical, through renewal of one step international tender.

ITEM	Name	PACKING	Quantity KG
1	Fipronil Tech (18.8-21.2) pct. (premix 20%)	200 kg drum	5500

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from Wednesday dated 3/2/2021 until Tuesday dated 9/2/2021 (5 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran).

The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of I.Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 358039782263500650000000000006.

The bidders are requested to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on Saturday dated 13/3/2021 (during official working hours) to our security office located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be held on Sunday dated 14/3/2021 at 14:00 PM with the presence of bidder's representatives at our purchasing committee hall (9th floor , no. 1, Fourth Alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran).

We would like to emphasize that the bid bond amount should be in bank guarantee as follows:

1- € 20515 for Fipronil Tech(18.8-21.2) pct. (premix 20%) equivalent to Iranian Rials 5920000000.

- The bid bond value will be in Euro or in equal value of any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on Telegraphic Transfer rate in Sana rate website, www.sanarate.ir. It should be noted that this site lists the currency transactions, executed in Integrated Currency Transactions System [Nima website] on 31/1/2021.

For more information, you may refer to our website [www.assc.ir](http://www.assc.ir), and <http://iets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.

PR & intl Affairs Dept of Agricultural Support Services Company(ASSC)



## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:18
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:52
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:36
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:01

36. Whatever ye are given (here) is (but) a convenience of this life: but that which is with Allah is better and more lasting: (it is) for those who believe and put their trust in their Lord:  
37. Those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, when they are angry even then forgive;  
Surah 42. Councel, Consultation (36 - 37)

## Tehran-Islamabad Trade Capacity Estimated at \$14b

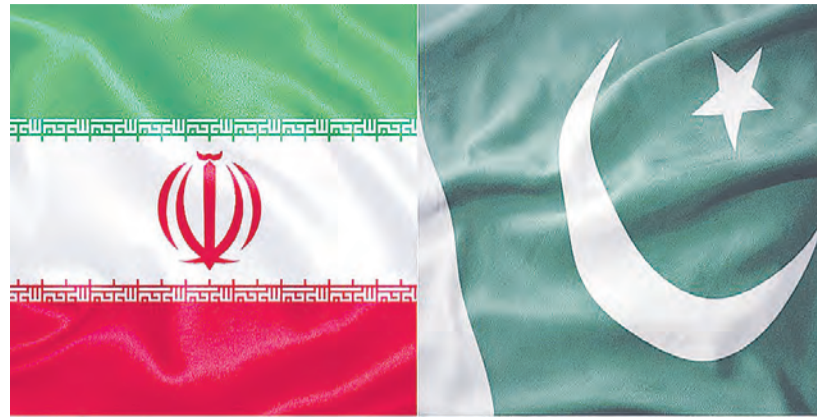
IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - Director-General of the Asia-Pacific Office at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Seyed Reza Seyed Aghazadeh believes the capacity for trade between Iran and Pakistan is high and in case the required infrastructures are paved, their bilateral trade can enhance to \$14b.**

Seyed Aghazadeh said the first online trade meeting of Iranian and Pakistani knowledge-based companies was held and said that estimates show that in case infrastructures are prepared, Iran and Pakistan can enhance their trade volume to \$14b.

He went on to say that Pakistan as a friendly neighboring country has huge capacity for increasing its trade with Iran in terms of quantity and quality that one of the grounds for cooperation is reinforcing joint cooperation due to Iran's energy sources and production.

Seyed Aghazadeh added that Pakistan is the fourth export destination for Iran's



products among the neighboring countries and their bilateral trade has stood at \$840m in the first 9 months of the current year.

He added that Iran's exports to Pakistan in 9 months are valued at \$71m and in return its imports have been around \$131m.

He went on to say that both countries can focus on barter trade and finding practical mechanism for it.

Meanwhile Pakistan Ambassador to Tehran Rahim Hayat Qureshi addressing the webinar expressed his country's interest, specially Pakistan Prime Minister's, for expanding trade and economy with Iran by using the border trade capacity and implementing existing agreements like preferential trade agreements.

He went on to say that due to restrictions because of the coronavirus pandemic, using virtual space capacity for holding such webinars is valuable opportunity and called for more support from the companies active in the field of knowledge-based and technical services.

## Reconstruction of Shahin Shahr Wastewater Network With New Method



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN - The CEO of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company says for the first time in Isfahan Province, pipe-laying of the concrete-made 1,600-millimeter diameter wastewater with the length of 424 meters is being carried out in Shahin Shahr by the knowledge-based companies with using new method of the indigenous TBM.**

Mr. Hashem Amini explained different dimensions of implementing the project of drilling and laying the pipe of the main collector of Shahin Shahr wastewater with new method, and said that the main collector of the Shahin Shahr wastewater to the treatment plant is in length of 6 kilometers with diameters between 1200 to 1600 millimeter, and 424 meter of the project is under reconstruction with new method.

He pointed to the lack of enough space for reconstruction of the main collector of Shahin Shahr wastewater, saying that due to the short width of some streets and being crowded, the reconstruction operation in these areas are pursued with using new method.

Mr. Amini further said that the reconstruction operation of the collector of Shahin Shahr wastewater costs over 4.2b tomans. He noted by accomplishment of drilling the tunnel, the operation for pipe laying in the tunnel and construction of pond will kick off.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - The 7th International PriceSteel Conference with the title of "Steel Value Chain Innovation in Production and Sales" with an especial approach to the virtual market of steel, light steel production and age of alloys.**

The CEO of Khorasan Steel Complex Mr. Kasra Ghafoori was one of the participants in the conference which is aimed at reviewing issues ahead of steel industry in the field of production, marketing and sales. Some other senior officials of the company were also present in the one-day conference with an eye on presenting products and reviewing ways for easing the marketing and sales of the steel products.

The Steel Price Conference was held at Olympic Hotel of Tehran on Sunday.

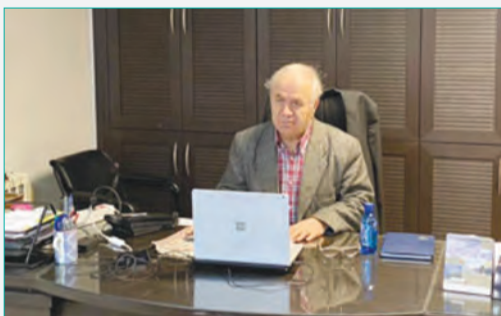
Deputy Industry Minister and head of IMIDRO Mr. Vajollah Jafaari as well as managers of some steel-making companies were speakers of the conference. On the sidelines of the conference, an exhibition on introducing capabilities of the steel companies was held.



## 7th Int'l Steel Price Conference Held

**Engineer Karim Poladvand, CEO of "Arkan Tadbir Sanaye" company, in an interview with Pardazesh specialized monthly, while describing the activities carried out, demanded:**

## The Need for Employers to be "Consultant-Oriented" in Implementing Projects and Modifying Consultants' Tariffs According to Inflationary Conditions



**Arkan Engineering Management Company (ATICO) is ready to provide technical and supervisory services for all high quality engineering operations. The company's activities include design, planning and project control, basic engineering, detailed engineering, supply and procurement engineering, installation and commissioning of steel plants and operation.**

**D**r. Karim Poladvand, CEO of Arkan-Tadbir Company, said in an interview with Pardazesh specialized monthly: "The company's policy is to provide high quality technical and supervisory services." The company's activities include all engineering operations, design, project planning and control, materials supply, procurement, executive operations, testing, project commissioning, production planning, management information systems and training. The company's experts have been involved in huge projects in the mining and steel industries for many years and have gained a lot of potential experience. These experts provide their experiences to large industrial projects in the collection of Arkanatdabir Industrial Engineering Company (ATICO). He said: "The most important current activity of the engineering company in exploiting pelletizing is 3.4 million tons and megamodule is 55.1 million tons, steelmaking is 3.1 million tons by hot-charging method in Chadormelo company." This project is done for the first time in the Middle East by this collection. The engineering and supervisory activities and launching and operation of the above projects in Chadormelo have been done by this company before. Other projects include: commissioning of 2.5 million ton Sangan pelletizing plant by Alice Chalmers method, operation of 2.5 million ton Sangan, preparation of international tender documents, selection of a contractor for Zagros Steel Complex in Andimeshk, implementation of a 500 m combined cycle power plant project Chadormelo 10 MW solar power plant.

Pointing out that the current engineering, executive and operation management in Chadormelo is in accordance with international standards, which follows the new management style in accordance

with international standards in terms of modernity, Poladvand said: Chadormelo has increased the speed of work by implementing this method. In addition, the quality and quantity of products has increased. The CEO of Arkanat Tadbir Sanaye added: "This year, in addition to doing previous work, the company is conducting an international tender to complete the five million ton Chadormelo pelletizing plant and select a contractor." The preparation of tender documents for Chadormelo Ferroalloy Complex with a capacity of 50,000 tons and cooperation in the preparation of tender documents for consulting in Sarmad Steel Manufacturing with a capacity of 600,000 tons has also been done by this company. According to him, the Industrial Management Board is also selecting a contractor for the one-million-ton pelletizing project of Sabanur Steel (Sabamid West-Middle East) in Bijar and consulting on the processing line of Khorasan Steel Concentrate. In addition, the contractor of Zagros project has selected Andimeshk and is carrying out basic, detailed engineering and equipment supply. This is while the construction project of Ferrosilicon Malayer factory in Hamadan province with a capacity of 15,000 tons is one of the other projects that have just been put into operation. Poladvand also pointed out the existence of some problems and obstacles in the way of engineering companies and said: "Basically, the philosophy of consulting is to solve problems and we are always trying to solve problems and overcome obstacles despite having strong human resources and adopting management strategies." But the issue that actually causes some problems and should be considered is the existence of unbalanced tariffs of consultants by the budget program organization, which does not correspond to the facts.

He said: "A good manager is someone who does his job by others and by experts." Exercising certain personal tastes in the implementation of projects by employers prevents the project from being carried out. Employers must leave the hands of committed and expert consultants in the implementation of projects. The CEO of Arkan Tadbir Sanaye asked the officials to update the consultants' tariffs according to the inflationary conditions and to be "consultant-oriented" in the project selection process. Emphasizing that we believe that experts should have a pen in one hand and the necessary tools in the other, Poladvand stated that we always believe that a pen should be in the "right" hand and a wrench in the "left" hand, which means that Science takes precedence over any other subject, and every technical work must always be accompanied by practical work. Dr. Poladvand, who has a master's degree in electrical engineering and industrial engineering from Tehran and a doctorate in industrial management from the United States, believes that if our activities are to be set according to international standards and projects are implemented in accordance with modern technology, we must have experienced consultants. The conditions of the day should be used, while all projects and activities should be organized and carried out according to the outsourcing system in order to prevent the process of slowing down. The CEO of Arkan Tadbir Sanaye emphasized that the employer should not do the work without coordination with the

expert consultant, that is, he should never buy equipment arbitrarily and perform it without the presence of consulting experts.

It is worth mentioning that Arkanatdabir Sanaye (Attico) Company has been able to create jobs for over 200 specialists with doctoral degrees to engineering experts in technical fields, while this company has the rank of one of the management and planning organization and is among the top five companies among Consultants.

### Tadbir Sanaye Organ Engineering Company (ATICO)

This company was established in March 2003 by the experienced experts of the Organization for Development and Renovation of Mines and Mining Industries of Iran (Imidro) in the field of steel and basic metals and with the comprehensive strategic goal of large projects. In 2005, this company succeeded in obtaining the rank of a basic metals from the Office of the Deputy and Strategic Planning and Supervision of the Presidential Institution.

### Part of the abilities

The company's policy is to provide high quality technical and supervisory services on all engineering operations, design, planning and control of material supply projects, procurement, executive operations, testing and commissioning of projects, production planning, management information systems and training.

### Company goals

The experts of this company have been involved in huge projects of mining and steel industries for many years and have gained a lot of potential experiences. They provide their experiences to large industrial projects in the collection of Tadbir Sanaye Organ Engineering Company (ATICO).

### Certificates and standards

Quality management standard certifications: ISO 9001, Environmental Management Standard Certificate 14001 ISO Occupational Health and Safety Management Standard Certificate: ISO 45001 Integrated Management System Standard Certification: IMS

### A: Activities of Arkan Tadbir Sanaye Engineering Company (Attico)

#### Consultant in operation and construction projects:

- 1- Granulation factories
- 2- Lines for processing and concentrating iron concentrate by dry and wet methods
- 3- Alice Chalmers and Lorgi pelletizing plants
- 4- Module and megamodule factories for direct reduction by Midrex method
- 5- Steel factories by electric arc furnace with hot and cold sponge iron charge
- 6- Hot and cold rolling mills
- 7- Ferroalloy factories
- 8- Combined cycle power plant

#### B: Activities performed in projects:

- 2- Preparing international and domestic tender documents and

holding tenders

- 2- Evaluating proposals and selecting foreign and domestic companies
- 3- Evaluating technical specifications and selecting foreign and domestic machines and equipment
- 4- Engineering management, design and supervision of construction, purchase and installation of internal and external machines and equipment, their commissioning
- 5- Engineering management, design and supervision of construction projects and steel structures of projects
- 6- Preparing and compiling personnel training programs in the sections of installation, commissioning and operation
- 7- Engineering management, design and supervision of planning and control affairs of projects, factories and management information systems

#### C: Completed and ongoing projects:

- 1- Iron ore crushing project with a capacity of 5 million tons per year in Sangan
- 2- Concentrate processing and pelletizing project with a capacity of 2.5 million tons per year in Sangan
- 3- Pelletizing project with a capacity of 3.4 by Alice Chalmers method and 5 million tons by Lorgi method in Ardakan
- 4- Mead Module project by Midrex method with a capacity of 1.6 million tons per year in Ardakan
- 5- Steel factory project with electric arc method with a capacity of 1.3 million tons of Ardakan
- 6- Chadormelo combined cycle power plant project with a capacity of 500 MW in Ardakan
- 7- Project of steel plant by electric arc method with a capacity of 600,000 tons per year in Abarkooh
- 8- Zagros steel project in Andimeshk by electric arc furnace with a capacity of 400,000 tons
- 9- Consultant in the construction of Khorasan steel concentrate line
- 10- Consultant in the construction of Bijar pelletizing plant



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## Zuma Not to Appear Before S. Africa's Anti-Graft Panel

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) - South Africa's beleaguered ex-president Jacob Zuma vowed Monday to not appear before a judicial panel probing corruption during his nine-year tenure, defying a court order compelling him to testify.

Zuma, 78, has played cat-and-mouse with the commission since it was set up in 2018 to investigate looting of state coffers during his rule.

He accuses the commission of bias and has demanded that its chair, deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo, recuse himself from the anti-graft inquiry.



## Uganda's Opposition Leader Files Election Challenge in Court

MAGERE (Dispatches) - Lawyers for Ugandan opposition leader Bobi Wine filed a challenge in the Supreme Court on Monday against President Yoweri Museveni's victory in last month's election, claiming the poll was rigged.

"We want nullification of the election. We do not want (Museveni) participating in any future election," said Medard Sseggona, one of Wine's lawyers, at the Kampala courthouse where he filed the petition for the runner-up in the January 14 presidential election. Museveni, a 76-year-old former rebel leader who has ruled since 1986, won a sixth term in office with 58.6 percent of the vote. Wine, a 38-year-old singer-turned-MP, came a distant second with 34.8 percent and slammed the vote as a sham.



## Myanmar Generals Tighten Grip on Power



WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States threatened to reimpose sanctions on Myanmar's generals after they seized power in a coup and detained elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi, whose whereabouts remained unknown on Tuesday more than 24 hours after her arrest.

The U.N. Security Council was due to meet later on Tuesday, diplomats said, amid calls for a strong global response to the military's arrest of the Noble Peace laureate and dozens of her political allies on dawn raids on Monday.

The coup followed a landslide win for Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party in November elections, a result the military has refused to accept citing allegations of fraud.

The army handed power to General Min Aung Hlaing and imposed a state of emergency for a year, crushing hopes the poverty-stricken country also known as Burma was on the path to stable democracy after decades of military meddling in politics.

U.S. President Joe Biden said the coup was a direct assault on Myanmar's transition to democracy and the rule of law, and said his administration would be watching how other countries responded.

"The United States removed sanctions on Burma over the past decade based on progress toward democracy. The reversal of that progress will necessitate an immediate review of our sanction laws and authorities, followed by appropriate action," Biden said in a statement.

"We will work with our partners throughout the region and the world to support the restoration of democracy and the rule of law, as well as to hold accountable those responsible for overturning Burma's democratic transition," he said.

The crisis in Myanmar is one of the first major tests of Biden's pledge to collaborate more with allies on international challenges, especially on China's rising influence. That stance contrasts with former President Donald Trump's often go-it-alone 'America First' approach.

The United Nations led condemnation of the coup and calls for the release of detainees and restoration of democracy in comments largely echoed by Australia, the European Union, India, Japan and the United States.

China did not join the condemnation, saying only that it noted the events and calling on all sides to respect the constitution. Other countries in the region including neighboring Thailand refused to comment on Myanmar's "internal affairs".

The streets of Myanmar were quiet overnight during a curfew already in place to stop the spread of coronavirus. Troops and riot police took up positions in the capital, Naypyitaw, and the main commercial centre Yangon.

## Erdogan Hits Out at "LGBT Youth" as Police Break Up Fresh Protest

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday lashed out at Turkey's LGBT movement, accusing it of "vandalism" following an outbreak of student protests.

Four people were arrested over the weekend for depicting Islam's holiest site with pictures of the LGBT rainbow flag during a rally at Istanbul's Bogazici University.

And shortly after Erdogan's televised speech on Monday, another rally erupted at the same school with dozens of people detained and social media footage showing police dragging away students who had been protesting peacefully.

"We will carry our young people to the future, not as the LGBT youth, but as the youth that existed in our nation's glorious past," Erdogan said during a video linkup with members of his ruling AK Party.

"You are not the LGBT youth, not the youth who commit acts of vandalism. On the contrary, you are the ones who repair broken hearts."

Rights groups accuse Erdogan of taking the mostly Muslim but officially secular country on an increasingly socially conservative course during his 18 years in power.

Homosexuality has been legal throughout modern Turkey's history.

But gay people often face harassment, and LGBT events -- including Istanbul Pride -- have been blocked under Erdogan.

Turkey was hit by a wave of student protests last month after Erdogan appointed a loyalist as the head of Bogazici University.

During one demonstration last Friday protesters hung an artwork opposite the new rector's office depicting the holy site in Mecca and images of the LGBT movement's rainbow flag.

Turkish police accused four people of "inciting hatred in the population". Two of them have been remanded in custody and the other two placed under house arrest.

Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu branded the suspects "four LGBT freaks".

Groups of students once again demonstrated at Bogazici university on Monday despite the presence of hundreds of riot police, demanding the four be freed and the rector stand down.

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## Russian Prosecutors Back Effort to Put Navalny in Jail

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian prosecutors on Monday backed a request to imprison opposition leader Alexei Navalny for several years on old charges, after police detained a record number of anti-Kremlin protesters across the country.

On Sunday, demonstrators defied government warnings and rallied across the country -- including in Moscow and Saint Petersburg where authorities enforced unprecedented lockdowns of the city centre -- in a second weekend of mass protests over the arrest of President Vladimir Putin's most prominent opponent.

The protests -- stretching from the Pacific port of Vladivostok to the northwestern city of Pskov -- came ahead of a high-profile court hearing that could see Navalny imprisoned for several years.

Navalny's detention and the crackdown on protesters has sparked an outcry in the West.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell is expected to press the Kremlin to free Navalny when he heads to Moscow on Thursday.

Navalny, 44, is facing charges of violating the terms of a 2014 suspended sentence for embezzlement and could be jailed for two-and-a-half years.

The General Prosecutor's Office said in a statement on Monday that it backed a request by the prison service to change the suspended sentence to jail time.

"This motion is considered lawful and justified," the statement said.

Navalny was detained at a Moscow airport in mid-January after flying back to Russia from Germany where he was recovering from an August poisoning.

He blames the attack with the Novichok nerve agent on Putin and the FSB security agency. The anti-corruption campaigner is being held in a high-security detention centre and faces years of jail time in several different criminal cases, despite calls from Western governments for his release.

Navalny's team has urged his sympathisers to gather in front of Moscow's Simonovsky district court on Tuesday to show support for the opposition politician.

## French Police Block Passengers as New Covid Rules Kick In

PARIS (Dispatches) - French border police turned away some passengers bound for non-EU destinations Monday as new rules came into force banning flights to and from countries outside the bloc.

Prime Minister Jean Castex announced the measure Friday as part of new efforts to contain Covid-19 infections and avoid another nationwide lockdown.

Travellers must also present proof of a recent negative Covid test. Only urgent reasons for travel are accepted and border police require written proof before allowing passengers to board, as Toure, a Malian national, found out when he tried to leave France for Bamako without the necessary document.

"I said that my mother, whom I hadn't seen in a while, was ill but they told me I needed proof," Toure, who withheld his last name, told AFP in the 2E terminal at Paris's main airport Roissy-Charles-de-Gaulle.

After being turned away Toure, who works for a French public works foundation, managed to get hold of his mother's doctor in Bamako who sent him a barely legible note by WhatsApp. He tried again, and this time was waved through.

By curbing international travel, the government hopes to get a better grip on the circulation of the coronavirus and its recent variants, which have been spreading at a fearsome pace.

"The idea is to limit the outbound-inbound loops between France and abroad," Julien Gentile, head of the border police for the Roissy and Le Bourget airports, told AFP.

Passengers must first show the required documentation at airline counters during check-in, and then again at the border controls, where agents were no longer allowing automated passport scanning but instead checking each document, as passenger queues grew longer.

The time needed per passenger can easily reach five or 10 minutes, compared with just seconds usually, as agents try to determine what is an "urgent" motive and what isn't.

"If you want to visit the grave of somebody who didn't die recently you can't go, even if that may seem cruel," said Cecile Aerde, head of the airports' border service. "You will have to wait until the health situation changes."

President Emmanuel Macron has decided, for now, not to impose a third national lockdown, choosing a different path than France's neighbours such as Britain and Germany.

Health Minister Olivier Veran said Sunday that the number of new coronavirus cases had barely increased over the past week, while other indicators -- such as traces of the virus detected in waste water -- were also reassuring.



## Bolsonaro Allies Win Control of Brazilian Congress

BRASILIA (Reuters) - Brazil's Congress on Monday chose lawmakers endorsed by President Jair Bolsonaro as speakers of its two chambers, giving the far-right leader a base among center-right politicians with whom he had once vowed never to ally.

Senator Rodrigo Pacheco won the two-year term to head the upper chamber by a vote of 57-21. Another new Bolsonaro ally, Arthur Lira of the right-wing Progressive Party, later won the speakership of the lower house by 302 votes against 145 for his nearest rival.

Bolsonaro's support for Pacheco and Lira underscores his embrace of a fragmented bloc of lawmakers known more for their horse-trading prowess than ideological commitments, called the 'Centrao,' or 'Big Center.' The president ran in 2018 on a pledge to clean up the capital and end decades of pay-to-play politics that culminated in a record-breaking corruption scandal known as Car Wash.

Lira faces charges of taking bribes in the Car Wash and other probes, although the cases have not advanced in the courts and some have been dismissed. His lawyers have denied any wrongdoing by their client.

Lira promised to be independent of the government and push through emergency measures to assist Brazilians hit by the coronavirus pandemic. He called for a moment of silence for the dead in his victory speech.

Bolsonaro's stronger standing in Congress should dispel for now the growing clamor for his impeachment from critics who have filed 60 requests to unseat him, mainly for his handling of the coronavirus pandemic that has killed some 224,000 Brazilians. Pacheco, of the center-right Democrats party, has vowed to seek a compromise between fiscal restraints and assistance to socially vulnerable Brazilians hurt by the pandemic.

He has also said he would not make a priority of privatizing Eletrobras, Latin America's largest utility and one of the government's biggest potential asset sales as it works to cut the fiscal deficit.

Despite deep recession and the world's second-deadliest COVID-19 outbreak, opinion polls show Bolsonaro retaining his core support of a third of the electorate, though his negatives rose in January as the second wave of the pandemic began to bite.



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**Niavaran Villa (\$6000)**  
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5bdrs, S/p  
S, J, & pkg  
green yard  
Fully Furn

**Parsian**

Zaferanieh (\$2600) 270sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F  
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Gheitarieh (\$1700) 160sq.m, 2bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F  
Kamranieh (\$2200) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F

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## Exxon, Chevron CEOs Discussed Merger in Early 2020

LONDON (Reuters) - The chief executives of ExxonMobil Corp and Chevron Corp held preliminary talks in early 2020 to explore combining the two largest U.S. oil producers in what would have been the biggest merger of all time, according to people familiar with the matter.

The discussions, which are no longer active, are indicative of the pressure the energy sector's most dominant companies faced as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold and crude prices plunged. The talks between Exxon Chief Executive Darren Woods and Chevron CEO Mike Wirth were serious enough for legal documents involving certain aspects of the merger discussions to be drafted, one of the sources said. The reason the talks ended could not be learned.



## Asian Factories Have Mixed Performance As Pandemic Impact Lingers

TOKYO (Reuters) - Manufacturing in China and Japan suffered in January amid a resurgence in coronavirus infections, while South Korea and Taiwan saw improvements, underscoring the fragile and uneven nature of the region's economic recovery.

Factory activity quickened in major chip exporters South Korea and Taiwan, as they benefited from continued brisk demand for semiconductors crucial to work-from-home IT goods.

But China's manufacturing activity expanded at the slowest pace in seven months in January, weighed down by falling export orders. Japan also saw factory activity slip back into contraction as a new state of emergency, rolled out in January, hit operating conditions, PMI data showed on Monday.

"PMI readings for Asia suggest that manufacturing sectors improved further in most places. Buoyant global demand for electronics should continue to support the sector for at least the next few months," said Alex Holmes, emerging Asia economist at Capital Economics.

Takeshi Okuwaki, an economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute in Tokyo, said Japanese manufacturers may slash output as the state of emergency will unavoidably hurt the economy.

"A shortage of chip supply will take time to fix, which will also weigh on Japan's automobile production," he said.

China's Caixin/Markit Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) dropped to 51.5 last month, its lowest level since June last year and easing from December's reading of 53.0.

Although it remains above the 50 mark that separates growth from contraction, the index was below a median market forecast for a reading of 52.7.

The survey broadly aligned with Beijing's official PMI on Sunday, which showed the recovery in factory activity slowing as local COVID-19 cases rose.

Japan's final Jibun Bank PMI fell to 49.8 in January from the previous month's 50.0 reading, as fresh state of emergency measures in areas accounting for 55% of the country's population hurt employment and output.

That was in stark contrast to South Korea, where factory activity rose at its fastest pace in a decade thanks to soaring exports.

Separate data showed South Korea's exports jumped 11.4% in January from a year earlier to mark a third straight month of gains due in part to surging sales of memory chips.

South Korea experienced its third and strongest wave of infections this winter but is seeing a gradual decline in new cases.

In India, factory activity expanded at its strongest pace in three months in January, fuelled by a continued recovery in demand and output.

Manufacturing activity in Indonesia increased at a faster pace in January than in December, and such activity stopped contracting in the Philippines.

But activity shrank in Malaysia and rose at a slower pace in Vietnam, the PMI data showed.

China's economy expanded at a faster-than-expected rate of 6.5% in the fourth quarter last year, as factories raced to fill overseas orders amid a surging pandemic. But recovery hopes are being dampened by a sharp increase in COVID-19 cases as authorities impose lockdown measures to curb the spread of the virus in the country's north.

## India Cuts Import Tax on Gold, Industry Expects Drop in Smuggling

MUMBAI (Reuters) - India slashed import duties on gold and silver on Monday in a surprise move that industry officials say could boost retail demand and curtail smuggling in the world's second-biggest bullion consumer.

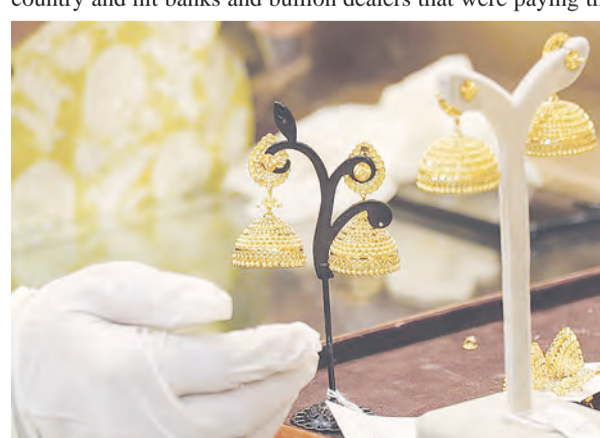
Higher demand for gold from India could support global prices, which hit a record high last year, although that could increase India's trade deficit and weigh on the ailing rupee.

India cut import duties on gold and silver to 7.5% from 12.5%, but imposed a 2.5% cess - a separate tax - on the imports, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said.

After the changes, gold imports would effectively attract 10.75% tax against 12.5% earlier, said Somasundaram PR, the managing director of the World Gold Council's (WGC) Indian operations.

"Hopefully, this is the first of a series of such cuts to make bullion an asset class that operates mainstream," said Somasundaram.

India raised import duty on gold in 2019 to 12.5%, which industry officials said boosted smuggling of bullion into the country and hit banks and bullion dealers that were paying the duty.



"Higher import duty was not only indirectly promoting illegal gold transactions but also eroding government's revenue," said Ahammed MP, Chairman, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

Up to 120 tons of gold was smuggled into India in 2019, according to the WGC.

Gold prices have come down with the duty cut and this will boost retail demand, said Prithviraj Kothari, managing director of RiddiSiddhi Bullions.

Gold futures fell nearly 4% after the announcement to 47,200 rupees per 10 grams, the lowest in over 7-months.

India also cut import duty on gold dore, or non-refined mined gold, to 6.9% from 11.85% and to 6.1% from 11% on silver dore, Sitharaman said.

Shares of jewellery makers such as Titan, P C Jeweller and Tribhovandas Bhimji Zaveri Ltd closed up as much as 8.8%.

## Kazakhstan Seeks Better Future With New Guidelines

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN – Kazakhstan Ambassador to Tehran Askhat Orazbay on Monday in a press conference delved into details of Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's statement addressing the first session of the new parliament of the country.

Mr. Orazbay said that some 63.25 percent of eligible voters in Kazakhstan cast their ballots to elect their representatives for the new term of the parliament and the Nur Otan party, led by the Leader of the Nation, has reaffirmed its leadership, adding that the parliament began its work by Kazakh President's statement.

The Ambassador said that 2021 is an important year for Kazakhstan because the country will celebrate the 30th anniversary of its independence, and by the way it will be the 25th anniversary of parliamentarism in the country. He went on to say that Kazakhstan has plans for a series of reforms to have an effective and fair country. He noted that the Kazakh president's statement aims at improving the living standard in the country through boosting rights of the citizens and quality of the country.

Mr. Orazbay added Kazakh President Tokayev in his statement explained his plans and guidelines for the good, prosperity and development of the country. The President said in his statement, "The elections have opened a new page in the development of our country. This important event once again proved the strength of our statehood. They demonstrated the high political culture and civic maturity of the Kazakh society. The voting results in all regions showed that our people fully support the strategic direction of the state. Together we have created the necessary conditions for a confident future. Despite the differences in political positions, we face one challenge. Our common goal is to make Kazakhstan a strong country. By 2025, we will create an effective institutional and infrastructural environment for every citizen.

The long-term development of our country is based on the principles of Continuity, Justice and Prosperity. To achieve our goals, we will make consistent changes in all areas."

The ambassador then highlighted some major points of Kazakh President's guidelines and priorities for 2021 and the parliament as follows:

\*First: to introduce a new model of public administration. Reforms in this area include a gradual decentralization of the system, modernization of the state apparatus, and optimization of the quasi-public sector and digitization of the entire process;

\*Second: to narrow the gap in the quality of education between different social groups and regions. At this stage of development, a new policy is required to retrain and continuously improve the skills of workers. To this end, a special national project is to be developed and implemented.

\*Third: to continue counter cyclical macroeconomic policies to support economic activity. As part of improving fiscal policy, it is necessary to revise the Tax Code in terms of its simplification, stimulation of business activity and competition.

\*Fourth: balanced development of the country in terms of territory and space. In addition to all this, we pay special attention to the development of the most important industries that unite all regions with a single economic space.

\*Fifth: One of the main directions of reforms in Kazakhstan is political modernization. The recent elections have had a positive impact on the strengthening of political competition.

\*Sixth: increasing the activity of civil society representatives, improving youth policy and supporting charitable activities. Now another important step will be taken to increase civic engagement;

\*and seventh: One of our main goals is the full protection of human rights. At the same time, it is important to ensure maximum freedom of choice for citizens. Therefore, ballots of all levels must contain the option "against all".

## UK Had Biggest G7 COVID Economic Hit

LONDON (Reuters) - Britain suffered the sharpest economic hit from the COVID-19 pandemic among Group of Seven nations even accounting for big differences in the way government spending is measured, an analysis by the country's statisticians suggested.

Official figures have previously shown that Britain suffered the biggest drop in economic output - adjusted for inflation - in the G7 between the first and third quarters of 2020.

Last month finance minister Rishi Sunak said the way Britain measured its economic output flattered other countries and the country's performance was not the worst among its peers.

On Monday, the Office for National Statistics said some of Britain's slump could indeed be explained by the way the output of government services such as education and healthcare was measured and it was hard to make international comparisons.

"But one helpful approach is to remove volume estimates of government consumption expenditure - this shows that the UK has still experienced the largest contraction but that the relative comparison with the rest of the G7 is not as large." Britain also suffered the G7's biggest drop in household spending, the ONS said, noting that the country's lockdown restrictions have generally been tighter and were imposed for longer.

The overall economic impact of lockdowns and social distancing may have been greater in Britain because social spending, such as eating out and holidays, is more dominant than in other countries, it said.

Britain has had one of the world's highest COVID-19 mortality rates, another factor seen as weighing on the economy. In nominal terms - unadjusted for inflation - the collapse in economic output seen in Britain was "broadly comparable" to other G7 countries, and not as bad the drop seen in Canada, Italy or Germany, the ONS said.

## Euro Zone Factory Recovery Faltered in Jan But Still Strong

LONDON (Reuters) - Euro zone manufacturing growth remained resilient at the start of the year but the pace waned from December as renewed lockdown measures across the continent, alongside supply shortages, hurt activity, a survey showed.

With coronavirus infections soaring again in Europe countries have forced vast swathes of the bloc's dominant service industry to shut their doors, leaving manufacturing to support the economy as factories have largely remained open.

IHS Markit's final Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell to 54.8 in January from December's 55.2, although that was a touch above the initial 54.7 "flash" estimate.

"Euro zone manufacturing output continued to expand at a solid pace at the start of 2021, though growth has weakened to the lowest since the recovery began as new lockdown measures and supply shortages pose further challenges to producers across the region," said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit.

An index measuring output, which feeds into a composite PMI due on Wednesday that is seen as a good gauge of economic health fell to 54.6 from 56.3, still comfortably above the 50 mark separating growth from contraction.

But with much of the service industry likely to remain closed for some time the bloc's economic outlook remains bleak and it will take up to two years for GDP to reach pre-COVID-19 levels, a Reuters poll found last month.

Restrictions meant a sub index measuring delivery times sank to 31.6 from 34.4, suggesting factories were struggling to obtain the raw materials they need. The index has only been lower once since the survey began in mid-1997 and that was at the height of the pandemic last year.

"Supply shortages have meanwhile put pricing power in the hands of suppliers, pushing raw material prices sharply higher. Increased shipping costs are adding to the burden," Williamson said.

Despite rocketing input costs factories increased their own prices at a shallower rate than in December.

Still, with hopes the vaccines being rolled out will allow some return to normality, optimism about the year ahead climbed to a three-year high.

## U.S. Manufacturing Sector Slows



WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. manufacturing activity slowed slightly in January, while a measure of prices paid by factories for raw materials and other inputs jumped to its highest level in nearly 10 years, strengthening expectations inflation will perk up this year.

The Institute for Supply Management (ISM) said on Monday its index of national factory activity fell to a reading of 58.7 last month from 60.5 in December. A reading above 50 indicates expansion in manufacturing, which accounts for 11.9% of the U.S. economy. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the index at 60 in January. The ISM revised data going back to 2012.

Manufacturing has been driven by strong demand for goods, like electronics and furniture as 23.7% of the labor force works from home because of the COVID-19 pandemic. But spending on long-lasting manufactured goods fell for a second straight month in December, government data showed on Friday.



