

2	DOMESTIC	3	DOMESTIC	4	INTERNATIONAL	8	SPORTS
IRGC Possesses Destructive Offensive, Defensive Power > SEE PAGE 2		Roadmap Required for Economic Cooperation Between Iran, Kazakhstan > SEE PAGE 3		France, Germany Seek Russia Sanctions Over Navalny > SEE PAGE 4		Everton Edge Nine-Goal Tottenham Thriller > SEE PAGE 8	

Assassination of Martyr Soleimani to Be Seriously Pursued by Iraqi Judiciary

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Judiciary Chief highlighted that Iraqi judiciary will seriously follow the case of the assassinations of Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis with its Iranian counterpart until the final result is achieved.

Ebrahim Raisi after returning from Iraq at Mehrabad International Airport in Tehran said: "During the trip, it was decided that the working group of the Iraqi judiciary will seriously follow the case of the resistance commanders with its Iranian counterpart until the final result is achieved."

Raisi added: "With the emphasis of Iraqi and Iranian officials, it was decided that the case of the martyrdom of Qasem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis should always be on the agenda and seriously pursued by the Iraqi judiciary."

"The issue of prisoners, serious fight against corruption, drugs, organized crime, exchange of information and activation of the law on extradition of criminals, as well as cooperation between the two countries in the fight against money laundering were also discussed during the visit," Ebrahim Raisi noted.

See Page 7

Iran Denies CBC's Claim Ukrainian Plane Shot Down 'Intentionally'

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian president says the people's resistance and the government's prudence during the three-year U.S. economic war on Iran crushed former American President Donald Trump.

CBC News reported on Tuesday that the Canadian government and security agencies are reviewing an audio recording in which a man — identified by sources as Iran's foreign minister — discusses the possibility that the destruction of Flight PS752 was an intentional act.

The individual is heard saying on the recording that there are a "thousand possibilities" to explain the downing of the jet, including a deliberate attack involving two or three "infiltrators" — a scenario he said was "not at all unlikely."

In a statement, Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said many of the statements attributed to Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif are basically not compatible with the language that he commonly uses.

"The claim that such a tape exists is not true," he said.

"Of course, everyone knows that Dr. Zarif, in his meetings and official contacts in the days and weeks following the catastrophe of the downing of the Ukrainian aircraft, including in his contact and meeting with the Canadian foreign minister, stressed the necessity of reviewing all possibilities surrounding the reasons and conditions of this tragedy, and electronic interference or the presence of infiltrators could be part of these possibilities," he said.

"This viewpoint does not belong to Dr. Zarif only; rather, as official remarks (including the ones made at the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission) show, the country's security authorities have all reviewed these possibilities and finally arrived at the conclusion that a disastrous human error was the cause of the tragedy," Khatibzadeh underlined.

"Accordingly, proceedings into the case are underway at competent judicial bodies of the Armed Forces," the spokesman explained.

"Investigations into air accidents is a completely specialized and technical issue, and by rumour-mongering and politically-motivated moves, one cannot force public opinion to accept a result which is aimed at serving wicked political objectives," he said.

"We want Canada not to add to the sufferings and grief of the bereaved families with such moves and by spreading rumors," he said.

Khatibzadeh also touched upon measures adopted to follow up on the incident.

"The report on the accident by the Iranian Civil Aviation Organization is not a journalistic report based on conjecture which is drawn up based on the request of a given country," he said.

See Page 7

Iran Celebrates 42nd Anniversary of Islamic Revolution in Different Style



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iranians across the country are celebrating in different style the 42nd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, which toppled the U.S.-backed Pahlavi regime in 1979.

Each year, the occasion is commemorated by nationwide mass rallies, but this year, there has been a change in the ceremonies due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The celebrations began in the capital, Tehran, and other cities at 10:00 a.m. local time (0630 GMT) on Wednesday, with the participants driving their cars, motorcycles and bicycles.

The vehicles were decorated with slogans as well as the images of Imam Khomeini, the late founder of the Islamic Republic, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, and Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the top Iranian anti-terror commander, who was assassinated by the US, last year.

In Tehran, processions of cars, motorcycles and other vehicles kicked off from 12 different points on, driving through the streets to circle the iconic Azadi (freedom) Square.

More than 6,000 Iranian and some 200 foreign journalists, photographers and cameramen are covering the event.

Ballistic missiles of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), namely Zolfaghar-e Basir, Qiam and Dezful, were also put on display as part of the ceremonies at Azadi Square.

In addition to the driving marches, a virtual rally also took place on Wednesday, with the Iranians taking to social media to renew their allegiance to the Islamic Republic.

The previous night, on the eve of the 42nd anniversary, a fireworks display was performed over Tehran and other Iranian cities.

Fireworks are set off next to Azadi Square, Tehran, on February 9, 2021, on the eve of the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. (Photo by Tasnim)

In a final communiqué, the demonstrators reminded the arrogant powers, especially the United States, of their grave miscalculations in dealing with the Iranian nation before and after its Islamic Revolution, reaffirming their firm determination to deal the enemies another blow in the economic war they are currently waging against the Islamic Republic.

The demonstrators also said they will stand firm by their position on the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, which the U.S. abandoned in 2018, calling for the removal of all sanctions imposed by Washington on Iran following its exit from the agreement.

Tehran, they emphasized, will return to its commitments under the agreement only after a thorough verification of the other parties' compliance with the deal, not only in words or on paper but in practice.

U.S. Remains in Exactly Same Position Held by Trump

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has once again stressed that it is the US that should take the first step in order to resolve the issues surrounding the 2015 nuclear deal, urging Washington to stop "spouting off" amid growing inconsistencies on the American side.

"It's impossible [for Iran] to take the initiative to make concessions," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said in an interview with China's Phoenix Television broadcast on Wednesday.

Zarif was reaffirming Iran's position on the nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was abandoned in May 2018 by former US president Donald Trump, in pursuit of what he called the "maximum pressure" policy on Iran. Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA has been strongly criticized by the US Democrats, including President Joe Biden, who prior to the November presidential election promised to re-enter the deal but has so far reneged on his promise.

"I feel that the Americans have not yet decided on their policies. That's why the White House had to correct Mr. Biden's remarks many times," said Zarif, a week after Biden said in an interview with CBS that he would not lift sanctions in order to encourage Iran to return to the negotiating table.

In similar remarks in a tweet on Thursday, Zarif said Biden's America remains in exactly the same position as Trump's America. He also urged the US to comply with the deal instead of "spouting off".

Elsewhere in the interview, Zarif said it is patently obvious that Washington is violating international rules.

"It is obvious who should abandon such policies, which are in violation of international rules, and lift all these sanctions," he added. Referring to Biden's criticism of Trump's withdrawal, the foreign minister said Biden has a clear option of abandoning his predecessor's Iran policy and doing away with the sanctions.

Therefore, he continued, there is no necessity for Iran to take the initiative in returning to full compliance with the deal. Zarif then clarified his recent remarks on the role EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell can play in order to save the JCPOA. He said while the U.S. should take action to remove sanctions, it should also be reassured that Iran would return to compliance with the JCPOA. "And for that to take place, we have a mechanism in the JCPOA called the Joint Commission, which has a chairman called Mr. Borrell, and Mr. Borrell can do this."

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

All Sanctions Means All Sanctions

Sunday, February 7 at the Imam Khomeini (R) Hosseiniyeh was a superb and determining day. Every year on February 7, some of commanders and personnel of Air Force and Air Defense of the Islamic Republic of Iran gather at the hosseiniyeh to meet the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei to commemorate the bravery action of Air Force staff and Homafara (officers) on February 7, 1979 for meeting the late Imam Khomeini at Alawi School. This gathering not only remind us of that divine day in materializing the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran but also causes determining the important and macro policies for continuation of the revolution in the second step.

This year the Supreme Leader highlighted some important points in his speech that we should go through its details because the policy of the current government for its foreign policy in the remaining six months of its term depends on these points. The Supreme Leader in some part of his speech said, "The historic allegiance of Air Force Personnel to Imam Khomeini on February 8, 1979, was one of the important surprises and the main factors of the victory of the revolution and also the miscalculation of the Americans and said that the need for the continuation of the rapid movement of the revolution, the presence of people on the scene, uninterrupted diligence, and effort, is the unity of words, especially among officials, trust in divine promise and increasing components of national power in action."

Indeed these sentences and remarks should put the Rouhani government in a strong position for announcing and implementing the policy of the establishment in face of the U.S. President Joe Biden Administration. The Supreme Leader also stated, "Americans and Europeans have no rights for setting any condition for Iran; because they violated their JCPOA-related commitments and the party that should make condition is the Islamic Republic because it adhered to its obligations. Therefore, the side with the right to set conditions for the continuation of the JCPOA deal is Iran, and its irrevocable condition is that the United States must remove all sanctions, and not just on paper but in action and we'll verify and if it's done properly, we'll return to our commitments."

The reflection of these remarks in the world media was the same as what he had pointed to them and as the importance of dimensions of those points. For example the Qatari TV Network Channel Al-Jazeera its Arab language channel recast some parts of the Supreme Leader's speech for its Arab audience and said, "The Leader of Iran has underlined that this is Iran which should set conditions because it has fulfilled its commitments."

See Page 7

Tehran, Moscow to Soon Launch Joint Manufacturing For Sputnik V

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran has concluded talks with Russia aimed at launching local manufacturing for Sputnik V, Moscow's flagship vaccine for tackling the coronavirus pandemic, says Iran's envoy to Russia.

"Our talks over the joint production have concluded and we will soon witness the manufacturing of this vaccine in Iran," said Kazem Jalali on Wednesday during a virtual festive ceremony to mark the anniversary of Iran's Islamic Revolution of 1979.

Iran has already started delivering Sputnik V into the people's arms after it received a first batch of the vaccines from Russia last week.

Jalali said a second batch was due on Friday.

He made the announcement as he attended a high-level meeting on Wednesday between representatives of the Iranian and Russian health ministries.

A 10-member delegation of pharmaceutical officials from Iran has been visiting Russia to closely monitor Sputnik V manufacturing processes in the country and to make preparations for joint production of the vaccine in Iran.

See Page 7

Iran's Trade With Neighboring States to Rise Two-Fold

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Hassan Rouhani has urged the new U.S. administration to take a new path in dealing with Iran and move to make up for the crimes committed by former president Donald Trump against the Iranian nation, saying the world has no doubt that the pressure policy against Iran has failed.

"We have not seen [any signs of] new deeds and goodwill on the part of the new [US] administration yet. Its rhetoric may have changed, but action is what matters; therefore, we should see what it will do in practice to make up for [Trump's] crimes," Rouhani said in an address to the inauguration ceremony of several Health Ministry projects on Thursday.

The Iranian president said a "big terrorist has been sacked and disgraced at a national and international level," said Rouhani, in a reference to Trump.

He highlighted the tough financial issues gripping the Iranian nation amid the deadly coronavirus pandemic, saying "a criminal in the White House" blocked the country's access to its assets and caused problems for its banking transactions.

With Trump gone, the White House should now think of how to compensate for his criminal deeds, said the president, calling on the new U.S. administration "to completely

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian first vice president says the country's trade exchanges with neighboring countries is set to increase by 100 percent in the coming years.

Es'haq Jahangiri said Iran should try to further expand its economic relations with neighboring countries, especially in the economic domain.

He highlighted the importance of border provinces when it comes to foreign trade.

"Despite restrictions caused by sanctions, a major part of the exports and imports of people's basic commodities were done through border provinces, and it became evident more than ever that border provinces are seen as great potential and a major privilege for the country," he said.

Biden Urged to Avoid Terrorist Trump's Path, Make Up for Past Crimes



reverse that course, which has turned out to be wrong and bound for defeat."

However, despite all the sufferings the Iranian nation has gone through, there are no doubts that Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign and his "economic war" have faced defeat, Rouhani added.

In May 2018, the US under Trump unilaterally pulled out of the landmark nuclear deal signed between Iran and major world powers, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and reinstated the anti-Iran sanctions that had been lifted by the deal. The Trump administration then targeted the Iranian nation with the "toughest ever" restrictive measures.

Iran to Permanently Join EAEU in Two Weeks

TEHRAN (IRNA) – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said upon his arrival in Tehran after a 3-day trip to Moscow that preliminary works for Iran's permanent membership in EAEU would start in two weeks, as Tehran has started talks to do so.

Congratulating the 42nd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Qalibaf said that the trip was at the invitation of the Russian State Duma chairman and provided an opportunity to exchange opinions on regional and economic issues and parliamentary cooperation.

He said that he delivered a message from Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei to Russian President Vladimir Putin, adding, "The Leader emphasized on long-term coordination and strategic agreements with Russia. His message was of course broader, covering other issues, including economic and political ones, how to achieve agreements, future communications and policies between Iran and Russia."

Inspecting joint high commission meetings by parliament speakers of the two countries was another axis of talks, according to Qalibaf.

He added that the inspection included discussions on investments and power plants, especially the Sirik power plant which is ready to launch with over 1,000 MW capacity.

Referring to meetings with Russian and Iranian business people during his trip, the speaker also said, "Despite coronavirus pandemic, Iran's exports to Russia have increased by 40 percent and a trading financial hub and a logistics center were planned to be launched to track customs and contracting issues."

He also remarked on Eurasia Economic Union (EAEU) which connects countries in the region to create a free trade zone, stating that Iran had commenced talks to make permanent its membership in the union.

Preparatory works for Iran's permanent membership in the EAEU is going to be done in two weeks, according to Qalibaf.

The speaker also underlined that he had discussed and made agreements on peace, national security, fight against terrorism, and Iran-Russia cooperation in Syria, as well as other security and defense issues, with the secretary of the Russian national security council.

Qalibaf also attended a meeting in the Russian center for oriental studies, where he said he talked about preventing U.S. unilateralism in the region. He had also a speech in a meeting in the Russian Foreign Ministry Academy about Iran-Russia relations at the regional and global levels.

FM Denies Arrest of Iranian Diplomat in Turkey

TEHRAN (MNA) - Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh on Thursday rejected a claim by a Turkish newspaper that Turkey has arrested an Iranian diplomat for his alleged involvement in a killing plot.

Khatibzadeh dismissed the claim as "baseless," saying that the Turkish newspaper's report was "based on groundless accusations."

Daily Sabah, an English-language Turkish newspaper, claimed Thursday that a staff member of the Iranian consulate in Istanbul was arrested for allegedly helping the mastermind of the murder of an Iranian national in 2019 in the city.

But the Iranian Foreign Ministry denied that any member of the consulate was arrested over the killing.

"Khatibzadeh said none of the staff members of the Iranian consulate in Istanbul has been and is involved in the activities claimed by the Turkish media outlet, whatsoever," the ministry said in a statement on Thursday night.

"In addition, none of the staff members of the Iranian consulate has been arrested," he added.

The spokesman said the person whose name is mentioned in the Turkish media report has not been a staff member of the consulate, and Iran is in talks with Turkish officials through official channels in order to shed light on different aspects of the issue.

IRGC Possesses Destructive Offensive, Defensive Power



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says the offensive and defensive power of the IRGC's Ground Force will be "destructive" if used in combination.

"If the real power of the ground forces is exercised, it will burn down the houses and nests of the enemies," Major General Salami said on Thursday, on the sidelines of a military exercise, codenamed the Great Prophet 16, in southwestern Iran.

Salami said the IRGC Ground Force has acquired fixed and mobile defense power on the ground, making it fully capable of safeguarding the country's territorial integrity and national security.

"The IRGC Ground Force has acquired the offensive power via using different systems, and it has achieved fixed and mobile defense power on the ground against enemies," he added.

The top Iranian general also said the ground forces demonstrated one of the most glorious, precise and powerful exercises during Great Prophet 16, which involved different drone, aviation, armor, ranger, artillery and special force units.

"Using jumping mines at high altitude against moving enemy targets is a difference between this exercise and previous exercises," he explained.

"In this exercise, a combination of all the main elements of the IRGC's ground combat power was showcased," said the commander, adding that a strong defense in fixed positions, anti-aircraft operations, use of Ground Force's offensive helicopters, and use of offensive drones and jumping mines were among the actions taken during the exercise.

Iran's Armed Forces have staged a series of drills in recent months, amid escalating tensions with the US, which reached their peak in the final days of former US president Donald Trump's presidency.

Great Prophet 16 was the latest of such drills, which the IRGC Ground Force held on Thursday and Friday, on the occasion of the 42nd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

In remarks on Friday, Salami advised the enemies to draw a lesson from the military might displayed by the Ground Force during the two-day military drills.

"The enemies must fear this movement, which springs from the faith and truth of the hearts of our brothers, and this firepower created by Iranians," he stated.

The IRGC held the previous phase of the drill, codenamed the Great Prophet 15, in mid-January, when the Guards launched home-grown ballistic missiles to destroy mock enemy warships in the northern Indian Ocean.

Tehran, Copenhagen Share Common Goal in Fight Against Terrorism

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs Masoumeh Ebtekar said on Tuesday that Iran and Denmark share a common goal in fighting terrorism, along with having business and investment capacities and opportunities in various fields.

Ebtekar met and held talks with Danish Ambassador to Tehran Jasper Vahr on Tuesday in Tehran.

Referring to Denmark's activities in the fight



against terrorism, she said that unfortunately, violence and terrorism have grown in recent years, and fighting it is a commonality between Iran and Denmark.

She stressed that Iran and Denmark have many business and investment capacities, as well as opportunities in various areas of environment, renewable energy, pharmaceutical, and health.

Vahr said in this meeting that creating security and fighting extremism is of great importance to Denmark.

Hamas Hails Ayatollah Khamenei's Honorable Position on Palestinian Cause

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior leader of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas has hailed the "honorable and unchanging" position of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei on supporting the Palestinian cause against Israeli occupation.

Ismail Haniyeh, head of the Hamas Political Bureau, sent a congratulatory message to Ayatollah Khamenei on Wednesday on the occasion of the 42nd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, which ousted the U.S.-backed Pahlavi monarchy and led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic.

In his message, Haniyeh said Hamas along with the Palestinian people share the joy of Iranians on this auspicious occasion. He expressed the Palestinian nation's deep appreciation to Ayatollah Khamenei for his "honorable and unchanging" position on standing by the Palestinians and backing their just cause and courageous resistance in defending their legitimate rights.

He added that Hamas was looking forward to Iran and the Leader's continued support for the Palestinian people and their just cause so that they will continue to put up resistance and defend their legitimate rights.

"The Islamic Republic, as before, does not stint on any effort to support the oppressed Palestinian people, redress their rights, and also fight off the bogus and usurping Zionist regime's evil," the Leader said.

Iran Says Crushing Response Awaits All Threats

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's defense minister reacts to the Israeli regime's renewed aggressive rhetoric against the Islamic Republic, saying the country will serve a crushing response to whatever threat.

"Iran is a powerful, great, resolute, and capable country. It has shown [in the past] that it would respond strongly and intensely to any threat if it were faced with one," Brigadier General Amir Hatami told reporters in the northwestern city of Zanjan on Thursday.

"Therefore, one should not attach any significance to Israel's threats," he added.

Israel finds Iran to be its strongest opponent, given the Islamic Republic's official position of outright opposition to the regime's occupation and aggression and Tehran's singular support for the regional peoples and groups that stand up to Tel Aviv's atrocities.

In 2015, Israel turned the nuclear deal that had been reached between Tehran and the P5+1 group of states -- the US, the UK, France, Russia, and China plus

Germany -- into the focal point of its antagonism towards the Islamic Republic.

Hatami, however, said the Israeli regime was in "a seriously fragile" situation, and was issuing such statements "out of desperation and fear," adding that "no one attaches any credit or pays any attention" to such discourse.

'Israel's talk bigger than its might'

The regime's actual capabilities do not measure up to its pompous rhetoric, Hatami, meanwhile, said.

"The capability that is owned by this regime that is situated in a very small occupied territory and has no historical precedence, does not go beyond a certain limit and measure," the official said, noting that Tel Aviv's potential only allows it to carry out some "vexatious" activities.

Therefore, the occupying regime, itself, knows that whatever apparent threat it has levelled against the Islamic Republic does not match its size and might, the official concluded.

Iran to Become COVID-19 Vaccine Production Hub in Region

TEHRAN (MNA) – Health Minister said that Islamic Republic of Iran will be turned into a leading coronavirus, COVID-19, vaccine production country in the region within the next three months.

Saeed Namaki broke the news on the sidelines of the inaugural ceremony of healthcare and treatment centers of the Ministry in various areas of the country and stated, "Today, the country is grappling with the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, disease seriously. Under such tough and difficult situation, we managed to commission at least 2,500 ICU beds as well as hundreds of hospital beds across the country."

Giant steps have been taken by the Ministry of Health in the field of offering high-quality medical and healthcare services to the noble people of the country, Namaki emphasized.

On the other hand, the Ministry has managed to manufacture many products in the fields of medicine and medical equipment, he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, senior official of the ministry pointed to the salient achievements of this ministry and added, "Every week, medical and healthcare treatment centers are commissioned in various parts of the country, so that 1,400 medical and healthcare treatment projects will be put into operation by April of the next Iranian year (to start March 21, 2021)."

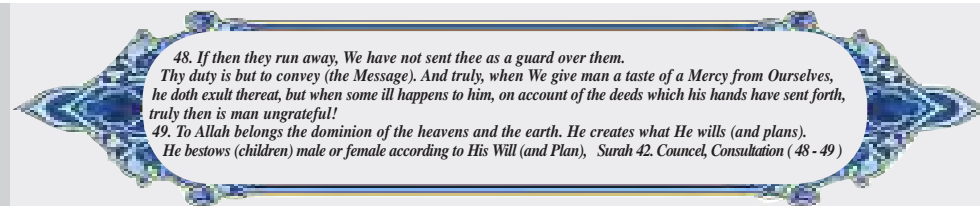
He then reiterated that Islamic Republic of Iran will be turned into a regional hub in producing COVID-19 vaccine in the next three months.

In addition, the country would be considered as one of the chief exporters of coronavirus, COVID-19, vaccine, in the world, the Health Minister Namaki added.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:18
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:02
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:27
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:51



Roadmap Required for Economic Cooperation Between Iran, Kazakhstan

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran and Kazakhstan business activists in a webinar explored ways for boosting bilateral economic cooperation and they called for preparing a roadmap for these co-operations.

The international affairs of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) in collaboration with Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Chamber of Commerce held this webinar where several business activists were present.

The participants explored opportunities for cooperation between Iran and Kazakhstan in the fields like agriculture and it was decided a roadmap is prepared for improving economic relations.

Head of international affairs of ICCIMA Mr. Mohammad Reza Karbasi in the webinar said extraterrestrial cultivation as well as technical and engineering services are of important fields for cooperation between Iran and Kazakhstan as both countries can focus on joint cooperation.

He also emphasized that good reputation of Iranian contractors and economic activists in the two mentioned fields as well as quality of Iranians' experts is known for everyone.

Karbasi also explained the important economic capacities of Kazakhstan and emphasized that Kazakhstan should be considered as a regional hub in order to ease exports of Iranian products to other countries neighboring Kazakhstan.

He went on to say that Kazakhstan market is apt to attract Iranian goods and by the way there is a strong will in Kazakh government for reinforcing the existing



cooperation with Iran, adding that by removing the hurdles in way of trade, Iranian tradesmen should also diversify the baskets of their exports.

Then Head of Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Chamber of Commerce Mr. Amir Abedi, for his part, explained the important priorities for cooperation between Iran and Kazakhstan and pointed to the ways for presence in the Kazakhstan market.

He said political, social and economic stability in Kazakhstan is the main factor which helps Iranian tradesman to work with this country as the country is located at the crossroad of Europe and Asia and it is a country with good business climate.

Abedi then pointed to major fields for bilateral cooperation like agriculture and urged the participants in the webinar for adopting a roadmap for cooperation between Iran and Kazakhstan.

Then in the meeting, participants pointed to hurdles in way of cooperation between Iran and Kazakhstan like problems for banking transactions and transfer of money because of sanctions, lack of enough and precise cognizance of Kazakhstan market, high costs of transportations and lack of export management companies.

Roadmap Needed For Participating in Azerbaijan Reconstruction



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) in cooperation with Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Chamber of Commerce held a webinar on the existing trade opportunities and capacities of Iran and Azerbaijan in the new economic condition and in the region, and participants called for adopting a roadmap for sustainable cooperation between the two countries in the reconstruction of Azerbaijan.

In the webinar, the most important programs ahead of Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Chamber of Commerce were explained and also the most important capacities for economic cooperation especially the issue of Iran's participation in the reconstruction of war-hit areas in collaboration with the private sector of Azerbaijan were discussed. Deputy Head of ICCIMA for International Affairs Mr. Mohammad Reza Karbasi in this meeting emphasized the importance of taking advantage from the created opportunities in the fields of exporting technical and engineering services in reconstruction of Karabakh as well as providing the required commodities. He added that ICCIMA has announced its readiness for dispatching a trade delegation to Baku during the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Commission.

Karbasi also said despite restrictions imposed by some neighboring states since the outbreak of the coronavirus, there was no disrupt in Iran's borders with Azerbaijan and the customs office is currently active round-the-clock. He noted that not only is Azerbaijan important export destination for Iran among the neighboring states but also are some important major of Iranian goods exported to Russia and Eurasian nations via Azerbaijan. He then added that the Karabakh peace has created opportunities and called for export of technical and engineering services, extraterrestrial cultivation agriculture and also cooperation in the fields of transit and tourism with Azerbaijan.

Meanwhile, the head of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Chamber of Commerce said that trade between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan, despite the spread of coronavirus, is still active and has never stopped.

Hossein Pir Moazen stated: "During the coronavirus pandemic, the only customs that was active 24 hours a day and trade was never stopped in it, was the customs of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan."

He added: "Most of the customs of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan, including Bileh Savar and Astara, have been operating 24 hours a day and the trade between the two countries has been positive during this period."

The head of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Chamber of Commerce talked about Iran's participation in the reconstruction of the areas affected by the Nagorno-Karabakh war, saying: "During the war, about 130 km of our joint border with the Republic of Azerbaijan was liberated and according to the Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan's report, this part turned into ruin and it is necessary to use Iran's technical and engineering capacity in the reconstruction of the region."

MAPNA Among Top 10 Oil and Gas Companies in Middle East

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of MAPNA Group says MAPNA is among the top ten oil and gas companies in the Middle East, noting that the self-belief is the main factor behind the achievements of the group.

Speaking at a press conference, Abbas Aliabadi explained the latest developments of MAPNA Group in different industrial fields and highlighted achievements of the group in the business.

Aliabadi said all achievements of the group are because of its spirit of self-belief and industrial progress in the country in recent decades. He added that MAPNA has been ranked among the top 10 oil and gas companies by the MEED magazine, and called the industrial capacities of the country source of pride and urged or boosting the spirit of hope to the future in the new generation.

He went on to say that Iran's largest energy engineering company MAPNA is to unveil a modern electricity generator with its CEO saying that the cutting-edge device will be a fresh proof that U.S. sanctions have barely hampered Iran's technological progress in recent years.

Aliabadi said that the 250 mega volt ampere (MVA) generator is being manufactured in MAPNA on the order of a foreign customer.



"This generator is a work on the international scale," said Aliabadi in a briefing with reporters meant to promote the latest technological achievements by his company.

MAPNA, which is partly owned by the Iranian government, has been contracted for major development

works in the country's energy sector.

The group's main job is to design and manufacture high-efficiency turbines for installation in the so-called combined-cycle power plants where exhaust heat from a first power generation unit is used to raise steam in another unit.

Aliabadi said renewables still account for a major part of MAPNA's activities, adding that the company is planning to manufacture 4.5 megawatt (MW) wind turbines for installation in the Iranian wind farms.

He said the company will also unveil its MGT-75 turbine that uses hydrogen as its fuel. "This turbine has been designed by Iranian experts and will have a 60-percent efficiency rate in combined-cycle systems," said Aliabadi.

On foreign contracts, Aliabadi said MAPNA is currently constructing 5 gigawatts in power generation capacity in other countries.

"MAPNA has defeated international giants in power plant construction industry because it has managed to offer high-quality equipment with lower prices to the global markets," he said.

Reinterpretation of Orsi Window In the Series "Domus Eyes on Iran"

TEHRAN - The Residence of the Italian Ambassador in Tehran, Giuseppe Perrone, hosted on Thursday the launch of the fourth episode of the original video-series dedicated to architecture and design "Domus Eyes on Iran", produced by the Italian Embassy in cooperation with the historic Italian magazine. A select group of architects, entrepreneurs and journalists took part in the ceremony carried out in full compliance with Covid19 protocols.

The documentary, fourth of a series of ten episodes, showcases the unique blend of history and modernity in Iranian architecture by going through the history of Orsi windows, till Keivanis' latest reinterpretation in "Orsi Khaneh" residential building (2015), in the Ghisha district of Tehran, as published by Domus magazine in 2016.

The project, named after the Orsi window, a typical element of traditional Iranian architecture, features a strong relationship with the genius loci, expressed through a reinterpretation of the traditional elements of Iranian architecture, such as colors, lights and plants.

The video-documentary goes on to explore the sun and Mithraism concepts as developed in the design of the "Mehr Khaneh" Apartments (built in 2016 and published

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

by Domus in 2016) and the recreation of the vertical garden in the "Pardis Khaneh" project (2017).

This latter work, featuring a constant search for green spaces in the context of relentless urbanization, finds its most eloquent parallel in Milan's "Vertical Forest", an innovative idea developed by Stefano Boeri, Gianandrea Barreca e Giovanni La Varra (2007-2014).

By revisiting works created over the last few decades, which caught Domus magazine's attention, the series "Domus Eyes on Iran" highlights the role of Iranian

architects and designers and their fruitful connection with Italy and its architects and designers.

The first episode featured Alireza Taghaboni's "Villa for an Older Brother", published by Domus in 2018.

The second one shed light on Gaetano Pesce's 1977 visionary project for the Tehran National Library, an inspirational endeavor and a forerunner of architectural trends.

The third episode highlighted the relationship between architecture and nature, through the work of Sara Kalantary and Reza Sayadian in their Saba Apartments.

All episodes can be viewed on the social media channels of the Italian Embassy in Tehran (YouTube, Instagram, Twitter).



Int'l Trade Plays Key Role For Iran's Free Zones

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Advisor to President and Secretary of the Supreme Council of Iran's Free Trade, Industrial and Special Economic Zones says international trade plays



key role for Iran's free zones, adding that free zones in Iran have been launched before their infrastructures to be prepared and most of the revenues of these zones are spent for improving the infrastructures.

Mr. Bank, who was in Maku Free Zone for a two day-visit to inaugurate some projects, in the meeting with economic activists and officials of Maku free zone said that the main advantages of free zones first of all belong to the native people of the zone and they feel it better than non-residents.

He reiterated that Iran pursues the policy of developing free zones, noting that sanctions and economic problems have led the economic development in the zones to become endogenous.

Mr. Bank also inaugurated the 97-hectare project of city of Bazargan in the Zone B. He also during his two-day visit inaugurated 2 production units with 800b rials of investments at the industrial park No.1 of Maku.

Addressing the inaugural ceremonies of these two apparel production units, Mr. Bank said that by supporting the investors in the free zones, the zones can turn into exporting areas. He said these two production units create 300 jobs.

Mr. Bank further said one of these units was launched with foreign investment worth \$3m.

KSC Consolidating Its Place as Second National Steel Pole

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Board of Directors Khouzestan Steel Company says the company is trying to consolidate its place as the second pole in the steel industry of the country.

Reza Taheri in an interview said that despite chaos in the global steel industry, Iran's steel industry continues its growth despite the outbreak of the coronavirus. He added that in 2020, Iran's steel production grew 13.4 percent and the amount of steel production by enjoying 4m tons of growth surpassed 29m tons. He added this success was achieved due to the assistance and empathy of the steel-makers and steel producers.

He went on to say that Khouzestan Steel Company as the second steel-making pole in the country has increased its production in recent years and the reason behind the increase has been some developmental projects in the company, adding that since the beginning of the chain, namely from iron ore to steel ingots, the company has invested in several developmental projects. He stated these investments have first led to provide feed stock for the processing and smelting plants and also timely provision of raw material for the company to save it from the shortage of the raw materials in the future.

Taheri noted that by the way, KSC has experienced rise in production and sales year-on-year and it has continued its activities with its full production capacity of 3.8m tons of producing slab, billet and bloom. He reiterated this year the amount of slab production has considerably increased while the production of bloom and billet have declined.

He further said in recent years, KSC has focused on exporting its products as the company set a record for exporting steel products of 2.8m tons in 2017 and it was one of the few companies whose earnings from the exports surpassed one billion dollars.

Taheri added that due to supplying the domestic market with steel production, the export trend of the company this year has slowed down but the company is still the biggest steel exporting company of the country and the amount of exports in 10 months this year has been 1.48m tons, expressing hope the figure reaches 1.7m tons by the year end.

He reiterated that KSC will not stop its effective role in the national steel industry and it has some more developmental projects on the agenda.

Berlusconi Hospitalized Overnight After a Fall

ROME (AFP) - Former Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi spent the night in hospital after an “accidental fall” at home, a spokesman for the 84-year-old billionaire said Thursday.

Berlusconi tripped while staying at his residence in Rome, and was bruised on one side. Following the accident, he was taken to his home city of Milan for a hospital check-up.

“He was discharged this morning and he is at home, working, to take part in remote voting for the European Parliament,” the spokesman said in a statement.



Biden, Xi Hold First Phone Call

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping held their first telephone call as leaders, with Biden saying a free and open Indo-Pacific was a priority and Xi warning confrontation would be a ‘disaster’ for both nations.

Biden also underscored his “fundamental concerns about Beijing’s coercive and unfair practices, its crackdown in Hong Kong, reported human rights abuses in Xinjiang, and increasingly assertive actions in the region, including toward Taiwan”, the White House said in a statement.



France, Germany Seek Russia Sanctions Over Navalny



PARIS (Reuters) - The European Union is likely to impose travel bans and asset freezes on allies of Russian President Vladimir Putin, possibly as soon as this month, after France and Germany signalled their willingness to move ahead, three diplomats said.

The sanctions, in response to the jailing of Putin’s main domestic critic Alexei Navalny, could be the first to be imposed under a new framework enacted in December, which allows the EU to take measures against human rights violators worldwide.

But Berlin and Paris are still likely to withhold support for tougher steps sought by some European allies, such as halting the huge Nord Stream II gas pipeline from Russia to Germany.

Pressure for sanctions has grown since Moscow infuriated European countries last week by expelling German, Polish and Swedish diplomats without telling the EU’s foreign policy chief, who was in Moscow for a visit. Paris and Berlin now say there must be a response.

Poland, Baltic countries, the Czech Republic and Romania had already been pushing for sanctions, and the agreement of the EU’s two most powerful countries means other EU states are unlikely to block it. The decision could be taken when EU foreign ministers hold their next meeting on Feb. 22.

“We can’t avoid sanctions anymore,” said a European diplomat. “There is a consensus including in Germany to have sanctions. We can’t respond in any other way.”

Germany has been vocal in support of Navalny, who was treated there for what Berlin says was poisoning by a Soviet-era nerve agent. But it also has close energy links to Russia.

Russia controls a third of Europe’s gas market. The \$11 billion Nord Stream 2 project, led by Russia’s state energy company Gazprom, would double the capacity of an existing undersea pipeline which bypasses Ukraine and deprives Kyiv of transit fees.

Berlin, with support from Paris, says sanctions should not target the pipeline, despite U.S. punitive measures against the project and a European Parliament resolution calling for it to be blocked.

Foreign Minister Heiko Maas told German lawmakers on Wednesday that sanctions needed to hit Russians responsible for Navalny’s jailing. France’s foreign ministry, in response to a Reuters question on whether it backed sanctions, said: “The latest developments, especially with regard to Alexei Navalny’s situation, will be fully taken into account. The EU’s response must be united, strong and comprehensive”.

The EU already imposed economic sanctions on Russia over its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014. Last year it imposed travel bans and asset freezes on six Russian officials close to Putin over Navalny’s poisoning. Moscow has denied blame for Navalny’s illness and says it has seen no proof he was poisoned.

Myanmar Ruler Calls for End To Protests, Sanctions Loom

YANGON (Reuters) - Myanmar’s new junta leader on Thursday called on civil servants to return to work and urged people to stop mass gatherings to avoid spreading coronavirus, as a sixth day of protests against him and his coup spanned the Southeast Asian country.

As Washington moved a step closer to imposing sanctions on Min Aung Hlaing and his fellow generals, Britain said it was also considering measures it could apply to punish the Feb. 1 takeover that halted an unsteady transition to democracy.

The coup and the detention of elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi along with scores of others have prompted the biggest demonstrations since a 2007 “Saffron Revolution” that ultimately became a step towards democratic reforms.

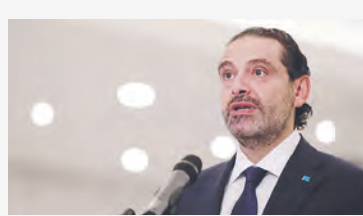
Senior General Min Aung Hlaing addressed the protests for the first time in public, blaming “unscrupulous persons” for work stoppages in a growing civil disobedience movement by medics, teachers, railway workers and many other government employees.

“Those who are away from their duties are requested to return to their duties immediately for the interests of the country and people without focusing on the emotion,” he said.



Macron, Hariri Meet to Discuss Lebanese Crisis

PARIS (Dispatches) - Lebanese Prime Minister-designate Saad al-Hariri on Wednesday dined with French President Emmanuel Macron to discuss the crisis in Lebanon and the difficulties in forming a new government, according to Hariri’s Twitter account.



“Presidents Hariri and Macron discussed the internal Lebanese difficulties that hinder the formation of the government and the possible ways to overcome them,” the Twitter post said, adding that the two men had discussed French efforts to resolve the crisis over a two-hour dinner.

Macron has been spearheading international efforts to rescue the former French protectorate from its deepest crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war. Macron is trying to use Paris’ historical influence in Lebanon to persuade squabbling politicians to adopt a roadmap and form a new government to root out corruption, a prerequisite for international donors including the IMF to unlock billions of dollars in aid.

However, those efforts have so far failed.

Highlighting some of that frustration, the French presidency did not include the dinner on Macron’s public agenda keeping the meeting private. Officials had declined to comment earlier in the day on whether the two men would even meet.

Hariri, a former prime minister, was given the task of forming a government after Mustapha Adib resigned in September. He is so far struggling to cobble together a cabinet to share power with all Lebanese parties.

Paris was not initially keen for Hariri to take up the role, having previously failed to implement reforms, French officials have said. But given the lack of progress in forming a credible government, Macron did not oppose the nomination.

India, China Agree to Pull Back Troops From Disputed Himalayan Lake

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - India and China on Thursday began to pull back troops and battle tanks from a bitterly contested lake area high in the western Himalayas on Thursday in a breakthrough after a months-long standoff on the disputed border.

Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh told parliament the two sides had reached an agreement to withdraw from Pangong Tso, a glacial lake at 14,000 ft (4,270 metres), after several rounds of talks between military commanders and diplomats from the nuclear-armed neighbours.

“Our sustained talks with China have led to agreement on disengagement on the north and south banks of the Pangong lake,” he said.

China’s defence ministry announced on Wednesday that frontline troops from the two countries were pulling back from the shores of the lake on Wednesday.

The standoff began in April last year when India said Chinese troops had intruded deep into its side of the Line of Actual Control or the de facto border in the Ladakh area in the western Himalayas.

China said its troops were operating in its own area and accused Indian border guards of provocative actions.

Video released by the Indian army showed troops saluting and shaking hands with each other in the barren mountains where the lake is located. A few battle tanks are seen turning around away from the frontlines.

In June, 20 Indian soldiers were killed when the two sides clashed with iron rods and stones in the Galwan Valley, the first combat losses on the border in 45 years. China also suffered an unspecified number of casualties.

Since then the two countries, who fought a war in 1962, had moved thousands of troops, tanks, artillery guns and combat jets close to the border.

Singh said the Indian government had told Beijing that peace and tranquility had been seriously disturbed by the actions of Chinese troops and bilateral ties had suffered.

“To ensure disengagement in friction points along the LAC, it was our view that troops of both sides, who are now in close proximity, should vacate the forward deployments made in 2020 and return to the permanent and accepted bases,” he said.

Pangong lake is a finger of water extending from China’s Tibet Autonomous Region in India’s Ladakh region.

In August, Indian troops occupied heights on the southern banks of the lake in retaliation against Chinese troops advancing further along the north bank.



Belarus Opposition Cries Foul As Lukashenko Convenes “People’s Assembly”

KYIV (Reuters) - Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko launched a “People’s Assembly” of 2,700 delegates on Thursday that promised constitutional reforms at a referendum next year but opponents see as a sham to help him keep power.

Lukashenko has ruled Belarus since 1994 but has faced street protests since a presidential election last August that the opposition says was rigged to enable him to win.

Mass arrests and a crackdown on the protests prompted new Western sanctions but Lukashenko has remained president, thanks to diplomatic and financial support from Russia, which sees the former Soviet republic as a buffer state against NATO.

Lukashenko, who denies electoral fraud, spoke to a packed hall in front of the slogan “Belarus: a test of endurance”. Local media footage showed police vans waiting outside in case of unrest.

“It was a mutiny. The blitzkrieg failed. We saved our country. For now,” Lukashenko, who has accused the West of sponsoring the protests, said in a televised speech. “The assistance of the Russian Federation was of the utmost importance for us,” he said. “As long as we and Russia stand back to back, no one will bring us to our knees.”

Lukashenko, 66, said his office wielded too much power and promised to prepare a referendum on constitutional reforms that would be put to a vote early next year.

He said he would only step down provided there was “peace and order in the country,” no protests and no revolutionary activities.

Most of the delegates attending the two-day assembly are pro-government local deputies and officials who were elected at closed sessions.

“Lukashenko is gathering loyalists at the so-called All Belarusian People’s Assembly to legitimise (the) usurper in the eyes of the people,” said Franak Viacorka, an advisor to exiled opposition figure Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. “Because Lukashenko understands that he lost people’s support, and he is still clinging on to power by all possible means.”

Protests are still simmering, and political analyst Artiom Shraibman said the political crisis was not over for Lukashenko.

“Dissatisfaction with the authorities has not gone anywhere,” Shraibman said.



Niavaran Apt (\$2000)
200sq.m, 3bdrs
S/pool, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Darrous Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, & pkg
green yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

3bdrs Apts
Velenjak (\$1800) 200sq.m
Darrous (\$2200) 260sq.m
with S/p, S, J, pkg, F.F

Available bldg
Fereshteh (\$8000)
4storey bldg, 15bdrs
yard, pkg lots, & F.F

Mirdamad Apt
220sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony, & F.F

Cell: +989121907875
Shanon_tari@yahoo.com
Tel : 88510081
Fax : 88506474

Vali-e-Asr Office
300sq.m, 4bdrs, pkg lot
balcony, yard (\$5000)

IRAN NEWS ADVERTISING
44253401

Don't Waste Your Time

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www.DeltaHOME.ir
The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

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

IRAN NEWS
PUBLISHER OF NEWSPAPERS
ADVERTISING

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

Europe Will Need Fiscal Help Into 2022

FRANKFURT (Reuters) - Euro zone states must keep fiscal spending up this year and into 2022 to protect the bloc from permanent damage caused by the coronavirus pandemic, European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde said in an online interview with the Economist on Wednesday.

Lagarde also called on European Union leaders to kick start the bloc's 750 billion euro Next Generation EU spending package as some economic restrictions could remain in place until the second half of the year.



World Economy to Lose Trillions If Poor Countries Are Shorted on Vaccines

OTTAWA (Dispatches)- As the Trudeau government is forced to explain delays rolling out COVID-19 vaccines, some of the world's economic and health leaders are warning of catastrophic financial consequences if poorer countries are shortchanged on vaccinations.

At a video meeting convened by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Secretary-General Angel Gurría predicted that rich countries would see their economies shrink by trillions of dollars if they don't do more to help poor countries receive vaccines.

The leaders of the World Health Organization and others also bemoaned the long-term damage of continued "vaccine nationalism" if current trends continue — rich countries getting a pandemic cure at a much higher rate than poorer ones.

It was a message that could provide some political cover for the Liberals, who have been widely criticized for shortfalls in deliveries of vaccines from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna while also facing international criticism for pre-buying enough doses of vaccines to cover Canada's population several times over.

Some international anti-poverty groups have also criticized Canada for planning to take delivery of 1.9 million doses from the COVAX Facility, a new international vaccine-sharing program that is primarily designed to help poor countries afford unaffordable vaccines, but also allows rich donor countries — including Canada — to receive vaccines.

Trudeau and his cabinet ministers on the vaccine file have repeatedly said that the pandemic can't be stamped out for good if it isn't defeated everywhere.

They say Canada is a trading nation that depends on the welfare of others for its economic prosperity — especially with the emergence of new variants of the virus in South Africa and Britain.

But their protestations are usually drowned out in the domestic clamour that tends to highlight unfavorable comparisons of Canada's vaccine rollout with the United States, Britain or other countries.

On Monday, Gurría — the veteran Mexican politician who has led the OECD for 15 years — brought the full force of his political gravitas by offering up a pocketbook argument that eschewed any pretence of altruism.

"It's a smart thing to do. It is ethically and morally right. But it is also economically right," said Gurría.

"The global economy stands to lose as much as \$9.2 trillion, which is close to half the size of the U.S. economy, just to put it in context, as much as half of which would fall on advanced economies, so they would lose around \$5 trillion."

South Korea January Jobs Fall at Sharpest Pace

SEOUL (Reuters) - South Korea's unemployment rate soared to a 21-year high in January, while the number of people employed fell at the sharpest pace in more than two decades, as curbs to contain the coronavirus continue to hurt the job market.

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate jumped to 5.4% in January, the highest since 1999, data from the Statistics Korea showed.

Wednesday's data comes as yet another blow to self-styled "Jobs President" Moon Jae-in, as jobs vanishing at the fastest pace in decades amid the coronavirus pandemic hurt his party ahead of April elections to pick mayors for the two largest cities, Seoul and Busan.

The number of employed declined by 982,000 in January from a year earlier, the fastest pace since 1998, as toughened COVID-19 distancing measures amid a third wave of infections struck businesses.

"Strengthened measures that has been kept in place to contain the third wave of the COVID-19 have led to job losses, especially hurting the service sector," the finance ministry said in a statement after the data was released.

Breakdowns showed workers at retailers, accommodation facilities and restaurants were the hardest hit, losing 586,000 jobs from a year earlier.

The number of full-time, permanent jobs grew 0.2% in January versus a year ago but the number of entrepreneurial jobs dropped almost 11%, showing uneven nature of the pain inflicted on the labour market.

A supplementary indicator for the unemployment rate for young Koreans aged between 15 and 29 jumped to a fresh record of 27.2% in January from its previous record of 26% in December, as more youth give up looking for jobs.

South Korea has been trying clamp down on the number of infections by imposing strict social distancing measures, including a ban on indoor restaurant dining after 9 p.m. It has since eased that curfew on more than half a million restaurants and other businesses outside the capital Seoul after a backlash.

French Economy Stabilizes at 5% Below Pre-Pandemic Levels

PARIS (Dispatches) - French economic activity is running at 5% below pre-crisis levels as the government holds off from

imposing a full Covid-19 lockdown beyond the current curfew and closures in some sectors, the Bank of France said.

After dipping to 7% below normal during November's lockdown, the economy improved somewhat in December and is expected to remain steady through February, according to the central bank's monthly survey of 8,500 companies conducted between Jan. 27 and Feb. 3. The stability comes despite the introduction of slightly stricter restrictions in recent weeks, including an earlier curfew and the closing of large shopping malls.

"Confronted with a hard shock, the French economy is resisting well overall," Bank of France Governor Francois Villeroy de Galhau said in an interview with regional newspaper network Groupe EBRA. "This resilience is both a good surprise concerning the end of 2020, and a source of reassurance for 2021."

Villeroy confirmed the central bank's forecast of 5% growth in 2021, which he described as "robust and rather cautious."

Still, the situation could change quickly if the government opts for more restrictions to contain the virus. According to statistics agency Insee, such a lockdown could cause the economy to contract again in the first quarter.

"Even more than usual, these estimates are surrounded by a large margin of uncertainty as they depend on how the health situation evolves," the Bank of France said in its report. According to officials at the central bank, the economy would record close to zero growth if activity continued at the same level in March as in the first two months of the year.

East Asian Economies Drive Global Trade Recovery

GENEVA (Dispatches) - Led by trade in goods, global trade recovered in the last quarter of 2020, reducing its overall decline for the year to about 9 per cent, according to UNCTAD's new Global Trade Update published on Wednesday.

But while imports and exports of goods grew by about 8 per cent in the fourth quarter of last year, trade in services stagnated as measures taken in the global fight against Covid-19 continued to affect sectors such as travel. "The recovery process has been uneven with many countries lagging," said UNCTAD economist Alessandro Nicita who worked on the report.

The recovery of Q4 2020 was largely driven by the trade of goods from and to developing countries, especially by the very strong performance of East Asian economies.

On a year-over-year basis, trade in goods originating from East Asia grew about 12 per cent in Q4 2020 with goods imports increasing by about 5 per cent, said the report.

In contrast, negative trends remained for goods exports originating from most other regions, even in Q4 2020. The influence of East Asian economies is even more marked when considering trade among developing countries (South-South trade).

While South-South trade has outperformed global trade, excluding trade of East Asian developing economies results in a significant drop in South-South trade, even for Q4 2020.

"The recovery in Q4 2020 was more broad-based, as trade in most sectors recorded positive growth," said Nicita. In Q3 2020, the recovery was by contrast largely driven by sectors related to goods for which demand increased due to Covid-19 like personal protective equipment and home office equipment.

However, besides services, trade in the energy and transport equipment sectors continued to be well below average levels. The report highlighted persisting concerns about Covid-19, noting that uncertainty about the timing and magnitude of stimulus packages will result in a lower trade rebound in the coming months. It projects that the first quarter of 2021 will record a slowdown in the recovery of trade in goods (a 1.5 per cent drop relative to Q4 2020) and a further decline for trade in services (a 7 per cent drop relative to Q4 2020), largely because of continued disruptions in the travel sector.

The report also finds that Covid-19 has affected countries' competitiveness in global markets with some economies gaining market share in certain sectors while losing it in others.

"The fall in global demand brought by Covid-19 has forced least competitive suppliers out of global markets while enabling the most competitive suppliers to thrive during the recovery process," the report says.

Countries like China, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, Uganda and Vietnam experienced relatively better export performance in 2020, according to the report.

In contrast, Colombia, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela performed relatively worse last year.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was established in 1964 as a permanent inter-governmental body.

Pakistan to Seek Debt Relief From China



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan plans to ask China for relief on payments for power projects Beijing financed over the past eight years, the latest developing nation that's struggling to repay debt under President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative.

In informal talks, Pakistan and China have discussed easing terms on the repayment of debt on about a dozen power plants, according to a person with knowledge of the matter, who said Islamabad hasn't made a formal request yet. The parties have canvassed Beijing's willingness to stagger debt payments, as opposed to lowering equity returns, the person said, requesting anonymity as the plan is private.

An enormous build-out of Chinese-financed power plants in Pakistan, which was originally intended to solve its electricity shortages, has resulted in a surplus that Islamabad isn't able to afford. Infrastructure projects funded by China's initiative in other developing nations, such as Sri Lanka and Malaysia, have suffered issues ranging from heavy debt loads to corruption. A spokesperson at China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said they aren't aware of Pakistan's plan to seek debt relief.

"Energy projects have provided Pakistan with a large amount of stable and low-priced electricity, effectively reducing the overall price of electricity in Pakistan," the spokesperson said in a written response. "China-Pakistan energy cooperation has progressed smoothly and brought about real economic and social benefits." Pakistan's power division didn't respond to a request seeking comment.

China has previously denied U.S. criticism that the initiative leads to debt traps, while acknowledging that countries have had difficulties repaying loans due to the pandemic-induced global recession. Last year, Beijing cancelled interest-free loans to 15 African countries due to mature by the end of 2020, and it has delayed other payments.

Malaysia's GDP Slump Likely to Have Deepened in Q4 2020

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Malaysia's economic slump is expected to have deepened in the fourth quarter of 2020 due to sustained restrictions on movement and business to curb the spread of the coronavirus, a Reuters poll showed.

The median estimate of 12 economists pointed to the economy shrinking 3.1% in the October-December quarter from a year ago, following on from the 2.7% contraction in the third quarter.

Economic recovery was likely to have "virtually stalled" in the final quarter of last year as sustained movement restrictions to clamp down on the spread of Covid-19 hit consumption, even as exports improved, Capital Economics said in a research note.

"The bad news is that worse is still to come," said Gareth Leather, senior Asia economist for Capital Economics.

"A surge in new cases of the virus and the government's decision to put the country back into lockdown will weigh heavily on economic activity this quarter," said Leather, who expects the economy to contract by 4% in the current quarter from year-ago levels.

The government had forecast the economy to fall by 4.5% in 2020.

Malaysia suffered its first economic contraction in over a decade in the second quarter of last year, when it shrank by 17.1% due to an initial six-week lockdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

Last month, the government imposed a partial lockdown as earlier movement curbs failed to arrest a surge in coronavirus infections.

Malaysia's 2020 exports fell 1.4% from a year earlier as economic activity slowed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, though shipments began recovering in the last four months of the year.



While the government has allowed more leeway for businesses to stay open under the current lockdown, it remains unlikely that Malaysia can expect the economy to get back on the track of recovery in the first quarter of this year, according to Brian Tan, regional economist for Barclays.

"The likelihood of a pickup in economic activity in Q1 21 appears to be fading after the tightening of social distancing measures," said Tan, who forecast 2021 full year growth at 4.0%.

The government had forecast growth of 6.5% to 7.5% this year. — Reuters

All quiet on the transport front amid sustained movement restrictions to clamp down on the spread of Covid-19. Picture for representational purposes only.

Iranian Actor Nominated for Award at Finnish Film Festival

TEHRAN (IP) - “Every Day Now” was nominated for six “JUSSI” Best Cinematic Awards in Finland, including the best male actor. “Every Day Now” is the first feature film by Hami Ramazan, an Iranian-Finnish director, starring Shahab Hosseini and Shabnam Ghorbani in six categories: Best Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Cinematography, Best Sound, and Best Male Star

(Shahab Hosseini) has been nominated for the JUSSI Awards, the most important film awards in Finland.

Pouria Heidary Oureh, the co-producer and responsible for the selection of Iranian actors for the film, announced that he was trying to release the film in cinemas and online platforms in Iran soon after obtaining the necessary licenses.



UK Approved \$1.9b of Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia Since Ban Lifted

LONDON (Dispatches) - The United Kingdom signed off on arms exports worth nearly 1.4 billion pounds (\$1.9bn) to Saudi Arabia between July and September last year following the lifting of a ban on weapons sales to the Gulf country – a move critics slammed as “immoral” amid the continuing war in Yemen.

The publishing of the figures by the UK’s Department for International Trade on Tuesday came days after new United States President Joe Biden said his country was ending all support “for offensive operations” by a Saudi Arabia-led military coalition fighting Yemen’s Houthi rebels, including “relevant arms sales”.

The announcement prompted mounting calls for the UK – the US’s main ally – to do the same, but British officials have so far refused to follow suit.

The UK’s previous moratorium on arms sales to Saudi Arabia came into effect in June 2019 after its High Court issued a landmark ruling forcing officials to pause sales amid concern the weapons would be used in violation of international humanitarian law.

A subsequent government review concluded there had been “isolated incidents” of possible violations by Saudi forces in Yemen, but “no clear risk” of future serious breaches. Officials announced in July 2020 that the UK would resume arms sales to Saudi Arabia – its biggest weapons buyer – in the wake of the review’s findings.

In the three-month period following the restart, the UK authorised weapons exports worth 1.39 billion pounds (\$1.9bn), according to the government figures. The category of arms including missiles and bombs accounted for 1.36 billion pounds (\$1.88bn) of the sales, although the figures did not state which manufacturers received the export authorisations.

Anti-arms trade campaigners slammed the sales as “shocking” and said the figures “illustrate the UK government’s determination to keep supplying arms at any cost”.

“UK-made weapons have played a devastating role in the Saudi-led attacks on Yemen, and the humanitarian crisis they have created, yet the UK government has done everything it can to keep the arms sales flowing,” Sarah Waldron, a spokesperson for the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT), said in a statement on Tuesday.

“Now even the U.S. is curbing its arms sales, while the UK government is continuing to fuel the war,” CAAT’s Waldron said. “They must change course now and work to support meaningful peace.”

Martin Butcher, international aid group Oxfam’s conflict adviser, said UK politicians had “once again ... put profit before Yemeni lives” and branded the arms sales documented on Tuesday as “immoral”.

“Arms exports to Saudi Arabia should stop immediately,” Butcher said in a statement. “Yemen is living through the world’s largest humanitarian crisis, with two-thirds of the population reliant on food aid and yet people are profiteering from the misery caused by these arms sales.”

Al Jazeera contacted the Department for International Trade for comment on the



criticisms levelled against the government. In response, a spokesperson said the UK operates “one of the most comprehensive export control regimes in the world”.

“The government takes its export responsibilities seriously and rigorously assesses all export licences in accordance with strict licensing criteria,” the spokesperson said. “We will not issue any export licences where to do so would be inconsistent with these criteria.”

The conflict in Yemen started in 2014 when the Houthis seized large swaths of the country, including the capital, Sanaa.

The war escalated in March 2015, when the Saudi Arabia-led coalition intervened in an attempt to restore the government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

The coalition has been assisted by several Western powers, including the UK and the US. According to CAAT, the UK has authorised arms sales worth 6.8 billion pounds (\$9.3bn) to Saudi Arabia since March 2015.

Both sides in Yemen’s conflict have since been accused of war crimes during fighting that has killed more than 110,000 people to date, including in excess of 12,500 civilians, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project.

Peace talks aimed at resolving the conflict have been stalled since late 2018, despite repeated efforts by United Nations officials to revive negotiations and end what it calls the world’s largest humanitarian crisis.

According to the UN, 80 percent of Yemen’s 30 million people depend on humanitarian assistance to survive.

India’s Solar Energy Output to Match Coal-Fired Power by 2040

CHENNAI (Reuters) - The share of solar energy in India’s power generation could equal coal-fired output by 2040, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Tuesday, driven by falling renewable tariffs and a government push to increase green energy use.

“Solar power is set for explosive growth in India, matching coal’s share in the Indian power generation mix within two decades,” the IEA said in its India Energy Outlook 2021 released on Tuesday.

Coal currently dominates India’s electricity sector, accounting for over 70% of overall generation with only about 4% produced through solar. India was on track to exceed its commitments as a part of the 2015 Paris agreement, the IEA said.

“This dramatic turnaround is driven by India’s policy ambitions, notably the target to reach 450 GW of renewable capacity by 2030, and the extraordinary cost-competitiveness of solar,” the agency said.

India has the potential to become a world leader in battery storage, the IEA said, adding the country could add 140-200 GW capacity of battery by 2040.

Electricity consumption is expected to outpace overall energy demand by 2040, mainly due to higher use of air conditioners, the IEA said.



“Battery storage is particularly well suited to the short-run flexibility that India needs to align its solar-led generation peak in the middle of the day with the country’s early evening peak in demand,” the IEA said.

Still, India’s emissions of carbon dioxide could rise as much as 50% by

2040, the largest of any country, enough to offset entirely the projected fall in emissions in Europe over the same period.

That would also make India the second largest emitter of carbon dioxide, trailing only China.

India needs to expand pollution policies and sharply reduce coal-fired generation to reduce its power sector’s emissions, the IEA said, adding current regulations were inadequate and utilities rarely deployed pollution cutting technology.

India is the world’s second largest coal market and holds the world’s fifth largest coal reserves. The nation’s coal demand is estimated to rise by over nearly a third by 2040, with share of imports shrinking to below 30%.

The IEA also warned that hundreds of thousands more could die every year due to higher exposure to air pollution, with the number of annual deaths potentially increasing by 200,000 from current levels to 1.4 million a year in 2040.

Tehran, Muscat to Expand Trade Ties

TEHRAN (MNA) – In an online meeting between the Head of TPOI and Omani deputy minister of commerce the two sides discussed the development of mutual trade, putting the issue on agenda.

Head of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) Hamid Zadbom and Undersecretary Saleh Said Masan of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion of Oman held an online meeting of the follow-up committee of the 18th meeting of the Iran-Oman Joint Economic Cooperation Committee on Tuesday, where the two sides expressed their country’s interest in developing economic and trade relations with each other.

During this virtual meeting, the officials of the two sides conferred on the MoUs signed during the Joint Commission, which was held in Tehran in December 2019. They also discussed signing the mutual roadmap to develop bilateral economic ties by 2023, developing cooperation between the private sectors of the two sides, resumption of trade events after the pandemic, and facilitating direct maritime transport between the two countries.

They also get prepared the documents supporting and encouraging investment, agriculture, customs, and maritime transport to be signed during the upcoming joint economic committee. In the end, the two sides agreed to hold a joint committee for cooperation between the two countries in Muscat in the near future.

The 18th Iran-Oman Joint Economic Committee meeting kicked off in Tehran on December 7, 2019, with ministers of two sides in attendance.

Assassination of...

FROM PAGE 1

Before leavin Iraq for Tehran, Judiciary Chief met with Iraqi Speaker of Parliament Mohammed al-Halbousi in Baghdad Thursday during which they stressed expanding judicial and parliamentary cooperation.

In the meeting, the Iranian Judiciary chief said that the two nations of Iran and Iraq are determined to expand their deep bilateral relations despite the opposition of ill-wishers.

Raisi quoted the Leader of the Islamic Revolution as saying that Iran always wants Iraq to be strong and independent as well as resilient, saying that Iran’s cooperation in the Iraqi fight against ISIL terrorist group and the martyrdom of Gen. Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis together at Baghdad airport showed the close cooperation between the two nations. The Iranian top judge further warned the Iraqi side of the danger that the presence of the U.S. military poses to the Iraqi security, saying that the security of the region and Iraq should be in the hands of the people of the region.

He further stressed the need for strengthening judicial and parliamentary cooperation between the two nations.

Al-Halbousi, for his part, expressed his happiness with the visit of the Iranian delegation led by Ayatollah Raisi, praising the similarities of both nations and their extensive bilateral relations.

The speaker said that Iraq welcomes warmer relations with its neighbors, especially Iran, extending his appreciation to Iranian help to the Iraqi nation.

Iran Denies...

FROM PAGE 1

“Rather, it is a technical and specialized report written by impartial and competent experts,” Khatibzadeh added.

He said the Iranian team looking into the incident prepared the report after consultations with seasoned experts from countries such as Canada the U.S. and France and sent it to the relevant countries, which had two months to inform Iran of their opinion and possible technical issues about the report.

“This two-month opportunity has now ended, and the questions by other countries as well as answers given by the Iranian probe team will be made public,” he said.

He urged the Canadian government to behave professionally instead of kicking up a fuss for nothing and present any viewpoints it may have in the form of specialized reports.

All Sanctions Means...

FROM PAGE 1

In this regards, Al-Mayadeen TV channel quoted some parts of the Supreme Leader’s remarks as, “Our return to the JCPOA depends on the removal of all sanctions.” This Lebanon-based channel broadcast some parts of the Supreme Leader’s speech.

The Saudi-based TV Channel Al-Arabieh also in its website wrote, “The Leader of Iran stated Tehran will continue its nuclear steps unless first Washington removes all sanctions.” The Russian news agency Sputnik in its Arab language version wrote, “The Leader of Iran sounded ultimatum and announced his country’s conditions for return to the JCPOA.” Sputnik continued, “The Leader of Iran announced that if Washington seeks Iran’s return to its previous steps of the JCPOA, it should remove all sanctions.”

Regarding this issue, the news website Al-Ahed wrote, “The Leader of the Islamic Republic announced that if all sanctions against Tehran are removed practically, Tehran will return to its JCPOA commitments.” The Lebanon-based news website published some parts of the Leader’s speech in Arabic. Meanwhile Al-Sharqiya Network with a similar title wrote, “The Leader of Iran announced that Iran’s return to the JCPOA depends on removing on al sanctions.” This Iraqi news website wrote, “The Leader of Iran said if Washington wants Tehran to return to return to the JCPOA commitment, it should first remove all sanctions.”

Some Arab media outlets, websites and networks also echoed the Supreme Leader’s speech of February 7 especially regarding the nuclear issue and the U.S. sanctions, and all emphasized Iran will return to its JCPOA commitment only if all sanctions are removed in action.

But in this regards on Tuesday February 7, exactly three days after the Supreme Leader’s speech and on the eve of the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution and in meeting with foreign ambassadors in Tehran President Hassan Rouhani had some remarks which should not be misunderstood. President Rouhani said, “Today, no one can expect Iran to take the first step. I think there is no doubt who should start. We have not exited the deal so that we would want to take the first step now. We have not pulled out of our commitments so that we take the first step. The country which has abandoned its obligations for three years and oppressed our nation in violation of international regulations and its commitments under [UN Security Council] Resolution 2231 (which endorses the JCPOA) is duty-bound to take the first step. Immediately after the P5+1 group of countries fulfill all their obligations, Iran would return to compliance with all its JCPOA commitments.”

“Iran has proved that if it signs something and accepts a commitment, it will fully remain committed to its signature and commitment and this has been an honor for the Iranian nation throughout history, and particularly over the past 42 years” since the 1979 Islamic Revolution,” he pointed out.

The world should know that all sanctions that the Supreme Leader have pointed to them do not mean only sanctions regarding the JCPOA and these remarks of President Rouhani should not be considered as the base for the decision-making of the West or P5+1. The purport of the Supreme Leader’s remarks is very crystal clear. All sanctions mean all sanctions and exactly after verification.

Tehran, Moscow...

FROM PAGE 1

The delegation, led by Iran’s Food and Drug Organization chief Mohammad Reza Shanehsaz, met senior Russian health ministry officials on Wednesday, said a report by Iran’s official IRNA news agency.

The report said Russian authorities were eager to raise the level of health cooperation between the two countries to “its highest level”.

It quoted Alexandra Dronova, Russia’s deputy health minister, as saying that Moscow would submit to Iran a draft agreement on increased health cooperation in the near future before representatives of the two governments meet to finalize it. Dronova said Iran and Russia should focus their joint future efforts on prevention of infectious and non-infectious diseases, provision of medical services and health education.

Shanehsaz, for his part, welcomed the initiative for ramping up health ties, saying Iran could become a regional hub for the sales of Russian medicines as part of future health exchanges between the two countries.

Neymar Walks Off During PSG Cup Win

PARIS (Dispatches) - Neymar walked off the pitch without waiting to be substituted after being on the receiving end of a series of fouls during Paris Saint-Germain's 1-0 French Cup win at second-tier Caen on Wednesday, with coach Mauricio Pochettino saying he had "pain in his thigh".

The Brazil attacker, captaining PSG with Marquinhos and Presnel Kimpembe absent, was fouled twice in the space of three minutes. He was visibly upset after the second foul, by Steeve Yago, exchanging words with the Caen player.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

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

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

Tokyo Olympics Boss to Resign Over Remarks

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Tokyo Olympics chief Yoshiro Mori is to resign over sexist remarks that have sparked outrage in Japan and abroad, reports said Thursday.

Multiple major Japanese media outlets, citing anonymous sources, said Mori has told officials of his wish to step down and intends to announce his resignation at a meeting of Games organisers on Friday.

Gaffe-prone Tokyo 2020 boss Mori, 83, has come under increasing pressure after he said last week that women "have difficulty" speaking concisely.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 13, 2021

Everton Edge Nine-Goal Tottenham Thriller

LONDON (Dispatches) - Everton upped the pressure on Jose Mourinho with a thrilling 5-4 victory over Tottenham after extra-time to reach the FA Cup quarter-finals, as Manchester City eased into the last eight by beating Swansea.

Tottenham face a daunting trip to City in the Premier League on Saturday and defeat after a draining 120 minutes was the last thing Mourinho wanted.

Spurs have lost four of their last five games and one of three chances to end the club's 13-year wait to win a trophy in cup competitions is now gone.

"Attacking football only wins matches when you don't make more defensive mistakes than you create," said Mourinho, who once described a 5-4 result as a "hockey score".

"It was the mouse and the cat. The mouse was our defensive mistakes and the cat was us playing very well, scoring goals, but it wasn't enough."

Mourinho's men made a bright start at Goodison Park as Davinson Sanchez headed them into the lead after just three minutes.

However, the defensive errors that have cost Tottenham dear in recent months were in evidence as Everton struck three times in seven minutes just before half-time through Dominic Calvert-Lewin, Richarlison and Gylfi Sigurdsson's penalty.

Erik Lamela reduced Spurs' deficit in first-half stoppage time before another rare goal for Sanchez made it 3-3.

Richarlison then smashed home from a narrow angle to restore Everton's lead.

Mourinho had left Harry Kane on the bench from the start to ease his return from an ankle injury. But the England captain ended up playing for over an hour and met Son Heung-min's cross at the back post with bullet header seven minutes from time to send the game into extra-time.

Bernard's brilliant finish from Sigurdsson's scooped pass proved a fitting winner to a pulsating tie to keep alive the Toffees' chances of a first trophy since 1995.

"It was a long night for everybody, but we



came out on top which is the main thing," said Everton assistant manager Duncan Ferguson.

The defending from both sides will encourage City, who also face Everton in the Premier League next Wednesday, after they broke the English football record for consecutive wins by a top-flight club.

Kyle Walker, Raheem Sterling and Gabriel Jesus were on target for City, who extended their winning run in all competitions to 15 games with a 3-1 success over Swansea.

Victory was also Pep Guardiola's 200th in 268 games as City boss, with his side still on course for a historic quadruple of trophies.

Guardiola's men hold a five-point lead with a game in hand at the top of the Premier League, face Tottenham in the League Cup final in April and resume their challenge to win a first Champions League in the last 16 against Borussia Monchengladbach later this month.

Leicester were made to wait until the 94th minute to book their place in the last eight with a 1-0 win over Brighton thanks to Kelechi Iheanacho's header.

Sheffield United also just needed a solitary goal to see off Bristol City 1-0 thanks to Billy Sharp's penalty after Alfie Mawson was sent off for handling David McGoldrick's goalbound shot.

Super Bowl Rakes in Half a Billion Dollars in Ads

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Advertisers splurged more than half a billion dollars during the Super Bowl, smashing previous records for an event that is routinely one of the most-watched things on US television.

Some of corporate America's biggest names coughed up an eye-watering average of \$5.6 million for a 30-second spot in American football's razzmatazz-filled final.

Car companies, fast food chains and delivery apps were among those clamoring to get their brands in front of the 96.4 million people who watched Tom Brady's resurgent Tampa Bay Buccaneers trounce young pretender Patrick Mahomes and his Kansas City Chiefs.

A must-watch for dedicated fans, the NFL final is also a major cultural event in the United States, with millions of Americans traditionally joining Super Bowl parties to drink and eat with friends.

Ahead of Sunday's game, health officials had advised against such gatherings in an effort to tamp down the coronavirus.

Lakers Edge Thunder, Win 6th Straight

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - LeBron James had 25 points, seven assists and six rebounds, and the Los Angeles Lakers won their sixth consecutive game, holding off the visiting Oklahoma City Thunder 114-113 in overtime.

Montrezl Harrell scored 20 points, Dennis Schroder contributed 19 and Kyle Kuzma added 15 for the Lakers, who played without Anthony Davis (Achilles) and Alex Caruso (hand) for the second game in a row.

Al Horford had 25 points, eight assists and eight rebounds for Oklahoma City. The Thunder's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (knee), who leads the team in scoring and assists, missed the contest, as did Isaiah Roby (foot, third straight game) and Theo Maledon (health and safety protocols, second in a row).

Kenrich Williams scored 24 points, Luguentz Dort had 17 and Hamidou Diallo collected 15 points and 13 rebounds for the Thunder, who have lost three of their last four. It was the third straight overtime contest for the Lakers, the last two against the Thunder.

Wes Matthews, who finished with 10 points, converted a 3-pointer with 41.9 seconds remaining to give the Lakers a 114-111 lead. Dort's layup closed to gap to one with 30.2 seconds left.

James airballed a jumper with 7.8 seconds left, but he got his hands on the inbound pass by the Thunder before Dort's prayer from near midcourt missed.

Dort's three-point play with 49 seconds left in regulation gave the Thunder a 103-102 lead. After Kuzma missed a wide-open 11-footer on the baseline, Horford sank two free throws with 24.4 seconds left for a 105-102 Oklahoma City lead before James' 3-pointer with 19.6 seconds remaining forced overtime.

Dort misfired on a 3-pointer before the final horn sounded in regulation. Oklahoma City carried an 84-80 lead into the fourth quarter.

The Thunder roared to a 43-23 lead early in the second quarter after a 3-pointer by Darius Miller. However, the Lakers sliced the margin to six before Diallo scored the final four points of the quarter for a 67-57 edge at the break. Williams led all scorers with 17 points in the first half.



at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan before Ivan Rakitic came back to haunt his former club by adding a second late on.

The 22-year-old Kounde dribbled past three Barca defenders and shot into the corner while Rakitic's strike turned a setback for Ronald Koeman's side into what now looks like a formidable challenge to make the final.

The winner will meet either Athletic Bilbao or Levante, who play the first leg of their semi on Thursday, in the final.

Sevilla Defeat Barca in First Leg of Copa del Rey

MADRID (Dispatches) - Barcelona's hopes of winning the Copa del Rey this season were left hanging by a thread on Wednesday after Sevilla won the first leg of their semi-final 2-0.

Jules Kounde furthered his growing reputation as one of the world's most exciting central defenders by scoring a stunning goal

"The result is a bit unfair, the reward feels too much for them," said Koeman.

"The return will be complicated at 2-0 but we have had chances and we have to keep going. At home, this team is capable of anything."

Koeman had described the cup as Barcelona's "shortest route" to a trophy this term and the sight of Kounde ghosting through his defence hardly inspires confidence ahead of next week's meeting with Paris Saint-Germain.

Barca face PSG at Camp Nou in the first leg of the Champions League last 16 on Tuesday.

Yet all is not lost in the cup. Although Koeman fielded his best available XI, after resting players against Real Betis in La Liga last weekend, he will also hope to have injured defenders available again for the return game at Camp Nou on March 3.

With Ronald Araujo and Gerard Pique out, Koeman played a patched-up back four of Jordi Alba at left-back, the left-footed Junior Firpo at right-back, right-back Oscar Mingueza at centre-back, alongside Samuel Umtiti, who is still regaining sharpness after a string of injuries.

Bayern Win Club World Cup

DOHA (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich won the Club World Cup final in Qatar on Thursday as Benjamin Pavard's second-half winner sealed a 1-0 victory over Mexico's Tigres, the Germans claiming a "six pack" of titles within 12 months.

Pavard's close-range tap-in was enough to give European champions Bayern their sixth title in quick succession.

This is the eighth year in a row that the Champions League winners have gone on to win the Club World Cup, as Bayern follow in the footsteps of last year's champions Liverpool.

Bayern are the second side to win all six available titles within a year after Barcelona managed the feat in 2009.

Hansi Flick's men had already won the Champions League, Bundesliga, German Cup, UEFA Super Cup and German Super Cup last season.

"It feels good to have the six pack -- six titles in a row is something very special for us," said Bayern striker Robert Lewandowski, who helped set up Pavard's goal.

"I think this is one of the biggest achievements in football, how we played will be remembered for a long time."

Since Flick took charge of Bayern in November 2019, the European champions have lost just five games, giving him more titles than defeats as boss. "I hope there won't be any defeats in the near future and there will be more victories than defeats," said Flick.

"In terms of the title, this was a statement. It's amazing what the team was able to do.

"It was really impressive how everyone played."

Defeat meant heartbreak for Tigres, the first Mexican side to reach the Club World Cup final as CONCACAF champions.

Bayern grabbed the winner when Joshua Kimmich's cross -- intended for Lewandowski -- bounced off the hands off Tigres goalkeeper Nahuel Guzman and into the path of Pavard on 59 minutes.



Nadal Powers On in Australia

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Rafael Nadal shrugged off any lingering back soreness to storm past qualifier Michael Mmoh Thursday for the loss of just seven games, brushing off a bizarre incident that saw a female fan thrown out.

The world number two has been struggling with tightness in his lower back since arriving in Australia last month, but showed few signs of it with the roof closed on Rod Laver Arena.

He crushed the American 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 in a match interrupted in the second set when a woman was ejected after heckling him and directing rude gestures in his direction.

The Spanish great took it in his stride, grinning and playing football with the ball while he waited, seemingly enjoying having spectators -- a rarity during the pandemic.

Asked afterwards whether he knew the woman, he replied: "No, and honestly I don't want to know.

"Maybe she take too much gin or tequila. I don't know, but honestly was strange situation, but funny at the same time," he added.

"Honestly, somebody doing the finger to me... I don't know the reason, but I was surprised, but at the same time was thinking, 'poor girl', because probably she was drunk or something like this."

Nadal, who will next play Britain's Cameron Norrie in his quest for a 21st Grand Slam title, said his back was still not 100 percent.

"No, not under control, honestly. I keep doing the things that I can. If you see my motion on the serve is different than what I would like," he said.

"But I am trying to find solutions every day. I just keep fighting to find a solution.

"I won two matches in straight sets. I have another opportunity to be on court in two days, and I have tomorrow to keep doing things and trying to find solutions for my back."

Nadal has a perfect record against qualifiers at the Australian Open, where he has reached the round of 32 every time he has played, barring his shock first round exit in 2016.

