

Health Ministry Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari Said on Sunday That Some 93 More Iranians Died From the Coronavirus Disease Over the Past 24 Hours Bringing The Total Deaths to 60,073

Head of Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company (IAC) Announced on Sunday a \$76-million Decline in the Country's Aviation Industry Revenues During 2020 Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic Restrictions

2 DOMESTIC

No Excuse Left For Foes On Nuclear Issue



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

Preferential Tariff Agreement Necessary for Developing Tehran-Jakarta Ties



> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

Myanmar Army Fires Ambassador To the UN After Anti-Coup Speech



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

Man City Stride Clear In Premier League



> SEE PAGE 8

President Says Iran Has Neutralized Sanctions

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Hassan Rouhani says his administration had neutralized sanctions by supplying essential goods for the people.

At the meeting of the Iranian government's economic coordination headquarters on Sunday, Hassan Rouhani stressed the development of non-oil exports.

"The development of non-oil exports is crucial as one of the powerful tools of a resilient economy to counter oppressive and illegal U.S. sanctions," he said.

He underlined that Iran had been able to neutralize the sanctions imposed on the Iranian people during the economic war, which were meant to create famine and economic insecurity. He also called on international community to respect Iran's rights to join global economy in a bid to develop non-oil exports.

Development of non-oil exports is an effective tool for achieving policies on Economy of Resistance underlined by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution to fight the U.S. unjust and illegitimate sanctions, the president added.

He stressed that the Government could successfully foil the enemies' plot to cause famine and economic hardship in the country.

Referring to new conditions created for the process of talks with the countries which had frozen Iranian assets due to the U.S. pressure, the president expressed hope that the conditions would lead to stability in forex market.

Tehran Not Interested In Escalation of Tensions With Washington

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's ambassador to the United Nations says Tehran is not interested in escalation of tensions with the United States, and unlike Washington, the Islamic Republic has no interest in making provocative moves.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi said the Islamic Republic of Iran has proved that it is not interested in escalation of tension, even during the tenure of the Trump administration that started the tension and provocative moves.

The Iranian envoy made the remarks in response to Al Jazeera's question about possible escalation of tensions as a result of Tehran's moves to scale down its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, officially known as the JCPOA.

He said the moves made by Iran in reaction to the failure of other JCPOA parties in living up to their commitments cannot result in escalation of tensions.

See Page 7

Iran Capable of Vaccinating 20m People a Month



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Deputy Health Minister Alireza Raisi ensured on Sunday that there was no concerns on fast vaccination as the country's health network has capability to vaccine 20 million people a month.

Speaking in an event to honor healthcare workers, Deputy for Health in the Ministry of Health and Medical Education said that Iran's health network, founded 30 years ago by great healthcare figures, is a strong point that reaches across the country so that no village with over 1,000 people population is deprived of the health network.

In addition to Health Houses – small local health centers, Raisi said, there are over 2,500 medical centers in cities and countryside and the centers are all connected to hospitals and specialized centers.

These centers in health network managed to carry out three rounds of COVID-19 screening across the country and it is now extending to nomad population, according to the Deputy Minister.

He also underlined that the health network will upgrade from primary healthcare to universal health coverage system (UHC); the transmission is now in pilot phase.

Several COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing projects have been developed in Iran and some of them have undergone clinical test.

Meanwhile yesterday, a second locally-manufactured COVID-19 vaccine has entered human trial in Iran.

The human trial of the vaccine, called Razi COV-Pars, kick-started on Sunday morning with the injection into two volunteers at Tehran's Rasoul Akram Hospital.

This is the second Iranian vaccine that has entered the human trial after, COVIRAN vaccine made headlines as the first viable Iranian-made vaccine for the coronavirus last month.

Developed by Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute, COV-Pars is an inhalable vaccine. It employs recombinant versions of the spike protein, which tutors the immune system against the wild virus. This works with an adjuvant, a compound that puts frontline immune cells on battle alert to muster a robust immune response to the protein antigen.

COV-Pars is administered in three stages; two intramuscular shots 21 days apart and an intranasal administration 30 days after the second jab.

Developers say not only does this protect the recipient from the virus, but it prevents them from transmitting the virus to others. Simply put, those who receive the COV-Pars vaccine will not need a mask.

Its domestic rival, Coviran, is ahead in schedule and as it will reportedly start the second phase of the human trial next month. At the same time, Iran has imported the two batches Russia's Sputnik V and a batch of China's Sinopharm to vaccinate sensitive groups.

Yemeni Forces Hit Sensitive Targets Deep in Saudi Territory

SANAA (Dispatches)- Yemeni defense forces have claimed the massive retaliatory strike, featuring a ballistic missile and as many as nine drones, against "sensitive" spots in the Saudi capital amid an ongoing Riyadh-led war on the impoverished nation.

Speaking at a news conference on Sunday, Armed Forces' spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Saree said the counterattack had begun on Saturday and lasted until early Sunday under the codename "the 5th Operation of Balanced Deterrence," Yemen's al-Masirah television network reported.

He identified the projectile as a Zolfaghar-type ballistic missile, and the drones as Sammad-3-type UAVs.

"The retaliatory attack targeted sensitive sites in the enemy's capital Riyadh," the network cited the spokesman as saying. As part of the retaliation, six more unmanned aircraft of the Qassef K2 make also targeted the Abha International Airport and the Khamis Mushait area in the southwestern Saudi Asir region. "The drones struck their targets with accuracy," he added.

Saree urged Saudi citizens to stay away from all of the kingdom's military sites, facilities, and airfields amid the retaliatory strikes.

His remarks came after Twitter users reported hearing an explosion in the Saudi capital. Some also circulated a video showing activation of Saudi Arabia's US-made Patriot missile systems.

The counteroffensive was followed by the kingdom's closing its airspace to all flights and shutting down all of its airports in Riyadh and the port city of Jeddah.

Yemeni Armed Forces have never ceased their defensive activities throughout the entire course of the war that the kingdom and its allies launched in 2015 to return power to Yemen's former pro-Riyadh government.

Tens of thousands of Yemenis have died and the whole Yemen has turned into what the United Nations describes as the scene of the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

See Page 7

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

End of Bloodshed in Yemen Is Inconceivable

U.S. President Joe Biden in his recent interview has announced that he has no desire to support Saudi Arabia continuing war in Yemen. That how much Biden's efforts will stay steadfast on course to return the U.S. from the savagery and lawlessness path which has been shaped during Former President Donald Trump era for earning money is an important question that perhaps all the world would wait for seeing his practical response in a time slot of three months.

The U.S. policy during Trump era was indeed to meet the country's interests in alignment with Saudi Arabia in Yemen. It means the U.S. did not care how long the Yemen war continued or the war had any winner. But what was important for the U.S. was to sell arms to Saudi Arabia, therefore, it disregarded the war and closed its eyes on all actions of Saudi Arabia in Yemen like violating the human rights, massacring the defenseless people and bombing houses in cities and villages, killing the poor and fed-up Yemeni event by besieging the country, and above all these crimes, dismembering the corpse of one of the media persons like Jamal Khashoggi in another country.

The political confrontation in running the country between Trump and Biden gives the glad tidings of shift in the process of approach towards the world among the new residents of the White House which has been dragged into the media, and it can to some extent appear to be real. Biden has both announced that he wants an end to war in Yemen and announced he regards human rights issues and attaches importance to the internal affairs of these countries. Even if Biden is honest in his words, it will be very natural that this issue have considerable impacts on the current condition of the U.S. ties of the U.S. with Arab countries like Saudi Arabia and the regional developments.

From these interviews and evidences dominating the approach of the White House, it is evident that Biden team has a common view regarding the continuation of war in Yemen, and they believe that since continuation of the war in Yemen has no result and it has no real winner, and also Saudi Arabia has suffered damages in its political, social and grandeur in the region, they should step into saving the country with taking a rational strategy with the lowest damage.

See Page 7

Pakistan-Iran-Turkey Container Train Set to Start From March 4

LAHORE (Dispatches) - Pakistan Railways has decided to resume trilateral container train from March 4 to connect Pakistan with Iran and Turkey, and Railways Headquarters has issued instructions to finalize arrangements in this regard, the news learnt Saturday.

Habib-ur-Rehman Gilani, Chairman Pakistan Railways confirmed and said, "it is starting from Istanbul on 4th March.

It will come to Zahidan after 180 hrs. Reportedly its destination is Karachi but it is yet to be confirmed. It will carry 24 containers of 40 ft."

"We will send our wagons at Zahidan from where trans-shipment will take place, he said while talking to The News. "DS Quetta is making arrangements for this purpose", he further added. The train will cover a distance of 6,566 km in the three countries.

The container train will cover a distance of 1,990 km from Islamabad and reach Iran, from where it will leave for Turkey via Tehran.

Senior Railway Officer Tahir Hassan Bukhari has been posted as the project's focal person while the Railways Headquarters has notified fares for container trains.

See Page 7

Sokhan Gostar Institute

IRAN NEWS

PRIVATE ENGLISH NEWSPAPER IN IRAN



Advertisement Department
021-44253335-39

www.irannewsdaily.com
info@irannewsdaily.com

@irannewsdaily @irannewsdaily

FM Summons Turkish Envoy

TEHRAN (IFP) - Ministry of Foreign Affairs has summoned the Turkish ambassador to Tehran to protest at the Turkish interior minister's "unacceptable" remarks about the presence of PKK elements in Iran.

In the Sunday meeting, the Turkish envoy has also received Iran's note of protest over the comments made by his country's ambassador to Iraq.

Earlier, the Turkish foreign ministry had summoned the Iranian ambassador to Ankara to protest at the remarks made by the Islamic Republic's envoy to Baghdad.

No Excuse Left for Foes On Nuclear Issue

TEHRAN (IP)- First Vice-President said that the government of President Hassan Rouhani implemented a new law, the Strategic Action to Lift Sanctions, in a bid to show the enemies of the Islamic Republic that the country's officials were united.

In a meeting on Resistance Economic doctrine in Golestan Province, Eshaq Jahangiri said that the law's tactful implementation had left no excuse for the foes to claim that there were different voices in Iran.

"We have done a job that Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. could not celebrate due to our measure," he said, adding, "They could not accuse Iran of trying to attain nuclear bomb."

The sanction campaign targeted Iran's main economic sectors, including oil sales, banking system, as well as shipping, aviation, and road sectors aimed at declining the possibility of transferring money, he added.

The Iranian people stand against all pressure. Therefore, the country is alive powerfully, but former U.S. President Donald Trump and his team who proposed a sanction regime against the Islamic Republic are now part of history, the VP noted.

The U.S. wanted to destroy the Iranian economy and put so much pressure on the



Iranian people to pour into the streets and pave the way for their much-anticipated fall of the system, but the Iranians could gloriously go through the hard situation and prove that they are an honorable nation, Jahangiri underlined.

He also noted that the government tries to pave the way for lifting the illegal sanctions and find a way to avoid any further pressures on the great Iranian nation.

The first vice president accompanied by several ministers arrived in Gorgan, the Golestan Province's capital city, to negotiate with provincial officials on development projects in this northern province.

Iran Reacts to Michel Bachelet's False Claim

TEHRAN (IP) - In response to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' false claim, the head of the Iranian Judiciary's High Council for Human Rights, wrote on Twitter that the Iranian ethnic groups were not minorities but rather considered as "the whole Iran."

In response to a claim by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michel Bachelet, the head of the Iranian Judiciary's High Council for Human Rights, Ali Bagheri-Kani, tweeted on Sunday: "If the veils of politics did not prevent you from traveling to Iran and you were allowed to see the realities of Iran directly, you would understand how the Iranian ethnic groups of Lor, Kurd, Turk, Turkmen, Arab, Baluch, Persian, and others are chanting against foreigners: 'We are Iranians.'"

Earlier the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michel Bachelet, had made the false claim that a coordinated campaign in Iran has targeted minority groups since December, including in Sistan and Baluchistan and Khuzestan.



AEOI Chief Warns of Any Anti-Iran Resolution By IAEA Board



TEHRAN (MNA) - The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) says Tehran will give a proper response to any anti-Iran resolution adopted by the IAEA Board of Governors, regarding the recent JCPOA developments.

"In case the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency adopts an anti-Iran resolution due to the suspension of the [NPT] Additional Protocol, we will give a proper response," Ali-Akbar Salehi said on Sunday, a day before the IAEA Board's meeting.

Referring to a recent joint statement between AEOI and the IAEA on Iran's voluntary suspension of the Additional Protocol to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Safeguards Treaty, Salehi said, "The appendix to this statement is confidential."

"No specific conditions have been made in this regard, and according to the detailed information about the list of facilities and surveillance cameras mentioned in this appendix and also due to security considerations and the need to hide the location of key facilities in Iran, this appendix will remain confidential," he added.

Ex-CBI Official Warns of Risks of Investment in Bitcoin

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - A former deputy governor of the Central Bank of Iran stressed the need for definite government regulations on the use of cryptocurrencies, warning people not to spend all their capital on Bitcoin.

The former CBI deputy for modern technologies elaborated on the nature and function of cryptocurrencies, particularly Bitcoin.

With years of experience and research on digital assets designed to work as a medium of trade exchange, Nasser Hakimi said the Iranian government ought to make definite regulations on cryptocurrencies, otherwise a financial disaster like the recent one in the stock market would be likely.

He also urged people to exercise caution in purchasing Bitcoin as long as the market is not clearly regulated, warning Bitcoiners about the legal risks of trading in the digital currency and the substantial fluctuation in its price.

The value of a single Bitcoin reached over 58,000 dollars for the first time in mid-February. Some major companies like MasterCard have announced that they are bringing a cryptocurrency onto their network and Tesla bought 1.5 billion dollars of Bitcoin earlier this year.

The new phenomenon's bull market in the past year encouraged many around the world and also in Iran to invest in the field. However, many financial gatekeepers are now expressing concerns about the future of cryptocurrency and the risks it involves.

Tehran Ready to Assist Baghdad in Security Affairs

BAGHDAD (IRNA)- Iran's Ambassador to Iraq Iraj Masjedi said here on Sunday in an interview with Iraq's Kurdish TV channel Rudav that Tehran is ready for assisting Iraq in security affairs, if needed.

Iran favors restoration of full security in Iraq, never supports those who intend to weaken and deteriorate Iraq's security, and in pursuit of such policies, Tehran is even ready for assisting Iraq in its security affairs, if needed," said Masjedi.

He pointed out that the existence of foreign forces is not only of no tangible fruits for Iraq, but leads to further insecurity and tension both in Iraq and in the region as well.

Therefore, he said, the Islamic Republic of Iran resolutely believes that the security forces of the Iraqi central government and the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan province can ensure Iraq's security needless of any foreign force.

Iran's relations with all different Iraqi governments after the collapse of Saddam's despotic regime have been friendly and constructive, the ambassador reiterated.

He added that Iran's current relations with various Iraqi sectors are satisfactory, and especially after Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kazemi's recent visit of Tehran and his consultations and agreements with Iranian officials they are now even better than before.

The Iranian diplomat further said that the 1975 Algeria Agreement on shared borders with Iraq that is also registered at the UN is still the basis and presently there is no plan for re-drawing of any new map on shared borders.

"The thing to be done at the time being is the rearrangement and full implementation of the 1975 Algeria Agreement in full collaboration between the two countries," he said, adding that only some small parts have remained undecided in that agreement that are of trivial importance.

"At any rate, there is no agreement on setting up new border posts, or defining new borders," he said.

The Iranian ambassador to Baghdad was asked about Iran's stand on missile attacks against the US Embassy in Baghdad. "I tell you quite clearly that the Islamic Republic of Iran is opposed to any kind of breaching of the security of diplomatic centers in any country, including Iraq, and has always condemned such attacks," replied.

Ambassador Masjedi further reiterated that the entire diplomatic centers' required security need to be preserved and there is no difference between the US, or any other country's embassies.

He reminded the TV reporter of the fact that the IRI diplomatic centers in Iraq have been faced with more severe attacks than the American centers, setting example of the Iranian consular offices in holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, both of which were also subjects for arsons.

Iran's ambassador to Iraq referring to the presence of the foreign forces in Iraq, said that Iran believes every Iraqi citizen has the right to enjoy living amid full security and if the Iraqi government wishes Iran is ready to assist Iraq in restoration of security in this country, including the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan province.

He added that Iran's stand about the presence of foreign forces in the region is quite clear and that is: there is no need to the presence of foreign forces of NATO, or any other country in Iraqi Kurdistan, in entire Iraq, or in the region.

Masjedi emphasized that the security of the region, either in Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, or any other regional country need to be ensured by the regional countries' their own forces.

Iran's envoy to Iraq said that the Islamic Republic of Iran's relations with the Autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan province, including the Iraqi Kurdish leaders, is brisk and satisfactory for both sides, and there is absolutely no difference of opinion to be resolved. "Yet, fine relations, too, are relative and the Islamic Republic of Iran's relations with Iraqi Kurdistan, for instance, can be further improved if the entire existing opportunities for strengthening and improvement of ties are maximally used," he said.

U.S. Urged Not to Undermine Iran-IAEA Ties

TEHRAN (IP)- Spokesman of the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of Iran's Parliament said that the cooperation between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was technical and within the framework of domestic agreements.

On the sidelines of the Iranian Parliament's open session, Abolfazl Amoui commented on U.S. efforts to pass an anti-Iran resolution IAEA Board of Governors over the strengthening of Iran's nuclear activities.

He said: "Iran's new steps to strengthen nuclear activities and suspend the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol were a response to Westerners who did not fulfill their obligation to lift sanctions."

The spokesman for the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of Iran's Parliament noted that Iran's new steps were a reaction within the framework of Article 36 of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and Iran had the right to resume and strengthen its peaceful nuclear activities.

The West must lift sanctions and fulfill its obligations, and the West is not expected to undermine Iran-IAEA cooperation, Abolfazl Amoui added.

The Spokesman for the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of Iran's Parliament, Abolfazl Amoui, concluded that Iran has a peaceful approach

and Western countries must not use the IAEA Board of Governors for their goals otherwise had a detrimental impact on the IAEA-Iran cooperation process.

Gov't, Majlis to Continue Cooperation on Counteractive Plan

TEHRAN (MNA) - A senior Iranian lawmaker said that government and parliament will continue the cooperation in propelling the Strategic Action Plan, which aims to counteract the U.S.' unilateral sanctions.

Shahriar Heidari, the Vice Chairman of Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, said that the lifting of sanctions imposed against the Islamic Republic of Iran was the main aim of the Parliament in approving the Law of the Strategic Action Plan.

Emphasizing the need for accurate implementation of Strategic Action Plan for Lifting Sanctions and protecting the rights of the Iranian people, he stated, "Upon the approval of the new law, the Islamic Republic of Iran initiated enriching uranium with 20% purity with a prior notice to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)."

Under the law approved by the Parliament, "We said from the beginning that if Western countries fail to lift sanctions imposed against the Islamic Republic, IAEA inspectors would be expelled from the country as of Feb. 23 and also Iran will suspend the voluntary implementation of Additional Protocol (AP)."

According to the recommendations of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, both the Parliament and government will interact with each other, he said, adding, "Chairpersons of Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Commission and Energy Commission are scheduled to hold expert-level meetings with the government and Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) in this respect." It is hoped that cooperation between Parliament and government will lead to realizing national interests and materializing sublime advice of Leader of the Islamic Revolution, he added.

Iran Welcomes India-Pakistan Joint Statement on Ceasefire

TEHRAN (IFP) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh has hailed the joint statement of India and Pakistan based on which the two sides have agreed to strictly adhere to the ceasefire along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir region.

In comments on Sunday, Khatibzadeh said the joint statement is an important step towards further peace and stability in the South Asia region.

He also expressed hope that the two countries will move towards peace, stability, and welfare of the region by taking further strides.

The armies of India and Pakistan announced on February 25 that they had begun to strictly adhere to a ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir from the midnight of February 24.

The armies released a joint statement following a discussion between India's Director General of Military Operations (DGMO), Lt Gen Paramjit Singh Sangha, and his Pakistani counterpart, Maj Gen Nauman Zakaria, reportedly on February 22, over their established telephone hotline.

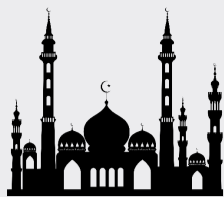
Chinese Vaccine For Coronavirus Arrives

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The first consignment of COVID-19 vaccines made by China's Sinopharm arrived in Iran, whose vaccination rollout has already begun with Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine.

A Mahan Air flight carried a cargo of 250,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccine to Tehran in the early hours of Sunday.

Sinopharm, a Chinese state-owned company, is developing two COVID-19 vaccines. It announced in December 2020 that phase three trials of the vaccine showed it was 79% effective. The United Arab Emirates, which approved a Sinopharm vaccine earlier this month, said the vaccine was 86% effective.

Iran has already imported shipments of Sputnik V from Russia to vaccinate the priority groups, including the nurses and the elderly in the nursing homes. Health Minister Saeed Namaki said on Friday that Iran is going to import the AstraZeneca vaccine for the coronavirus from South Korea.



PRAYER TIME

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| ■ Noon (Zohr) | 12:16 |
| ■ Evening (Maghreb) | 18:17 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr) | 05:09 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Sunrise | 06:32 |

20. Know ye (all), that the life of this world is but play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting and multiplying, (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children. Here is a similitude: How rain and the growth which it brings forth, delight (the hearts of) the tillers; soon it withers; thou wilt see it grow yellow; then it becomes dry and crumbles away. But in the Hereafter is a Penalty severe (for the devotees of wrong). And Forgiveness from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure (for the devotees of Allah.. And what is the life of this world, but goods and chattels of deception?

Surah 57. Iron (20)

Preferential Tariff Agreement Necessary for Developing Tehran-Jakarta Ties

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) in collaboration with Iran-Indonesia Joint Commercial Committee held a webinar to review trade opportunities and capacities of Iran and Indonesia in the current economic condition.

In this webinar, the most important capacities ahead of both countries especially in the fields of mining, industry, agriculture and technical and engineering services were reviewed.

Addressing the webinar, head of international affairs of ICCIMA Mr. Mohammad Reza Karbasi explained the most important economic capacities of Iran and Indonesia, saying that Indonesia is one of the biggest and most populous Islamic countries which has one of the biggest economies in the East Asia and most of the active population of this country is busy in the agriculture sector and in the small and medium-sized enterprises.

He emphasized the significance of Indonesia in the ASEAN region and called the country a gateway for arrival of Iranian goods to the countries of the ASEAN region, and emphasized multilateral cooperation with this country due to its strategic position in the continent.

Karbasi noted that talks with Indonesian officials bespeak this fact that Indonesians are very keen Iran to import palm oil from Indonesia, adding that in this regards a mechanism for launching a barter trade is on the agenda.

He went on to say that rice, cocoa, palm oil and coconut are of major opportunities for cooperation between both states in the agro sector, noting that Indonesia can be a good market for Iran's export of its dates.

Karbasi also said both countries have grown considerably in the industry sector, and they can take important actions in the mine discovery especially that both countries are eager to expand bilateral ties and the governments of both states are strongly determined to develop the ties.



On the low trade volume between Iran and Indonesia, he said in some period of time their trade volume has hit \$2b and in 2007 and 2008 their trade volume grew considerably and their direct trade volume was around \$916m while in that time considerable amount of their goods were traded via the Persian Gulf countries.

He then pointed to the bilateral agreements between both states, saying that both countries were to sign preferential agreements to ease their trade but until now nothing has happened, reiterating that signing and implementing the preferential agreements is important for developing trade ties.

Karbasi also stated that once there was a direct shipping line between the two countries which reduced considerably the cost of trade but currently this line is limited and economic activists are obliged to use the ports of other countries, and for this reason the cost of trade has increased highly.

He also called for the launch of direct flight between Tehran and Jakarta as well as diversifying the exporting goods to Indonesia and claimed them other solutions for improving the bilateral trade.

Then head of Iran-Indonesia Joint Commercial Committee Mr. Yadollah Tahernejad, for his part, explained the opportunities for entering Indonesia's market in different fields.

He pointed to some fields that the private sector of Iran can have active presence in Indonesia. In the webinar, the participants also reiterated that holding virtual exhibitions in the current condition can be a good solution for making the private sector of Indonesia with Iran's capabilities in the technical and engineering sector.

IME Enjoys 9% Rise In Weekly Trade

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed last week trade of 789,176 tons of commodities with a total trading value of nearly \$445m, showing a growth of 9% in volume of trades as compared to the week before.



According to a report by the IME's international affairs and PR, the exchange sold on its mineral and industrial trading floor 312,107 tons of various products worth more than \$221m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 299,717 tons of steel, 7,500 tons of copper, 3,985 tons of aluminum, 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 30 tons of precious metals concentrate, 25 tons of lead, 450 tons of zinc and 20 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the oil and petrochemical trading floor of the IME, on its both domestic and export pits, saw trade of 475,291 tons of various commodities valued at more than \$224m.

On this floor, the exchange's customers purchased 184,480 tons of vacuum bottom, 121,955 tons of bitumen, 77,966 tons of polymeric products, 40,036 tons of chemicals, 48,000 tons of lube cut, 1,901 tons of base oil, 30 tons of argon, 500 tons of insulation and 1,800 tons of sulfur.

In addition to that, the IME traded 1,777 tons of other commodities on its side market.

Baghdad to Speed Up Releasing Iranian Funds



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI) chairman Salem Chalabi says his bank will expedite efforts meant to release funds belonging to Iran and blocked in the bank because of U.S. sanctions on Tehran.

Chalabi said on Saturday during a meeting with Central Bank of Iran governor Abdolnasser Hemmati in Tehran that the TBI will try to diversify channels through which Iran can access its blocked funds in the TBI.

Chalabi has travelled to Tehran with a high-ranking delegation led by Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein.

The TBI maintains billions of dollars of funds that the Iraqi government has deposited in an account in the bank to pay for purchases of natural gas from neighboring Iran.

The funds are believed to be just over a half of funds Iraq owes to its neighbor for energy imports in recent years while the government in Baghdad is expected to use the same TBI account to reimburse its overdue debts to the Iranian Oil Ministry.

Hemmati and Chalabi discussed various options for the transfer of Iranian funds during their Saturday meeting in the CBI headquarters, said a report on the bank's website, adding that Hemmati had urged the immediate release of the funds in the TBI in line with recent agreements between the governments of Iran and Iraq.

Hemmati and other Iranian government officials travelled to Baghdad last year to press for the release of the funds.

Iran has intensified efforts to get the release of tens of billions in funds that have been blocked in banks in other countries since a previous U.S. government withdrew from an international deal on Iran's nuclear program and imposed sanctions on Tehran.

Gov't Reports 6.2% Surge in Non-Oil Exports

TEHRAN (PressTV)- The Iranian customs office IRICA has announced that exports of non-oil goods from the country increased by 6.2 percent in the calendar month to February 18.

IRICA spokesman Rouhollah Latifi said on Saturday that total value of non-oil exports from Iran in the 11th month of the current Iranian calendar year had reached \$3.135 billion, up by \$184 million against the previous month.

Imports declined by \$50 million or 1.32 percent compared to the month ending late January to stand at \$3.682 billion, said Latifi.

That comes against a 19-percent month-on-month drop recorded for exports in the month to late January.

Total value of non-oil exports from Iran for the 11-month period between late March last year and late February this year had amounted to \$31.198 billion, said Latifi, adding that the country had imported \$34.3 billion worth of goods over the same period.

Exports and imports grew by size in the month to late February to reach \$6.817 billion in total, an increase of 1.24 percent month on month.

China remained the top importer of Iranian goods over the same month with \$845 million worth of purchases, followed by Iraq at \$477 million and the United Arab Emirates at \$441 million.

The three countries along Afghanistan and Turkey accounted for 70 percent of all purchases in value terms and 60 percent of the weight of the export cargoes, said Latifi.

Top three exporters into Iran in the month to February 18 included the UAE with \$1.061 billion worth of supplies, followed by China at \$908 million and Turkey at \$426 million. The three along Germany and India were responsible for 76 percent of the value of the cargoes imported into Iran, said the IRICA spokesman.

Energy Ministry Launches New Systems to Improve Services

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian inaugurated several new systems for improving services in the water and electricity sectors through video conference on Sunday.

Launched in the 43rd week of the Energy Ministry's A-B-Iran program, the mentioned systems were put into operation in various areas including resource consumption improvement, asset utilization, human resource management, financial resources management, and reforming work processes in order to create transparency, and to facilitate and accelerate affairs while eliminating possible bottlenecks.

A smart system for improving the Energy Ministry's support and emergency centers called Homa, as well as a new customer services system called Chavoush were also among the launched systems.

A mechanized network monitoring system called Sanam was also put into operation; this system is aimed

at monitoring the electricity networks of various provinces in order to reduce electricity losses and improve the efficiency of the country's power network.

As reported, electricity losses in the country's power network have been reduced from 14.5 percent in the Iranian calendar year 1392 (ended in March 2014) to 9.5 percent in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20) and as a result, the fuel consumption by the country's power plants has also decreased by 16 billion liters.

The mentioned developments have saved the country about 500 trillion rials (about \$11.9 billion) during the said period.

A-B-Iran program (the acronyms A and B stand for water and electricity in Persian) was initiated in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2020), during which the minister made several trips to various provinces for inaugurating over 220 major projects with a total investment of 335.6 trillion rials (about \$7.99 billion).

House Prices in Tehran Grow by 97.2% Y/Y

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - In a report published on its website on Saturday, February 28, the Central Bank of Iran said house prices in Tehran grew by 97.2% from February last year to February 2019.

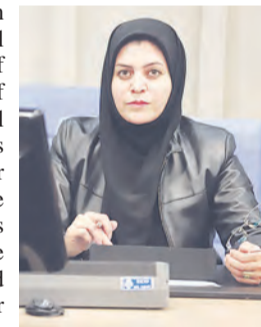
The average price per square meter of housing in Tehran during February 2020 has peaked to 27 million and 386 thousand toman.

The number of housing transactions also reached 3,515 in February this year, compared to 13,264 in February last year. Thus, the number of housing transactions in Tehran has fallen by a quarter of last year's February level.

Levying Tax on Value Added in Free Zones "Against the Law"

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Coordination Manager of financial bodies of Secretariat of the Supreme Council of Free and Special Economic Zones says Majlis decision for levying tax on the value added in the free zones is against the law and the nature of these zones, and it will kill the interest for investment in those zones and will pave the ground for flight of capitals from the zones to the neighboring countries because all the neighboring countries grant more incentives and tax exemption for investments.



Reacting to the Majlis approval regarding tax exemption in the free zones, Elham Sakhaee said that the main advantage of investment in the free and special economic zones to the other areas is its tax exemption and the tax exemption in the zones is according to the law of the administration of the free industrial-trade zones which has been approved in 1994 and it has been levied in the special economic zones according to the law of launching and administering special economic zones which has been approved in 2006.

Sakhaee noted that Majlis decision is in contradiction to the laws regarding administration of free zones. She noted that tax exemption on value added is one of the incentives for investment and production in the free zones, adding that sudden elimination of this advantage will push the economic activists in these areas into new processes that are against the policy of easing the process of the business in those areas, and it will encourage producers to provide their required raw materials from other countries and this is also against the supportive policies from exports and hindering imports of foreign goods.

She added by the way, it will increase the cost of production and kill the interest of investors for investing in those areas.

Sakhaee also claimed that this decision will also affect the tourism industry in those areas while according to the most countries Iran can make most of it tourism industry. She further said most of neighboring countries with fewer privileges comparing to Iran do their best for boosting their tourism industry by offering incentives to the investors in this money-making industry.

Ecuador Health Minister Steps Down

QUITO (Dispatches) - Ecuador's health minister has stepped down after criticism over the distribution plan of COVID-19 vaccines, the latest vaccination-related scandal to roil governments in South America.

Juan Carlos Zevallos tendered his resignation on Friday after claims of irregularities in a pilot programme for vaccinations that the government has been carrying out since January.

Zevallos is under investigation by state prosecutors for mishandling the roll-out after he participated in an inoculation effort at a nursing home where his mother lives.



Moldova Approves Russia's Sputnik V Vaccine

CHISINAU (Reuters) - Moldova's medicines agency on Friday approved Russia's Sputnik V vaccine while President Maia Sandu was accused by her Moscow-friendly predecessor Igor Dodon of blocking Sputnik's use in the country, which Sandu's office denied.

Moldova's Medicines and Medical Devices Agency authorised two vaccines registered for emergency use by the World Health Organization - Pfizer/BioNTech, and a shot developed by Anglo-Swedish firm AstraZeneca - as well as Sputnik V.

Moldova and neighbouring Ukraine have lagged behind wealthier European countries in securing coronavirus vaccines.



Myanmar Army Fires Ambassador To the UN After Anti-Coup Speech



YANGON (Dispatches) - Myanmar's ambassador to the United Nations has been fired, state television reported on Saturday, a day after he urged the UN to use "any means necessary" to halt a military coup.

The Southeast Asian country has been mired in crisis since the military seized power on February 1 and arrested the civilian government leader Aung San Suu Kyi and much of her party, after the military alleged that elections held in November were fraudulent. The election commission found that the vote was fair.

Kyaw Moe Tun had told the UN General Assembly he was speaking on behalf of Aung San Suu Kyi's government "We need further strongest possible action from the international community to immediately end the military coup," he said on Friday. Myanmar state broadcaster MRTV said on Saturday the ambassador had "betrayed the country and spoken for an unofficial organisation which doesn't represent the country and had abused the power and responsibilities of an ambassador". UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar Tom Andrews said early on Saturday that he was overwhelmed by the ambassador's "act of courage", adding on Twitter, "It's time for the world to answer that courageous call with action."

China's envoy did not criticise the coup and said the situation was an internal affair of Myanmar, adding that Beijing supported a diplomatic effort by Southeast Asian countries to find a solution.

The Myanmar generals have traditionally shrugged off diplomatic pressure. Australia's Woodside Petroleum Ltd said it was cutting its presence in Myanmar over concern about rights violations and violence. Al Jazeera's Tony Cheng, reporting from Bangkok, said Kyaw Moe Tun's family in Myanmar were reportedly "keeping their heads down".

"I've spoken to some sources inside Yangon today who say that the extended family are keeping their heads down but they do not appear to be targeted," he said.

"We do know that Myanmar's military has a history of using families overseas to target people it wants to have influence over," he added.

Reporting from the United Nations, Al Jazeera's James Bays said the military's move to fire the ambassador could be the beginning of a long process at the UN.

"The military say that they have fired him. Does that mean that he is no longer the ambassador here in New York? It's not entirely clear at this stage.

"This could end up as a drawn-out affair, assuming the ambassador wishes to stay in the United States and we assume he won't want to back to Myanmar because of possible reprisals against him.

"If he says he is staying and is still the legitimate representative of the real government in Myanmar, whose leaders are currently in jail, then it will go to a complicated procedure at the UN General Assembly called the credentials committee, that has nine members on it.

"Currently it has the U.S., Russia and China among those members, and they will have to decide what to do."

Armenia's President Rebuffs PM's Order To Sack Top Army Official

YEREVAN (Dispatches) - Armenian President Armen Sarkisian said Saturday he had refused to sign a prime ministerial order to dismiss the army's chief of staff, deepening a national political crisis.

The ex-Soviet nation has faced turmoil since Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan signed a Moscow-brokered peace accord in November, sealing a defeat to Azerbaijan after six weeks of fighting over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Divisions widened Thursday when Pashinyan defied a call by the military to resign, accused the army of an attempted coup, and ordered the chief of the general staff, Onik Gasparyan, to be fired.

On Saturday, President Sarkisian said in a statement that he would not back the sacking.

"The president of the republic, within the framework of his constitutional powers, returned the draft decree with objections," the presidency said. It added that the political crisis "cannot be resolved through frequent personnel changes".

Earlier in the day, 5,000 opposition protesters waving Armenian flags and calling for Pashinyan's resignation gathered for the third day running outside the parliament in Yerevan.

"Today Pashinyan has no support. I call on the security services and the police to join the army, to support the army," said former premier Vazgen Manukyan, who has been named by the opposition to replace Pashinyan.

"I am sure that the situation will be resolved within two to three days," he told the crowd.

Pashinyan has faced fierce criticism since he signed the peace deal over Nagorno-Karabakh, an ethnic Armenian region that broke from Azerbaijan's control during a war in the early 1990s.

The agreement was seen as a national humiliation for many in Armenia, but Pashinyan has said he had no choice but to agree or see his country's forces suffer even bigger losses.



Dissident Leader Ferrer Arrested in Cuba

HAVANA (Dispatches) - Leading Cuban dissident Jose Daniel Ferrer was arrested on Friday at his home in Santiago de Cuba, one of his supporters said.

"They arbitrarily detained Jose Daniel Ferrer, leader of Unpacu, and until now he is missing," Zaqueo Baez, deputy national coordinator of the group, told AFP by telephone, referring to the banned opposition organization the Patriotic Union of Cuba.

Ferrer, one of the most recognizable dissidents who has chosen to stay in Cuba rather than go into exile, had been under house arrest.

He was jailed in 2003 after leading calls for democratic political reforms.

After being released in 2011 following pressure from the Roman Catholic Church, he formed Unpacu.

An activist said police had entered Ferrer's house, the organisation's national headquarters, on Friday and taken him out through the back door of the house.

Ferrer had painted the phrase "Patria y Vida" ("Fatherland and Life") on the facade, the title of a protest song by Cuban rappers denouncing the communist government.



Ferrer and three other members of his organization were imprisoned from March 2019 to April 2020 but their sentences were commuted to between four and five years of house arrest.

Anger Brews Over Prison Death of Bangladesh Writer

DHAKA (AFP) - Hundreds of people in Bangladesh took part Saturday in a second day of demonstrations sparked by the death of a writer at a high security prison in a case that has drawn international concern.

Protesters marched at the University of Dhaka chanting slogans condemning the government's treatment of Mushtaq Ahmed as well as other dissident writers, journalists and activists.

Another protest was staged at the National Press Club. Demonstrators demanded the scrapping of Bangladesh's headline Digital Security Act (DSA) under which Ahmed was imprisoned. The law has been used to crack down on dissent since it was enacted in 2018.

Security forces clashed with students in Dhaka on Friday night. Police said six people were arrested while activists said at least 30 were injured.

Ahmed collapsed and died at Kashimpur High Security Prison late Thursday. He was first detained in May after criticizing on Facebook the government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

The 53-year-old, a crocodile farmer and a writer known for his satirical style, was charged with spreading rumors and conducting "anti-state activities".

Protesters have called his death a "custodial murder" after he was denied bail six times in 10 months.

"Mushtaq Ahmed's death was not a normal death. We'll say it was a murder," said Manisha Chakraborty, a protester with a left wing group.

Demonstrators said they would march to the office of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina carrying a coffin later Saturday.

Facing international questions on the case, authorities have ordered a probe into Ahmed's death, senior government official S.M. Tarikul Islam told AFP.

"We formed a committee to probe whether there was negligence by jail officials or procedures in his treatment," Islam said.

Thirteen ambassadors from countries including the United States, France, Britain, Canada and Germany have expressed "grave concern".

"We call on the government of Bangladesh to conduct a swift, transparent and independent inquiry into the full circumstances of Mr. Mushtaq Ahmed's death," the ambassadors said in a statement released late Friday.

They said their countries would be following up over "wider concerns about the provisions and implementation of the DSA, as well as questions about its compatibility with Bangladesh's obligations under international human rights laws and standards."

Rights groups have also raised concerns about the case.



Navalny Allies to Commemorate Anniversary of Nemtsov's Murder

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Members of Russia's opposition plan to commemorate the sixth anniversary of opposition politician Boris Nemtsov's murder in central Moscow on Saturday amid a clampdown on protests over the jailing of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

Allies of Navalny, who was jailed this month on parole violations he said were trumped up, have called on his supporters to lay flowers on the Moscow bridge where Nemtsov was gunned down on the night of Feb. 27, 2015, near the Kremlin.

Navalny's allies have declared a moratorium on street protests until spring after several nationwide rallies were broken up by police who detained more than 11,000 people, according to a monitoring group.

But the opposition urged Muscovites to come to pay their respects to Nemtsov while observing social distancing and wearing medical masks. Moscow authorities turned down a request for them to hold a commemorative march due to the pandemic.

"This is a memorial event, not a rally or a march," opposition politicians said. "We recommend that you refrain from bringing posters. There is no need to give any reasons for the police to detain (participants)."

Nemtsov, who briefly served as deputy prime minister in the late 1990s before joining the opposition, had been working on a report examining Russia's role in the conflict in Ukraine at the time of his killing.

After his murder, opposition activists began guarding a makeshift memorial on the bridge when municipal authorities turned down a request to put up a plaque there in his honor.

City workers have taken down the memorial on several occasions over the years. Police detained eight people last week as they tried to lay flowers at the memorial after it was dismantled by police.

In 2017 a court sentenced five men to between 11 and 20 years in prison for their involvement in Nemtsov's murder, but the late politician's allies said at the time that the people who had ordered his killing remained at large.



Farmanieh Apt (\$3000)
300sq.m, 4bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
nice view
pkg, & F.F

Shanon (adviser)

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

Parsian

Available Apts
Mahmoodeih (\$2000) 180sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F
Kamranieh (\$3000) 280sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F
Gheitarieh (\$1500) 120sq.m, 2bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F
 Mountain view

Fereshteh Apts
(\$1600) 2bdrs, S/p, F.F
(\$2200) 3bdrs, S/p, F.F

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

Vanak offices
(\$20 per sq.m) 200sq.m, pkg
(\$35 per sq.m) 400sq.m, pkg

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

India's Inflation Target Band Appropriate for Next 5 Years

MUMBAI (Reuters) - India's current medium-term inflation target band is appropriate for the next five years, the Reserve Bank of India said in an internal report published. The RBI seeks to keep inflation within a 2-6% range with a target of achieving 4% inflation over the medium term. India's central bank adopted the flexible inflation targeting framework in 2016 to tackle high and volatile prices driven by fuel and food prices in Asia's third-largest economy. The target band has to be reviewed every five years, according to the law.



G20 Promises No Let-Up in Stimulus, Sees Tax Deal by Summer

ROME (Reuters) - The world's financial leaders agreed on Friday to maintain expansionary policies to help economies survive the effects of COVID-19, and committed to a more multilateral approach to the twin coronavirus and economic crises.

The Italian presidency of the G20 group of the world's top economies said the gathering of finance chiefs had pledged to work more closely to accelerate a still fragile and uneven recovery. "We agreed that any premature withdrawal of fiscal and monetary support should be avoided," Daniele Franco, Italy's finance minister, told a news conference after the videolinked meeting held by the G20 finance ministers and central bankers.

The United States is readying \$1.9 trillion in fiscal stimulus and the European Union has already put together more than 3 trillion euros (\$3.63 trillion) to keep its economies through lockdowns. But despite the large sums, problems with the global rollout of vaccines and the emergence of new coronavirus variants mean the future path of the recovery remains uncertain.

The G20 is "committed to scaling up international coordination to tackle current global challenges by adopting a stronger multilateral approach and focusing on a set of core priorities," the Italian presidency said in a statement.

The meeting was the first since Joe Biden - who pledged to rebuild U.S. cooperation in international bodies - U.S. president, and significant progress appeared to have been made on the thorny issue of taxation of multinational companies, particularly web giants like Google, Amazon and Facebook.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told the G20 Washington had dropped the Trump administration's proposal to let some companies opt out of new global digital tax rules, raising hopes for an agreement by summer. The move was hailed as a major breakthrough by Germany's Finance Minister Olaf Scholz and his French counterpart Bruno Le Maire.

Scholz said Yellen told the G20 officials that Washington also planned to reform U.S. minimum tax regulations in line with an OECD proposal for a global effective minimum tax. "This is a giant step forward," Scholz said.

Italy's Franco said the new U.S. stance should pave the way to an overarching deal on taxation of multinationals at a G20 meeting of finance chiefs in Venice in July. The G20 also discussed how to help the world's poorest countries, whose economies are being disproportionately hit by the crisis.

On this front there was broad support for boosting the capital of the International Monetary Fund to help it provide more loans, but no concrete numbers were proposed.

To give itself more firepower, the Fund proposed last year to increase its war chest by \$500 billion in the IMF's own currency called the Special Drawing Rights (SDR), but the idea was blocked by Trump. "There was no discussion on specific amounts of SDRs," Franco said, adding that the issue would be looked at again on the basis of a proposal prepared by the IMF for April.

While the IMF sees the U.S. economy returning to pre-crisis levels at the end of this year, it may take Europe until the middle of 2022 to reach that point.

The recovery is fragile elsewhere too. Factory activity in China grew at the slowest pace in five months in January, and in Japan fourth quarter growth slowed from the previous quarter. Some countries had expressed hopes the G20 may extend a suspension of debt servicing costs for the poorest countries beyond June, but no decision was taken.

The issue will be discussed at the next meeting, Franco said.

Turkish Inflation Expected to Exceed 15% in February

ISTANBUL (Reuters) - Turkey's annual inflation is expected to rise to more than 15% in February, a Reuters poll showed on Friday, as fruit and vegetable prices continue to exert upward pressure.

In a Reuters poll of 16 economists, the median estimate for annual consumer price inflation in February was 15.39%, with forecasts ranging between 15.10% and 15.70%. It stood at 14.97% in January.

The median for the month-on-month rise was 0.7%, with forecasts ranging between 0.5% and 1%.

"The food group with its increased weight in the basket, especially fruit and vegetable prices, could exert upside pressure on February inflation," said Serkan Gonencler, an economist at Gedik Yatirim.

Inflation is expected to peak at around 16% in April before falling gradually, Gonencler said, adding that a continuation of the recent weakness in the lira could add upside pressure.

"A policy rate hike could still come on the agenda if the recent lira weakening continues and negatively impacts the inflation path. We continue to think that the central bank could consider rate cuts in Q3 after a fall in the inflation print."

The lira strengthened following the change of economic management in November, but was hit this week by surging U.S. bond yields that helped erase nearly all the year's gains.

The central bank, which has repeatedly said it would target inflation more strongly under new governor Naci Agbal, has raised its policy rate by 675 basis points to 17% since November. The benchmark rate was held steady in January and February meetings.

The central bank expects inflation to come down to 9.4% by the end of 2021. However it said changes of weightings in the inflation basket will have an upside impact on annual inflation until mid-2021.

The central bank said the changes were projected to increase inflation by 0.5 points by April, then die out towards the end of the year. In the Reuters poll, the median forecast of 14 economists for inflation at year-end stood at 10.90%, with estimates ranging between 10.00% and 12.00%.



Fiscal Stimulus Fires Up U.S. Consumer Spending

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. consumer spending increased by the most in seven months in January as the government doled out more pandemic relief money to low-income households and new COVID-19 infections dropped, positioning the economy for faster growth in the first quarter.

Despite the strong rebound in consumer spending reported by the Commerce Department on Friday, price pressures were muted. Inflation is being closely watched amid concerns from some quarters that President Joe Biden's proposed \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 recovery package could cause the economy to overheat. The plan, being considered by the U.S. Congress, would be on top of a rescue package worth nearly \$900 billion approved by the government in late December. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell has played down the inflation fears, citing three decades of lower and stable prices.

"Thanks to Washington, the economic outlook in the near future is sunny," said Sung Won Sohn, finance and economics professor at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

Consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of U.S. economic activity, jumped 2.4% last month. That was the biggest gain since last June and ended two-straight monthly declines. Personal income shot up 10%, the largest increase since last April when the government disbursed the first round of stimulus checks. Income rose 0.6% in December.

The recent stimulus package included \$600 checks to mostly low-income and some middle-income Americans. The package also extended a government-funded weekly unemployment subsidy as well as benefits for millions of people who do not qualify for state unemployment programs as well as those who have exhausted their six months of eligibility. These benefits expire in mid-March.

The consumer spending report added to upbeat data this month on manufacturing output, building permits and home sales.



Russia Offers to Import Hydrogen to Spain in Future

MOSCOW (Tass) - Russia offered Spain to start purchasing Russian hydrogen in the future, said Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak following the results of the intergovernmental commission meeting with Spain on trade and economic cooperation on Friday.

"The European trend towards decarbonization of the EU economy gives Russia and Spain additional opportunities to create innovative technological solutions. Hydrogen energy is in the foreground here, according to which we propose to consider future export supplies of hydrogen from Russia to Spain," Novak said.

As he noted, the pandemic had a significant impact on the dynamics of trade between the countries, which by the end of 2020 decreased by 19% to \$ 4.7 bln continuation of joint projects. We have prepared a list of priority product groups for which it is possible to significantly increase exports from Russia," Novak added. The co-chairmen of the commission noted the presence of significant potential for the further development of cooperation between the two countries in the field of transport, tourism, mechanical engineering, space, energy, food industry, aviation, as well as in the field of small and medium-sized businesses. As a result of the meeting, the Russia and Spain signed a strategy for the development of long-term bilateral relations in economy and investment.

Russia can become one of the world leaders not only in terms of hydrogen supplies, but also in the field of technologies for hydrogen energy, said earlier Novak. He noted that at present several dozen companies are engaged in hydrogen technologies in Russia. The biggest ones are Gazprom, Rosatom, Novatek, Rostec, Rusnano.

Japan's Jan Factory Output Rises for First Time in 3 Months

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan's industrial output rose for the first time in three months in January thanks to a pickup in global demand, in a welcome sign for an economy still looking to shake off the drag of the coronavirus pandemic.

But retail sales, a key gauge of consumer spending, posted their second straight month of declines in January as emergency measures taken in response to the pandemic hit consumption.

Official data released on Friday showed factory output advanced 4.2% in January, boosted by sharp rises in production of electronic parts and general-purpose machinery, as well as a smaller increase in car output.

"Manufacturers will continue to increase output over the near term as long as there won't

be any big shock," said Taro Saito, executive research fellow at NLI Research Institute.

While economic growth will likely be negative in the first quarter, the strength in manufacturing would offset the negative impact of a state of emergency at home, which is mainly affecting the services sector, he said.

The rise in output, which followed a 1.0% fall the previous month, was largely in line with a 4.0% gain forecast in a Reuters poll of economists. Manufacturers surveyed by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) expect output to grow 2.1% in February, followed by a 6.1% decline in March.

The government kept its assessment of industrial production unchanged, saying it was picking up. Factory output fell in November and December as a rebound in car production ended on sagging global demand, but since then strong demand for tech-making equipment and electronic goods has helped turn the tide.

Still, some analysts worry that Japan's economic recovery will remain hobbled by weaker conditions at home and as lockdown measures taken around the world to contain the COVID-19 crisis, particularly in Europe, weigh.

The government also released data on Friday showing retail sales fell 2.4% in January compared with the same month a year earlier, in a sign households tightened their purse strings as the coronavirus staged a resurgence.

The fall, which was in line with a 2.6% drop seen by economists in a Reuters poll, was largely due to sharp contractions in general merchandise and fabrics apparel spending. It followed a 0.2% fall in December.

Compared to a month earlier, retail sales in January fell 0.5% on a seasonally adjusted basis for the third straight month of declines. But the pace of decline was slower than in the previous two months. "We think consumer spending will only fall around 1% quarter-on-quarter this quarter," said Tom Learnmouth, Japan economist at Capital Economics.

"We expect it to rise fairly strongly over the coming quarters as the recovery resumes and is soon given a shot in the arm by vaccines," he added.

China's Factory Activity Growth Likely Moderated



BEIJING (Reuters) - China's factory activity likely grew at a slightly slower rate in February as factories closed for the Lunar New Year holiday, a Reuters poll showed, although growth is expected to remain firm, buoyed by an early resumption of production.

The official manufacturing Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI) is expected to dip marginally to 51.1 in February from 51.3 in January, according to the median forecast of 20 economists polled by Reuters. A reading above 50 indicates an expansion in activity on a monthly basis.

Chinese factories typically scale back operations or close for lengthy periods around the Lunar New Year holiday, which fell in the middle of February this year.

However, the resurgence of COVID-19 cases in the winter had prompted local governments and companies to dissuade workers from travelling back to their hometowns, giving a boost to the earlier-than-usual resumption of production at many factories, analysts say.

"Although government COVID-19 prevention measures may constrain some manufacturing activities in the near-term, the fact that a majority of migrant workers stayed in their workplace cities for the holiday should facilitate an earlier resumption of business activity following the holiday this year," said analysts at Nomura in a note to client on Thursday.

Wang Zhishen, a migrant worker from Gansu, told Reuters that his factory, a manufacturer of logistics boxes in the manufacturing hub of Dongguan, only closed for three days during the holiday, thanks to overwhelming businesses. Lured by the 1,500-yuan cash subsidy his factory offered, he chose to work through the holiday.

The Chinese economy has largely shaken off the gloom from the COVID-19 health crisis, with consumers opening up their wallets after months of hesitation. Growth is now set to rebound sharply this quarter, also helped by the low base effect of a year ago.

Azizi Khadem Elected as Head Of Iran Football Federation

TEHRAN (MNA) – Shahabeddin Azizi Khadem has been elected as the new President of the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The IRIFF Electoral General Assembly was held today in Tehran as four candidates ran for the presidency of the body almost one year after former chief Mehdi Taj handed in his resignation.

Mostafa Ajorloo, Ali Karimi, Koiumars Hashemi, and Shahabeddin Azizi Khadem were the four candidates for the presidency's seat.



India's Economy Exits Deep Recession as Fledgling Recovery Strengthens

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - After plunging into one of the worst recessions of any major economy, India is showing signs of a modest comeback.

But that recovery is uneven, and the country is still struggling to find ways to sustain growth. Its service sector is vulnerable, and the vast informal economy — which employs farmhands, day laborers, rickshaw drivers and many millions of others — remains weak as well.

India's economic output grew 0.4 percent in the third quarter, which ended in December, from a year earlier, according to economic data released by the Indian government on Friday. The figures show that India has emerged from a recession, which is generally defined as two consecutive quarters of economic shrinkage.

The economic turnaround is good news for the government of Narendra Modi, the prime minister, and for Indian households that have struggled with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the country and on the global economy. But that rate is still slow compared with past years, when the economy annually grew 6 percent or more.

Growth had already been stumbling for the two years before the pandemic hit. The challenge for the government will be to find opportunities for a relatively young and aspirational population.

The fledgling recovery was driven by services, agriculture, construction and some sectors of manufacturing, economists said. The service sector — especially financial and professional services — has done much better than expected, said Priyanka Kishore, head of South Asia at Oxford Economics.

"The broadening of the recovery, alongside the solid growth momentum, creates upside risks to the 2021 growth outlook," she said. "However, there are reasons to be cautious in the near term, given the slow start to vaccination, spikes in cases in some states and the threats from new variants."

Last spring and summer, India imposed one of the world's strictest and longest lockdowns, allowing only essential services to function. That brought the economy to a near standstill and left many people unemployed, especially workers in the country's enormous informal economy. India's economy was one of the worst performing among major countries last year, contracting 24 percent in the first quarter, despite expansive government spending. In the second quarter, it contracted again, by more than 7 percent.

For the moment, though, the pandemic appears to be largely under control, and India has emerged from its lockdown. New virus cases have dropped to around 15,000 per day, compared with nearly 100,000 last fall. Virus deaths have dropped to around 100 per day, compared with more than 1,000 during the worst period of 2020.

But cases are rising again in some parts of the country, including the financial capital of Mumbai.

In recent weeks, in many Indian cities, life has returned to near normal. Restaurants and bars are crowded over weekends. Movie theaters, swimming pools and gyms have reopened. Street markets are thronged with people shopping for weddings and festivals. And some schools are finally back in session.



India produces millions of doses of coronavirus vaccines each day, and the world's largest immunization drive is fully underway, though it is restricted to frontline workers. More than 13 million people have received at least one dose of the vaccine. The government has announced that starting on March 1, private hospitals will also be allowed to administer the vaccine to anyone over 60 years or those over 45 years old with certain medical conditions.

Experts hope that as the vaccination rollout picks up pace, it will blunt the effects of a possible second wave and put the economy back on track. But the data shows an uneven recovery, with small businesses facing the brunt of the downturn.

"Large companies have seen a major increase in their profit. This shows up in the G.D.P. numbers. In the two consecutive quarters, the listed companies have made unprecedented record profits," said Mahesh Vyas, chief executive of the Center for Monitoring of the Indian Economy. "They are grabbing markets at the expense of small-scale industries. So small- and medium-size companies are not able to survive."

But the G.D.P. figures do not reflect the effect on the informal economy, said Arun Kumar, an economist at the Institute of Social Sciences in New Delhi.

"This data does not account for the unorganized sector at all, and that is the sector which was hit the most," he said. "The organized sector in e-commerce is gaining at the expense of brick-and-mortar stores."

The unorganized sector excluding agriculture employs nearly 50 percent of the work force and contributes more than 30 percent of the G.D.P.

Various agencies forecast that the Indian economy will grow more than 10 percent in 2021.

But the Indian government, which had been predicting a higher growth rate for the last quarter, now says the economy will have shrunk by 8 percent for the financial year that ends in March.

End of Bloodshed...

FROM PAGE 1

The strategic solution for resolving the Yemen crisis should not lead to ignore the U.S. economic interests with the Saudi Family and its ally, namely Saudi Arabia, and it should save Saudis from this abyss which has been grappling with it and no end to it is imagined for it. Most experts believe that end of war between Riyadh and Sanaa will not be easily attained because it relies on some decisive and determining factors. First, the domestic affairs of Yemen after the war and the relation with the U.S. and reactionary Arab states are very important; therefore, until this condition is provided, it is actually difficult to predict the end of the war between Saudis and warring parties in Yemen.



On the Yemeni side, Ansarullah welcomes any political solution but it considers cessation of bombing and removing sanctions as a gateway for entering the peace talks. Now for Ansarullah, ceasefire without removing sanctions and cessation in bombardment is not any longer the priorities for making decision and this group explicitly repeats that they cannot enter the political talks under the bombardment and threats and they cannot make decision under the heavy pressures of killing starving and defenseless people.

Therefore, the issue of ceasefire for Ansarullah is considered as a matter of verification for the planners of peace talks, and the issues of removing sanctions and cessation in bombardment should be shaped seriously in true sense, and it is natural that talks under the pressure of sanctions and bloodshed are a lever for a unilateral dominance and will be of -no worth for Ansarullah and other Yemeni groups.

If we flash back to a couple of months ago, news reports bespeak that the Trump Administration had vowed that it would supply Saudis with strategic weapons after restoration of diplomatic ties between the UAE and Bahrain with Zionist regime in order that Saudis could show their superior and effective power in encountering Yemen. This idea of delivering strategic weapons to Saudis faced opposition both in the U.S. Congress and among the Republican Party as they feared lest these weapons are employed in favor of Shiite current in Saudi Arabia but with change in the residents of the White House, it seems the Biden Administration unlike the Trump Administration is not so willing for arms deal with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and it will not evaluate cooperation with him in line with the policy of restoring the law and the lost reputation of the U.S., especially the issue of murder of Khashoggi by Bin Salman is one of the issues that it may be one of the serious differences between the U.S. Democrat Administration and the Saudi government.

That the U.S. slaps sanctions on 70 people involved in the murder but closes its eyes on Bin Salman's crime means that since the U.S. in the COVID-19 pandemic era has faced with negative economic growth unprecedented in the past four decades in the country, and all the ruling U.S. administrations have looked at Saudi Arabia as a milking cow, Biden Administration has no way but to ignore Bin Salman's crime because Saudis with their wealth will have no serious problem in creating pressure and purchasing people like Biden, of course, not in Trump's level.

So I believe that end of bloodshed in Yemen will not happen easily and it will not be conceivable so soon unless Ansarullah in the military front takes seriously destroying the infrastructures of Saudis and makes the return of the U.S. companies to the Saudi Arabia's economy face serious challenges.

Yemeni Forces...

FROM PAGE 1

Under the pretext of helping out Saudi Arabia -- Washington's most treasured regional ally after the Israeli regime -- former U.S. president Donald Trump poured out advanced and precision arms and munition into the kingdom that Riyadh would, in turn, rain down on Yemen without any qualms.

The support included a \$110-million arms deal with Riyadh, where Trump travelled in his maiden foreign trip at the height of the war. Washington would also lend ample logistical support, including bombing coordinates, and political patronage for the kingdom's aggression against the impoverished country.

Following the Yemeni forces' reprisal, the Saudi-led coalition carried out a drone attack against a residence in the western Yemeni port city of al-Hudaydah, killing five members of the same family, including a child.

The attack that also wounded some others marked another violation by the coalition of a United Nations-mediated truce that is supposed to govern the city.

Pakistan, Iraq Agree to Bolster Military Cooperation

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan and Iraq officials agreed to bolster military cooperation as Islamabad offered to provide training to Iraqi armed forces during the visit of Iraqi defense minister to Islamabad.

Iraq's Defense Minister Juma Anaad Sadoun held separate meetings with Pakistan's top government and military officials during his four-day (24-27 February 2021) visit focused on strengthening bilateral relations especially cooperation in the field of defense.

During the interaction, Pakistan's President Dr Arif Alvi offered training programs for the Iraqi military personnel in Pakistan as well as technical assistance and human resource for infrastructure development in Iraq.

"Pakistan attaches great importance to the mutually beneficial relations with Iraq and wants to further strengthen bilateral relations in the areas of trade, economy and defense" President Alvi said. The Iraqi minister expressed Iraq's desire to improve economic and political relations as well as defence ties with Pakistan.

The Iraqi defense minister also discussed measures to further enhance bilateral defense and security collaboration during his meeting with Pakistan's Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa at the GHQ.

Pakistan's army chief offered all possible assistance and cooperation in development and defense related fields to Iraq, stating that "Pakistan values its brotherly relationship with Iraq and acknowledges sacrifices rendered by the Iraqi nation in fighting terrorism." The visiting dignitary praised Pakistan's continuous efforts for peace and stability in the region.

Pakistan's Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Nadeem Raza and Iraq's defense minister, in a separate session at joint staff headquarters, reaffirmed their determination to work together for enhancing security and stability in the region.

Iraq's Defense Minister Juma Anaad Sadoun also met Pakistani Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Minister for Defense Production Zobiaida Jalal on February 26 to exchange views on future collaboration.

Qureshi hoped that the visit would "help diversify and deepen collaboration between the two countries in the fields of defence and defence production." The two ministers reaffirmed the mutual desire to further promote and solidify existing bilateral relations.

Pakistan is looking to enhance defense cooperation with Baghdad particularly with the training and development of Iraqi armed forces. Last month, Minister for Defense Production Zobiaida Jalal and her delegation visited Baghdad where she held a meeting with the President of Iraq, Barham Salih, to discuss the bilateral cooperation in the defense sector.

Airbus Reports Emissions Data Amid Climate Pressure

PARIS (Reuters) - European planemaker Airbus on Friday joined a growing list of companies outlining the environmental impact of their products, as aviation aims to reshape itself after the coronavirus crisis.

Major companies are under increasing pressure from investors and climate change activists to report the emissions that result when customers use their products, known as "Scope 3".

Airbus says it is the first planemaker to do so.

It says it is driving aerospace toward zero-emission flying with plans for a commercial aircraft powered by hydrogen by 2035, which it reaffirmed on Friday.

But environmentalist groups say that flying itself needs to be curbed to have a meaningful impact on climate change.

Airbus estimated lifetime emissions for jets built in two dramatically different years: 2019, which saw

record deliveries on the back of an order boom, and 2020, when the pandemic sent aviation into crisis and forced Airbus to slash output by 40%.

For the 863 jets it delivered in 2019, Airbus estimated lifetime emissions of 740 million tons of CO2 equivalent based on an average aircraft lifespan of 22 years. That includes 130 million tons related to the production of fuel burned in flight. In 2020, it delivered 566 aircraft with estimated lifetime emissions of 440 million tons, including 80 million for fuel.

Airbus also published carbon intensity data suggesting an "average efficiency" of 66.6 grams of CO2e per passenger-kilometre in 2019, improving to 63.5g in 2020.

A senior Airbus official said the data included conservative assumptions for synthetic fuels, whose use is expected to grow.

Tehran Not Interested...

FROM PAGE 1

"When the Trump administration decided to leave the JCPOA, the remaining parties to the JCPOA asked us not to adopt a stance similar to that of Trump. They said they will compensate for the damages caused by the Trump administration's withdrawal from the deal. We waited for a year, but we didn't get anything from their promises, and it was just an empty promise," he said.

Therefore, the envoy added, Iran had no other choice if it wanted to create a balance in the nuclear deal, and thus started to take certain measures in that regard.

"Recently, when our Parliament witnessed that the other parties to the JCPOA are not serious about making up for our damages, and that the E3 is not willing to fulfil its commitments, it decided to ... pass a law that obliges the administration to take measures like increasing uranium enrichment."

"What we did was based on the Paragraph 36 of the nuclear deal, and was in line with our commitments based on the text and spirit of the JCPOA," he added. "It wasn't Iran that sent arms to a region far from its territory; it was rather the US that sent arms and warships to our region, which is 7,000 miles away from America," he said.

"All these provocative moves, including the assassination of our dear general Martyr Soleimani which was a very provocative terrorist attack, were made by the U.S. Iran hasn't had and still doesn't have any interest in making provocative moves," Takht-Ravanchi said. When asked about Qatar's bid to mediate between Tehran and Washington, Takht-Ravanchi said the US return to the JCPOA needs no mediator.

"We have good relations with our Qatari brothers. Qatar is a totally friendly country, but we believe the U.S. must return to its commitments in full, and that's what needs to be done. Therefore, it needs no mediator."

Takht-Ravanchi said the U.S. implementation of its commitments does not even need any negotiation.

"It is up to the U.S. to decide whether it wants to fulfil its commitments or not. The implementation of their commitments does not need any negotiation. The US needs to make the necessary decisions," he added.

He said the U.S. administration is well aware the sooner it returns to its JCPOA commitments, the better.

"The best way is that the U.S. returns to its commitments, and then Iran will do the same. In that way, talks can be held on the JCPOA-related issues within the P5+1 platform. This is an easy and diplomatic way, and I think this solution can be easily achieved," he added.

Pakistan-Iran-Turkey...

FROM PAGE 1

Hamdan Nazie, an official from Pakistan Railways said, "0.23 Euros per kilometer will be charged if goods container is 40 feet size and instructions have also been issued to launch print and electronic media campaign for the success of the project." In the past, first train was launched on August 14, 2009. After the inauguration, a total of eight trains were made operational but after some time were closed due to security reasons.

Koepka Grabs One-Shot WGC-Workday Lead

MIAMI (AFP) - Four-time major champion Brooks Koepka fired seven birdies in a six-under par 66 to seize a one-shot second-round lead in the World Golf Championships-Workday Championship. The former world number one, seeking his second win this month after finally putting nagging knee and hip injuries behind him, had an 11-under par total of 133 at Concession Golf Club in Bradenton, Florida, which is hosting the event after coronavirus logistical problems forced the move of the WGC-Mexico.

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

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

Double World Cup Winner Pathan Calls It Quits

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Yusuf Pathan, who won the World Cup and Twenty20 world title with India, has retired from all cricket at the age of 38. Tributes were led by Indian great Sachin Tendulkar who said the hard-hitting all-rounder had been one of the "great students" of the game. "The time has come for me today to put a full stop to this innings of my life. I officially announce retirement from all forms of the game," the 38-year-old said in a statement released late Friday.

Man City Stride Clear In Premier League

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City's dominant centre-backs Ruben Dias and John Stones both struck as the Premier League leaders beat West Ham 2-1 on Saturday, while West Brom enlivened the battle to beat the drop with a controversial 1-0 win over Brighton.

Pep Guardiola's men are now 13 points clear thanks to a 20-game winning run in all competitions that has seen them close in on an unprecedented quadruple of trophies.

For the first time in recent weeks, City showed signs of fatigue, though, and needed the centre-back pairing that has been a huge part of their success defensively this season to also make their mark at other end.

"After 10 or 15 minutes today we realized we were not going to paint anything beautiful," said Guardiola. "When you play a lot of games - in the league and then the Champions League - this is normal. We were lucky to get all three points."

Kevin De Bruyne made just his second start since returning from a hamstring injury and the Belgian's teasing cross was powered by home by Dias for his first City goal since joining from Benfica in September.

City had kept eight clean sheets in their previous 10 league games, but West Ham showed why they are fourth and pushing to edge out the likes of Liverpool, Chelsea, Tottenham and Arsenal to qualify for next season's Champions League.

Michail Antonio had already threatened an equaliser by hitting the post before he did level by tapping home Jesse Lingard's mishit shot just before half-time.

Stones was harshly dropped for a 2-0 Champions League win at Borussia Monchengladbach in midweek after revitalising his career this season, and the England defender smashed home Riyad Mahrez's pass to restore City's lead on 68 minutes.



West Ham could still have snatched a point deep into stoppage time when Issa Diop headed a glorious chance wide.

"I'm really disappointed we didn't get a point," said West Ham boss David Moyes. "It was a terrific performance. We came here and tried to match a top side - and for long periods we did."

West Brom kept their hopes of avoiding the drop alive with just a second win in 13 games under Sam Allardyce in a game overshadowed by a surreal moment of refereeing by Lee Mason that cost Brighton an equaliser.

Kyle Bartley's early header gave West Brom the lead before Pascal Gross hit the bar from the penalty spot for the visitors.

Brighton did have the ball in the end when Lewis Dunk's quickly taken free-kick, after Mason had whistled for it to be taken, caught Sam Johnstone napping.

Mason initially did not award the goal before reversing his decision. However, after reviewing the incident on VAR, the goal was ruled out as the referee changed his mind for a second time.

"Lewis Dunk takes a quick free-kick and bends the ball into the net but after consulting the VAR, referee Lee Mason has overturned the goal because the whistle had been blown a second time before the ball had crossed the line," the Premier League said in a statement to justify the decision.

Victory for the Baggies hauls Allardyce's men to within eight points of safety, while Brighton remain just four points clear of the drop zone in 16th.

Popyrin Crushes Cilic's Singapore Title Hopes



SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Australia's Alexei Popyrin took out third seed Marin Cilic in an absorbing contest at the Singapore Tennis Open on Saturday, prevailing 7-6 (5), 7-6 (2) over the Croat to make it to his first ATP Tour final.

Popyrin let out a huge roar after sealing his victory in front of 250 fans, who were allowed to attend the tournament after passing Covid-19 tests.

"I worked my whole life to get into an ATP final and I'm finally in one tomorrow. It's definitely an amazing feeling but I got one more match to go and I want to focus on that," said the world number 114.

After taking the second set to a tiebreak, Popyrin raced to a 5-0 lead with his huge serves, helped no less by two unforced errors from Cilic.

The former world number three managed to stage a fightback to 2-5 but another ace from Popyrin swung the advantage back to the Australian, giving him four match points.

A powerful serve followed by a forehand winner eventually saw Popyrin winning in just under two hours.

De Vries Wins Formula E Opener in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Dutchman Nyck de Vries stormed to a lights-to-flag victory in the season-opening race of the Formula E championship, piloting his all-electric car under the stars in oil-rich Saudi Arabia.

De Vries, in a Mercedes, finished ahead of Switzerland's Edoardo Mortara of Venturi and New Zealand's Mitch Evans in a Jaguar in the floodlit Diriyah E-Prix.

Mercedes, multiple champions in Formula One, are in their second season in the Formula E series.

They finished the 2020 campaign with a victory helping them to third place in the constructors championship and second in the drivers category with Belgian Stoffel Vandoorne.

De Vries, 26, was Formula Two world champion in 2019 and made the podium in Formula E last season with a second place run in Berlin in June.

He was reluctant, however, to predict an era of Mercedes Formula E dominance to rival the company's stranglehold on F1.

"There is too much going on in Formula E," said De Vries, who led from start to finish after also dominating both free practice sessions. "Today, everything went well. It's encouraging but we must remain humble. Tomorrow is another day."

Zubcic Topples Faivre in 2nd Run of Giant Slalom

SOFIA (Dispatches) - Croatian Filip Zubcic delivered in the second run of the giant slalom in Bansko, Bulgaria, on Saturday to deprive Frenchman Mathieu Faivre of a World Cup win to follow his world title.

Faivre, who won two golds at the world championships in Cortina d'Ampezzo including the giant slalom, led Zubcic by 0.11 seconds after the first run. Frenchman Alexis Pinturault, who leads the World Cup standings in the event, was third.

Zubcic made up the time on the second run to finish with a combined time of 2min 20.62sec, 0.40s ahead of Faivre. Austrian Stefan Brennsteiner jumped to third on the second run, 0.93sec behind the winner.

Bale "Happier Than Ever"



Europa League matches against Wolfsburg recently.

He could make a rare Premier League start against Burnley on Sunday after Tottenham boss Mourinho said he is playing with freedom again after the difficult end to his spell in Madrid, where he won the Champions League four times but was frozen out by boss Zinedine Zidane.

LONDON (Dispatches) - Jose Mourinho claims Gareth Bale is "happier than ever" as the Tottenham forward tries to salvage his troubled second spell at the Premier League club.

Bale has been dogged by fitness problems and poor form since returning to Tottenham on a season-long loan from Real Madrid.

But the Wales captain is starting to show signs of his old self after shining in the

"I think the mental is always a consequence of the physical. If a player feels great, if he is playing 100 per cent and if the feelings are all good, there are no psychological problems or fears or barriers," Mourinho said.

"When you have little worries and especially when you have a recent history of injuries it's normal to have some fears and these fears have a consequence. But lately he has been fine.

"It's just a question of how many minutes he can play and how many days he needs to recover between matches. He looks happier than ever, he looks confident. In training you can see he has his confidence back, the way he hits his shots.

"You could see from his goal on Wednesday. It was a confident shot. A player with fear or negative feelings would never have hit that type of shot. To strike the ball that way, I think that strike means a lot.

"It means freedom. It means freedom in relation to the brain muscle. For this you need to be in a good condition. He is in the best condition since he arrived."

Gut-Behrami Seals Speed Double in Italy



ROME (Dispatches) - In-form Lara Gut-Behrami's golden spell continued on Saturday when the Swiss skier sealed her second downhill win in the space of 24 hours at Val di Fassa.

The 29-year-old, successful in the Italian resort on Friday, once again proved unstoppable to consolidate her grasp on her second overall World Cup title.

The 2016 winner of the big crystal globe was .32s too quick for her compatriot and downhill world champion Corinne Suter and .68s up on Kira Weidle, who took world silver at Cortina d'Ampezzo.

Her seventh win in her past 11 races pulled her 107 points clear of Petra Vlhova, who came in 12th, with nine races to go.

Gut-Behrami could well reel off a treble at Val di Fassa as she will start hot favourite to land Sunday's super-G.

She arrived in the Italian dolomite ski station after winning the super-G and slalom world titles, as well as downhill bronze behind Suter.

The Swiss racer has made the most of the absence of Olympic champion Sofia Goggia, winner of four World Cup downhills before sustaining a season-ending injury at the end of last month and who still tops the downhill standings.

James Hit Back At Ibrahimovic



LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Four-time NBA champion LeBron James hit back at Swedish soccer star Zlatan Ibrahimovic on Friday, saying there is no reason why he cannot have just as big an impact off the basketball court as he does on it.

James has been a force for social change in America, focusing much of his attention on police brutality and racial injustice against African Americans.

He was outspoken about the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Wisconsin last summer, against Donald Trump, and he worked with other NBA stars to try and get Black people out to vote during the recent US election that brought Joe Biden to power.

"I am kind of the wrong guy to go to because I do my homework," said James after the Los Angeles Lakers 102-93 win over the Portland Trail Blazers on Friday night.

James was responding to Ibrahimovic's comments earlier this week that athletes should "stay out" of politics, mentioning James by name and calling him out over his political activism.

"(LeBron) is phenomenal at what he's doing, but I don't like when people have some kind of status, they go and do politics at the same time," Ibrahimovic said. Speaking in an interview for UEFA for Discovery+ in Sweden, the outspoken striker said it is a "mistake" when athletes step out of their lane.