

**Health Ministry Spokeswoman
Sima Sadat Lari Said on Tuesday
That Some 86 more Iranians Have
Lost Their Lives From the
Coronavirus Disease Over the
Past 24 Hours Bringing the Total
Deaths to 60,276**

IRAN NEWS

**Gov't Has Allocated Some \$3m for
Revival of Bakhtegan and Shadegan
Wetlands as Well as Wetlands
Surrounding the Lake Urmia in the
Northwestern Country, an Official with
Department of Environment said.**

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Tehran Warns IAEA Over Ratifying Any Anti-Iran Resolution

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Government Spokesman says the temporary bilateral technical understanding it has reached with the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), shows “goodwill” on the part of the Islamic Republic and gives diplomacy a chance to resolve the nuclear issue.

Ali Rabiei, the Iranian administration’s spokesman, made the remarks at a virtual media briefing in Tehran on Tuesday, a week after the IAEA and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) struck the deal, under which Tehran stopped its voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and denied IAEA inspectors access to its nuclear facilities beyond the Safeguards Agreement for three months.

During this period, Iran withholds recordings from monitoring equipment that the IAEA installed at its nuclear sites. If the US sanctions are lifted completely, Tehran will provide the information to the IAEA, otherwise it will be deleted forever.

“We implemented the legislation passed by the Parliament in a way that it assures the international community, while respecting the law, that our nuclear program will continue to be under legitimate international supervision and on a peaceful path. This agreement carried a clear message of our goodwill when it comes to giving diplomacy a chance,” Rabiei said.

He was referring to the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions, a law passed last December by the Iranian Parliament. It set February 23 as a deadline for the government to further scale back compliance with the 2015 nuclear accord, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), if the U.S. does not lift its anti-Iran sanctions by February 21.

Tehran went ahead with the new commitment reductions after the deadline for the sanctions removal was missed. “We expect all JCPOA parties to take a reciprocal step to prove their goodwill after receiving this (Iran’s) message [of goodwill],” Rabiei added. “Any action contrary to our expectations will have harmful effects on the diplomatic process and can swiftly close the window of opportunity.”

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Iran Foreign Trade Value Hits \$65b in 11 Months

TEHRAN (MNA) – Foreign trade value of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (from March 21, 2020 to Feb. 20, 2021) hit \$65 billion.

Head of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) Hamid Zadboum broke the news on Tuesday.

Of \$65 billion worth of country’s foreign trade value, about \$34 and \$31 billion of which is related to imports and exports respectively, he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the sanctions imposed against the country and said that affecting Iran’s trade and business in international arena is the main objective behind imposition of sanctions against Iran.

Despite sanctions imposed against the country, Islamic Republic of Iran conducted more than \$80 billion worth of foreign trade last year (ended March 20, 2020), he emphasized.

He further pointed out that export promotion of agricultural products and import of agricultural raw materials needed in this sector should be taken into serious consideration.

**New Steel Production
Line of Arian Steel Co.
Rolls on in Presence of
Minister of IMT**

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Iran-Russia Trade Volume Surpasses \$1b in 10 Months



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) in a webinar on identifying the trade capacities of Iran and Russia markets said the trade volume of Iran and Russia has surpassed \$1b in ten months of the current Iranian calendar year which will end on March 20.

Hamid Zadboum said economic cooperation of Iran and Russia in the framework of temporary preferential trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has led to the rise in the bilateral trade of Tehran and Russia.

He further said due to the high level political relations of the two countries, both sides should take advantage of it for developing their economic relations. He also said meetings of presidents of the two countries in recent years and in the new chapter of Iran-Russia ties have been unprecedented.

He added that by negotiations and signing free trade agreement with these countries, the trade will see growing trend in the next two years, adding that Russia is one of the biggest countries with 145m population and with per capita over \$11,000, and it is considered as a target market for Iran’s exports.

He then highlighted major programs of the TPO for the future of the economic ties with Russia, saying that in the near future, the 16th joint economic commission of Iran and Russia will convene and on its sidelines, the sixth joint workgroup on industrial and trade cooperation of the two countries will be held in the deputy minister level.

Then the Head of Russia Desk at the TPO Mr. Farhad Parand explained the significance of Russia for Iran’s trade and pointed to the capacity of Russian market. He said Russia is considered as one of the most important neighboring countries and export target of Iran and its climate, geographical, industrial and mining advantages plays an important role in providing the needs of consumers in both countries.

He noted that Iran’s foreign trade with Russia has been over \$1.2b in 10 months in the current year.

He also called for expansion of trade between provinces of the two countries which can enhance the bilateral trade.

Parand added that provinces of Khuzestan, Alborz, Bushehr, Gilan, Mazandaran, West Azerbaijan and Hormuzgan have high capacities for providing Russia with food stuff, fruits and fishery products.

He went on to say that the probable increase of sanctions and decline of the oil price makes necessary the expansion of trade ties with Russia.

Europe-Iran Business Forum a Step to Expand Trade Ties

LONDON (IRNA)- The European Union’s foreign policy spokesperson, Peter Stano, has described the Europe-Iran Business Forum as an important event to expand trade relations between the green continent and the Islamic Republic.

In a press conference on Monday, Stano stipulated that the forum is a kind of gathering for Iranian and European businesses to develop legitimate trade.

Describing the EU’s support for the three-day forum, which started work on Monday, as part of grand strategy of the bloc in dealing with Iran, he said that the more the economic relations increase, the more the trade and job opportunities will grow in both sides.

The Europe-Iran Business Forum with the participation of more than 3,000 participants is being held aimed at paving the ground for trade, scientific and technological cooperation in order to expand Iran’s non-oil export.

The forum is slated to be held virtually with the collaboration of the European Union (EU), the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI). Economic activists and thinkers as well as press, who have registered to take part in the forum are going to review the latest ways to revive and develop economic ties between Europe and Iran. A number of European ambassadors in Tehran will partake in the forum.

In the opening ceremony of the forum, the EU’s Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs, Enrique Mora, referred to the trade capacities of Europe and Iran, adding that the considerable number of participants of today’s meeting is a clear message to those who are interested in expanding trade relations with Tehran.

According to the schedule of the forum, Michael Bock, German-appointed president of the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) is going to deliver a speech in the forum.

Bilateral trade between Europe and Iran was reported 15.9 million tons of commodities worth over 8.8 billion dollars in the first half of the Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020 to September 21, 2020).

Iran exported 5.6 million tons of goods worth over 2.6 billion dollars in the same period.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



For the Love of Shia, Is It Really for Islam?

For kind information of my addressees, I should hereby mention that recently a movie with the title of “The Lady of Heaven” in genres of dram, action and historic has been screened worldwide. The movie was screened by Enlightened Kingdom Company on December 2020 concurrent with the mourning days of martyrdom anniversary of Hazrat Zahra (AS) (the youngest daughter of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and it draw many attractions.

The film narrates the journey of an Iraqi child who has painted the picture of the significance of patience and resistance in the war-hit Iraq after 1,400 years by following the life of Hazrat Zahra (AS). The plot of the story shows that after losing his mother, the child finds himself in a new home, where a loving grandmother narrates the historical story of Hazrat Zahra (AS). What the movie is trying to show is to picture Hazrat Zahra (AS)’s sufferings and comparing it with the story of a girl in the 21st century.

The movie has been directed by Eli King and produced by Hussain Al Shammeri. Ray Fearon, Mark Anthony Brighton, Denise Black, Oscar Garland, Chris Jarman, Alex Hughes, Sami Karim, Dimitri Andreas and Lucas Bond are the major actors who starred in the movie.

According to some assumptions, the director of the movie Eli King is a Los Angeles-based Australian born actor and singer of Egyptian descent who has starred in movies like “Heartbreak High”, “Cedar Boys” and “Where’s My Money?”

The script of “The Lady of Heaven” has been written by Sheikh Yasser Al Habib, the Kuwaiti Shiite cleric, who is one of the controversial clerics and one of the elements in charge of demarcation between Shia and Sunni, and probably with having a mission to create rift among Islamic sects. The sheikh was not for some time in the spotlight of the media but suddenly on November 3, 2020, and by publishing his video clip in the YouTube re-emerged and in the clip, he explained the reason behind his absence, claiming he was busy with wring the script of this movie.

On the significance of the movie, its producer Al Shammeri has said that so far over 250 movies have been made on Jesus, 120 movies about Moses, 80 movies on other prophets, 40 movies on Buddha and 9 movies on Mary (mother of Jesus) but no film had been made about the daughter of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

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Unlawful Use of Force Against Yemen Violation of UN Charter

TEHRAN (IRNA)- The unlawful use of force against Yemen in clear violation of the UN Charter and in defiance of the principle of self-determination of people shall be reversed, Iran’s permanent representative to the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva Esmaeil Baghaei Hamaneh said on Monday.

In a statement read to the Virtual High-Level Humanitarian Event for Yemen, Baghaei Hamaneh said that “The Islamic Republic of Iran appreciates any initiative made in good faith to alleviate the immense pain and suffering of the Yemeni people who are being brutalized under an imposed war of aggression that has turned Yemen into the worst humanitarian tragedy on earth.

Iran has made concerted efforts to deliver humanitarian aid to Yemen over the course of the crisis, including during the current pandemic. Unfortunately, our efforts have been hindered ineffective by the so-called Coalition.

As Under Secretary-General Mark Lowcock has noted quite rightly, ending the war is what is needed most to stop this catastrophe, and that’s exactly what the world knows very well.

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Washington Urged to Pay \$1.3m of Damages to IRIB

TEHRAN (MNA) – According to the latest verdict of Iran–U.S. Claims Tribunal, Washington is obliged to pay \$1.3 million of damage to the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB)

According to the announcement made by the Public Relations Department of the IRIB, by submission of the required documents, credible bills, and the help of experienced lawyers and experts the Iranian body could eventually receive the court’s verdict in its favor.

The case is about the purchased musical instrument by personnel of the IRIB in New York, which are seized by the U.S.

GC Urges People to Offer Ideas on Maximizing 2021 Voter Turnout

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Guardian Council spokesman Abbas Ali Kadkhodaei has invited the Iranian elite and other people to submit any initiatives that would help boost voter turnout in the forthcoming presidential election during the coronavirus pandemic.

The vetting body “embraces suggestions, criticisms and solutions in every field, and we have called upon the elite to bring forward their proposals for a high voter turnout amidst coronavirus-related [precautionary] measures,” Kadkhodaei said in an interview with IRIB Radio Maaref station.

He noted that scholars and thinkers can increase the turnout via optimal solutions and criticism and help authorities better perform in this regard, emphasizing that officials should also utilize such strategies and be receptive to criticism.

“Holding elections is an important issue and a complex process. We need the ideas of our elites and our dear people in order to run better elections. We also ask the public to send us their ideas and opinions, which can effectively help us hold a better election,” Kadkhodaei said.

The senior Iranian official went on to say that nearly 400 academics have already submitted



their initiatives concerning a high voter turnout during the outbreak to the Guardian Council Research Institute, some of which have been vetted and appreciated during a ceremony.

“Each of these ideas can be a roadmap for the Guardian Council, the Interior Ministry or other institutions, including the Islamic Consultative Assembly (parliament). God willing, we will send them such ideas and they can put them to use,” Kadkhodaei said.

He added that while the Guardian Council is tasked with observing the upcoming presidential election, it places paramount importance on the voters’ health during the COVID-19 outbreak.

“Since last year, public health and the health of voting have become inextricably intertwined. The health of the people should also lay out the criteria for holding elections,” Kadkhodaei said.

Iran Likely to Approve FATF Soon

TEHRAN (IFP) - An Iranian official says the bills proposed by the Rouhani administration on adoption of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standards will probably be approved at the Iranian Expediency Council soon.

Mohammad-Reza Bahonar, a conservative member of the council, said the key point with regards to the FATF is to see where national interests are or are not compatible with global interests. The official stressed that Iran is against terrorism, and added the country will announce at international circles how it will join the Palermo protocols and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) mechanism.

“However, this should not be a lever to neutralize Iran’s fight against sanctions. This is a technical and precise job which takes some time to do,” he said. “In order to neutralize sanctions, we need to circumvent them some times and ignore the laws of hostile countries,” he said.

Gov’t Plans to Increase Amount of Airplanes Flying Over Its Territory

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran is to encourage foreign airlines to fly over Iran’s air space by providing incentive tariffs, said an official with the Iran Airports Company (IAC) Siyavash Amirmokarrami.

“Iran Airports Company has the authority to negotiate with primary customers by reducing tariffs to increase the amount of foreign airlines flying over Iran’s airspace,” said Amirmokarrami.

“A committee has been formed that include various sectors of AIC that cooperate together to attract passing flights by providing necessary incentives,” he said.

“Reforming tariffs has currently been implemented and airline companies such as Qatar airways have welcomed it and have increased the number of its flights. There have also been negotiations with Turkish airline,” he said.

“There have been ongoing negotiations with military organizations to reduce the number of banned flight zones, and have short parallel routes,” he said. “The number of flights through the region is currently 70 percent of the volume before the coronavirus outbreak, so we can’t expect more than 30 percent of air traffic,” he said.

West Not Fulfilling Shared Duty in Drug Trafficking Battle



TEHRAN (MNA) – Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif criticized the Western countries for lack of commitment to their share of responsibility in the fight against drug trafficking, an issue that Iran has been grappling with for decades.

“Unfortunately, Western countries have not yet paid any contribution to the fight against drug trafficking,” Zarif said.

Referring to the significance of collective effort in the battle against drug trafficking, Zarif said, “Such efforts and sacrifices do not just benefit the Iranian nation... they serve the people of other countries.”

The top diplomat said, “We continue to make sacrifices in the fight against drug trafficking because of our commitment to international law and, of course, our commitment to the people of our country.”

However, he noted that the Islamic Republic’s “equipment and capabilities in this regard are limited,” and if such needs are not supplied, Iran will definitely think of other priorities in this area.

Besides the lack of commitment by the Western countries in the fight against drug trafficking, the illegal anti-Iran sanctions have also stymied the country’s capacity to fight drug trafficking by depriving it of the necessary equipment.

Green Growth Must Provide Environmental Indicators

TEHRAN (IP) - Health Minister said that one of the issues of green growth is the provision and guarantee of environmental indicators.

In the 22nd National Conference on Green Industry, Saeed Namaki stressed that natural resources should not be destroyed and passed on to the next generation.

Noting that the green economy is costly, Namaki added that without government support, environmental activists could not succeed in protecting the environment.

Emphasizing that special taxes on pollutants should be increased, Health Minister said: Out of 380,000 deaths before coronavirus disease, 313 deaths were due to pollutants annually.

Namaki also referred to the waste in the environment and highlighted its destructive impact on the health of society, especially in developing societies.

Twenty-second National Conference on Green Industry was held with the presence of Iran’s Health Minister Saeed Namaki and the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Department of Environment Issa Kalantari in Tehran.

At the end of the ceremony, prizes were awarded to a number of top environmentalists.

Tehran, Baghdad Stress Expansion of Border Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) – Commander of the Border Guards of the Islamic Republic of Iran Police met and held talks with Commander of Iraq’s Border Police on the expansion and strengthening of border cooperation.

During a meeting with the Commander of Iraq’s Border Police General Hamid Abdullah Ibrahim, Brigadier-General Ahmad Ali Goudarzi said, “The Islamic Republic of Iran has 15 neighboring countries and has the most common borders with its neighbors in the world after Russia and China, which are controlled and managed in the spirit of friendship between the countries of the region.”

“We hope that in this meeting, which is held with the aim of exchanging information and using the border capacities between the two countries to ensure lasting border security, we will be able to make the most of and transfer experiences to improve the border situation,” he added.

Referring to the security of the borders and the efforts of the border guards to prevent the entry of drugs into the country, Goudarzi said, “Since the beginning of the Iranian year [March 20, 2020], about 130 tons of various drugs have been confiscated in the borders of the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

He also pointed to the favorable interaction and good border relations between the border guards of

Iran and Iraq, saying, “The Islamic Republic of Iran has a 1609-kilometer border with Iraq, and this huge volume of the common border is well controlled and managed by the favorable relations and interaction that is established between the border guards of the two countries.”

Stating that Iran and Iraq have common enemies, he added, “The Islamic Republic of Iran faces many threats around its borders and will confront arrogance, takfiri and terrorism elements at the borders.”

Emphasizing that the border police force pays special attention to fighting insurgent groups, armed miscreants, and weapons and ammunition smugglers at the borders, Goudarzi highlighted, “We expect the Iraqi border to cover the border gaps and to be active in combating the smuggling of weapons, ammunition and anti-cultural items.”

Hamid Abdullah Ibrahim, for his part, stressed the need to transfer experiences and information interaction between the two countries’ border guards, saying, “Equipping and blocking Iraq’s borders is on the agenda so that we can use these components and transfer experiences to fight terrorism, insurgent groups, smuggling weapons and ammunition, and anti-cultural items.”

Webinar Iran-Pakistan Trade to Be Held Today

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) plans to hold an online seminar on the expansion of Iran-Pakistan trade today (Wednesday), the portal of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) announced.

Officials, businessmen, and traders from both sides are due to attend this online event which is going to be held through Zoom platform.

Considering Pakistan’s relatively large consumer market, expansion of trade with the country and boosting exports to its market has become one of Iran’s priorities in recent years.

Iran’s exports to Pakistan in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2020) stood at \$1.18 billion, but in the meantime, financial and banking problems have still created obstacles in the way of trade relations with this country.

In late December 2020, Pakistan’s Advisor to Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood said his country was seeking to enhance ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran, especially in economic areas.

Iran, Syria Discuss Closer Sci-Tech Cooperation in Damascus

TEHRAN (IFP) - Vice President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari, who is in Damascus at the head of a sci-tech delegation, has sat down with Syrian Minister of Higher Education Bassam Ibrahim.

In the Tuesday meeting, the two sides stressed the need to forge closer scientific and technological cooperation between Tehran and Damascus.

Sattari touched upon developments in the domain of Iran’s technology and innovation ecosystem, adding that innovations presented by millions of students currently studying at Iranian universities should be utilized.

“Many players have a part in this ecosystem (the technology and innovation ecosystem), including innovative and knowledge-based companies, sci-tech parks, innovation centres, accelerators and risk-prone funds,” he added.

“In this ecosystem, ideas and innovations are turned into products,” he explained, adding that these are technological products which meet people’s needs.

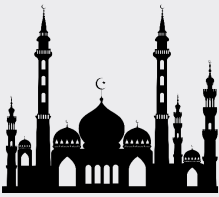
“This ecosystem took shape 7 years ago and has grown stronger over these years, so much so that there are currently hundreds of innovation centers, more than 50 sci-tech parks, around 10,000 start-ups and over 50,000 knowledge-based companies,” Sattari noted.

He said the biggest start-ups in the region in the domains of nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology and aerospace belong to Iran.

The Iranian vice-president noted that it is important for these firms to sell their products as the revenues will significantly contribute to the growth of economies.

“Sales by these companies have reached \$12 billion, so far,” he said. Sattari further highlighted that Iran has made considerable progress in the nanotechnology sector as well.

The Syrian minister, in turn, touched upon the great potential for cooperation between the two countries, saying Iran and Syria should work together closely in scientific and technological areas.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)

■ Evening (Maghreb)

■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)

■ Tomorrow's Sunrise

12:16

18:19

05:06

06:29

23. In order that ye may not despair over matters that pass you by, nor exult over favours bestowed upon you. For Allah loveth not any vainglorious boaster;-

24. Such persons as are covetous and commend covetousness to men. And if any turn back (from Allah's Way), verily Allah is Free of all Needs, Worthy of all Praise.

Surah 57, Iron (23-24)

Tehran, Kiev Eye Resolving Problems in Way of Bilateral Trade

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Chambers of commerce of Iran and Ukraine on Tuesday explored ways to boost trade ties in a webinar where the both sides called for removing hurdles in the way of trade.

President of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Mr. Gholam-Hossein Shafei and President of Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (UCCI) Mr. Gennadiy Chyzhykov as well as other participants exchanged their views on how both countries can develop their bilateral trade.

Addressing the webinar, Mr. Shafei underscored this point that private sectors of both countries are keen to boost bilateral trade, adding that sanctions and COVID-19 pandemic are two major factors that have recently hindered development of trade relation between Iran and Ukraine.

He went on to say that however, state officials and private sectors of the two countries are very determined to develop ties, expressed hope that a brighter and more active economic prospect would be drawn up for both countries.

He also pointed to the restrictions in financial transactions and called for the launch and reinforcement of barter trade system as he believes most of problems will be solved by this action.

Shafei also admitted that the arrival of unprofessional tradesmen in the target countries leads to trade disputes and causes problems for the

private sectors of the countries and suggested the establishment of some arbitration panels and credit bureaus to be put on the agenda. He reiterated he believes establishment of arbitration panels has important role in making healthy the relations between the two states as well as presenting professional tradesmen.

Then President of UCCI Mr. Chyzhykov, for his part, hinted at this point that once the trade volume of Iran and Ukraine was around \$1b per year, and then elaborated economic capacities in front of Iran and Ukraine.

He said Ukraine is one of the leading countries in the field of processing industries, agriculture especially in producing types of liquid oil, sunflower, soya and corn and this provides considerable cooperation opportunities between Iran and Ukraine.

He also pointed to Ukraine's position in the world in the field of telecommunications and IT which can be good grounds for bilateral cooperation.

Chyzhykov admitted that financial exchanges and restrictions due to the sanctions have been one of the major hurdles in way of developing trade between both states and called for constant holding virtual meetings as well as forming specialized committees for resolving this problem.

Then Head of International Affairs of ICCIMA emphasized implementation of preferential trade between the two countries and called for immediate signing of the preferential trade agreements which plays important role in boosting the trade volume between the two states.

Iran Gas Export Doubles in 8 Years

TEHRAN (IRNA) – The CEO of National Iranian Gas Company Hassan Montazer Torbati said on Tuesday that Iran's gas export has made 100 percent growth in 8-year term of the incumbent Government with 18b cubic meters export in the current year compared with 9b cm export in 2013.

Torbati said that Iran continues to export gas to Turkey and Iraq as the main destinations, as well as Azerbaijan and Armenia.

He said that in 2013 Iran had an annual export of 9m cubic meters, while the number stands at 18m cubic meters in the current year and the daily export volume is 75m cubic meters.

Noting that negotiations to extend gas export contracts often begin in the final 5-year period, the official underlined that there was still enough time for Turkey export contract to negotiations, but Iran is now in the golden point.

Torbati also said that the private sector in Iran should get involved in gas export, as the market in Turkey has been transforming from a governmental to private environment, adding that Iran sees Turkey as a confident market and Ankara recognized Tehran as a sustainable supplier.

On the suspension of gas import from Turkmenistan, Torbati said that the dispute sparked off because the country wasn't sure how Iran was going to pay and the case was referred to arbitration, obliging Iran to pay only its debt. However, some claims by Tehran on the volume and quality of imported gas led to subtraction of fines from Iran's debt.

The official said that the gas export contract with Pakistan is still pending the construction of pipeline on the Pakistani side to complete. Iran is entitled to bring the case to arbitration, but avoids doing so because is optimistic about the future of the plan, he added.

Iran's gas export to Europe can be done through several paths, the Turkey path, however, is the strongest one, according to Torbati.

New Steel Production Line of Arian Steel Co. Rolls on in Presence of Minister of IMT

Bahman Ghasemi, CEO of Arian Steel Company Suggesting wage of \$ 300

Production line of industrial oxygen and smelting furnace of Arian Steel Company come on stream in presence of the Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade (IMT). The new production line of industrial oxygen and smelting furnace of Arian Steel Company with an investment of more than \$29m and 35b tomans from domestic sources was inaugurated in the presence of the Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade.Mr. Bahman Ghasemi, CEO of Arian Steel Company in inaugurating ceremony, said: "Arian Steel Complex has been established on two plots of land of 180,000 and 200,000 meters and on a support land of 450,000, one 110,000 square meters of production hall, and with 2m tons of rolled steel capacity including five rolling lines and 240 thousand tons of ingot production capacity including two rebar lines of 600,000 tons and two profile steel lines with production capacity of 300,000 and 200,000 tons.

He added: "This company is able to manufacture types of beams, angles, studs, rails and sheets up to 40 cm wide and all types of rebars and an alloy electric arc smelting line with a capacity of 120,000 tonnes (60,000 tonnes per line) and a total of 240,000 tonnes of smelting. He pointed that all of the production lines of this company except induction furnace are made exclusively and customized by a consortium of the most prestigious manufacturers in the world such as Toshiba, Nippon Steel, Hyundai, SMS, Siemens, Hitachi, ABB, Shinko, Mitsubishi, Sakai ..., and added: "This equipment makes products by use of tungsten rollers, therefore, the outcomes must be provided to the final consumers with the highest standards and the most appropriate prices to meet customer satisfaction.Mr. Ghasemi pointed that the company has oxygen plant line with capacity of 60,000 tons of liquid oxygen, nitrogen, and argon and, and stated, "One line of Electric arc EBT with capacity of 500,000 tons (75-ton furnace) from Danieli company is available in Arian Steel Company that can operate independently or subservient in regions with appropriate infrastructures such as electricity and materials. He expressed hope that the 600,000-ton rebarline, which is in the pilot production stage, and three 50-ton induction furnaces with a capacity of about 400,000 tons, with a physical progress of more than 85%, will be put into operation by early summer next year.The CEO of Arian Steel Company said that the most important drawback is provision of raw material for the rolling lines and sponge iron for melting line, expressing hope the issues would be tackled by help of officials, and increase in the manufacturing capacity while it is currently operating with less than %30 of desired capacity. He also said that this company is ready to cooperate with metal and mining industries to enhance efficiency and capabilities. Mr. Ghasemi also notified minimum wage by Labour Council as totally unfair and dramatically low, and he suggested \$300 should be accepted as minimum wage and it should be balanced by inflation and fluctuated exchange rate of dollar. He described it by saying, "This method of payment should include all services, and prices such as transportation cost and retail and the level of livelihood would remain fair as a result. The fact that it is constantly argued that the employer's representative is opposed to raising the wage level is certainly an untrue argument. As entrepreneurs, we object to unfair wage base, and support a wage bae of at least \$300 and a monthly adjustment commensurate with inflation and a change in the value of the dollar."

Ex-Peru President Fujimori Faces Trial

LIMA (Dispatches) - A judge in Peru opened proceedings on Monday against disgraced former president Alberto Fujimori and other officials accused of the “forced sterilizations” of thousands of poor, mostly indigenous, women.

An estimated 270,000 Peruvians were subjected to surgery to have their fallopian tubes tied as part of a family planning program instigated during Fujimori’s final four years in power.

Fujimori and his fellow defendants, including three ex-health ministers, “did a lot of harm with their policies,” said public prosecutor Pablo Espinoza as he read out the charges against the 82-year-old former president.



U.S. to Impose Sanctions on Russia for Navalny Poisoning

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – U.S. President Joe Biden’s administration is preparing to impose sanctions on Russia for the poisoning and imprisonment of Kremlin critic Alexey Navalny, CNN reported Monday.

Citing two administration officials, CNN wrote that the United States will coordinate with the European Union to determine what the sanctions will entail and their exact timing. According to one official, a potential option is an executive order that would trigger sanctions on Russia for repeated attacks on U.S. democracy, including the SolarWinds cybersecurity hack and placing bounties on U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan, CNN wrote.



U.S. Presses Saudis Over Khashoggi Killing



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States on Monday pressed Saudi Arabia to take further measures after the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi as Washington faced growing criticism that it did not directly target Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

President Joe Biden on Friday released an intelligence report that found that Prince Mohammed approved the 2018 killing of Khashoggi, a US-based contributor to The Washington Post who was lured into the Saudi consulate in Istanbul where he was strangled to death and dismembered.

The report -- classified under former president Donald Trump, a close ally of the Saudis -- found that seven of the 15 members of the hit squad that flew to Istanbul came from the Rapid Intelligence Force, which it said “exists to defend the crown prince” and “answers only to him.”

“We have urged Saudi Arabia to disband this group and then adopt institutional, systemic reforms and controls to ensure that anti-dissident activities and operations cease and cease completely,” State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters.

“We have made crystal clear -- and will continue to do so -- that the brutal killing of Jamal Khashoggi 28 months ago remains unacceptable conduct,” Price said.

He also called on Saudi Arabia to act on other fronts including lifting a travel ban on Loujain al-Hathloul, an advocate for women’s right to drive in the ultra-conservative kingdom who was provisionally freed in January after nearly three years in jail.

The Biden administration imposed sanctions on the Rapid Intervention Force -- meaning any US transactions with it will be a crime -- and said it was banning entry into the United States of 76 Saudis under a new policy against foreign officials who harass dissidents.

Biden has sought to “recalibrate” the decades-old Saudi alliance and has already said the United States will end support for offensive operations in the devastating Saudi war in Yemen.

But the administration stopped short of personally targeting the 35-year-old crown prince -- the de facto leader as well as defense minister of the major oil provider.

Asked why no action was taken against the prince, also known by his initials MBS, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said that the United States does not typically sanction foreign leaders -- despite frequent U.S. actions against senior officials of hostile nations.

But she hinted that Prince Mohammed was not permanently off the hook, saying: “Of course we reserve the right to take any action at the time and manner of our choosing.”

Price said that the United States would not “preview” who would be banned in the future but said, “I am not aware of any plans for the crown prince to travel to the United States in the near term.”

Armenia PM Open to Early Elections to End Crisis

YEREVAN (Dispatches) - Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said he would be ready to hold snap parliamentary elections if the opposition agreed to certain conditions, as thousands joined rival street rallies in the capital Yerevan on Monday.

Pashinyan, in power since 2018 in the ex-Soviet republic of less than three million people, is facing a crisis after the army last week demanded he step down, prompting him to decry a coup attempt and try to sack the army’s top general.

Speaking to thousands of supporters who rallied in the centre, Pashinyan proposed holding a referendum in October to adopt a new constitution and said snap elections were possible under certain conditions.

He has suggested parliamentary factions sign a memorandum promising not to elect someone else as prime minister if he steps down to clear the way for early elections.

“If the parliamentary opposition agrees to early elections, we will agree to early elections,” he told the flag-waving crowd. “Let’s go to the polls and see whose resignation the people are demanding,” said Pashinyan, who swept to power after spearheading peaceful demonstrations in 2018.

The Armenian leader has faced protests and calls to resign since last November, when he agreed to a Russian-brokered ceasefire that halted six weeks of fighting between ethnic Armenian and Azeri forces over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Pashinyan admitted to making mistakes and asked for forgiveness, but has refused to step down.



170 U.S. Lawmakers Urge Biden Administration to Push Turkey on Rights

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - One hundred seventy members of the U.S. House of Representatives signed a bipartisan letter sent to Secretary of State Antony Blinken urging President Joe Biden’s administration to address “troubling” human rights issues as it formulates policy for dealings with Turkey.

The letter, dated Feb. 26 and made public on Monday, notes that NATO ally Turkey has long been an important U.S. partner but says the administration of President Tayyip Erdogan has strained the relationship.

“Strategic issues have rightfully received significant attention in our bilateral relationship, but the gross violation of human rights and democratic backsliding taking place in Turkey are also of significant concern,” said the letter, whose signers included Representatives Greg Meeks, the Democratic chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Mike McCaul, the panel’s ranking Republican member.

Erdogan said on Feb. 20 that the common interests of Turkey and the United States outweigh their differences and Turkey wants improved cooperation with Washington. But relations have frayed over a host of issues, including Turkey’s purchase of a Russian missile defense system and U.S. support for the Kurdish YPG militia in Syria.

Washington has also expressed repeated concern over rights and freedoms. The lawmakers’ letter said Erdogan and his party have weakened Turkey’s judiciary, installed political allies in key military and intelligence positions, and wrongfully imprisoned political opponents, journalists and members of minority groups.

IAEA Says N. Korea Nuclear Program Cause for Serious Concern

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The International Atomic Energy Agency has said North Korea’s nuclear programme is continuing despite United Nations sanctions and remains “a cause for serious concern” with negotiations on denuclearisation stalled for more than two years.

“The continuation of the DPRK’s nuclear programme is a clear violation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions and is deeply regrettable,” Rafael Grossi, the IAEA’s director-general told a news conference after a meeting with the Vienna-based agency’s board of governors. North Korea is officially known as the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Grossi said that the IAEA was intensifying its readiness “to play its essential role in verifying North Korea’s nuclear program”.

North Korea last conducted a nuclear test in 2017 and the following year said it had blown up tunnels at its main nuclear test site at Punggye-ri, claiming that was proof of its commitment to end nuclear testing.

But since that self-declared moratorium, Kim Jong Un, who marks 10 years as leader in December, has called for the continued production of nuclear weapons, launched a series of smaller missiles and in January, promised to put “state defence capabilities on a much higher level” as he unveiled what appeared to be a new submarine-launched ballistic missile.

IAEA inspectors are not allowed into North Korea, but they have been monitoring activity in the country via satellites and other available information.

Grossi said there was evidence of continuing construction and that a cooling water facility at an experimental light water reactor had been tested at the end of last year, South Korea’s Yonhap news agency reported.

There were also signs that North Korea had been operating a thermal plant at the Yongbyon complex that could be used to provide heat to a nuclear fuel rod reprocessing facility, Yonhap said. Yongbyon has nuclear reactors, fuel reprocessing plants and uranium enrichment facilities that have been linked to the country’s nuclear weapons programme.



EU Launches Mediation Of Georgia Crisis

TBILISI (AFP) - The European Union on Monday initiated talks between Georgia’s government and opposition to defuse a spiraling post-electoral political crisis that deepened with the arrest of an opposition leader last week.

The nation in Europe’s extreme southeast has been in the grip of a crisis since parliamentary elections in October, which the opposition has denounced as rigged.

Last week’s violent police raid on the headquarters of largest opposition force, the United National Movement (UNM), and the arrest of the party leader Nika Melia, further exacerbated the tensions.

In a surprise diplomatic win during a visit to the capital Tbilisi, European Council President Charles Michel initiated talks between Georgia’s government and opposition parties.

Negotiations under Michel’s mediation were held late in the evening between Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili and leaders of all opposition parties.

“Tonight, I am proud because a good step, an important step in the right direction has been taken... the political dialogue has been relaunched,” Michel told journalists after the talks.

“That doesn’t mean that everything was solved,” he said, but both the government and opposition demonstrated “political will to find together solutions.”

Michel added that the negotiations will continue and the progress will be evaluated in two weeks’ time during the next EU-Georgia Association Council meeting.

Prime Minister Garibashvili said an agreement was reached that “this dialogue will go on.”

A leader of opposition Lelo party, Badri Japaridze, told AFP that “intense work is to be done and significant progress is to be achieved over the next two weeks.”

“I am confident, that President Michel’s personal role and efforts, the EU’s high-level engagement will help us to find a way out political impasse.”

Earlier on Monday, Michel said he was “deeply concerned” about the crisis which “undermines Georgia’s hard-won young democracy.”

“I have called on all parties to de-escalate and come together to relaunch the political dialogue and I’ve invited them to (a) meeting tonight.”



Shanon
(adviser)

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

Parsian

(\$2200)
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S/pool, S, J, pkg
balcony, & F.F

Farmanieh Apts
(\$1500) 2bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F
(\$2200) 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F

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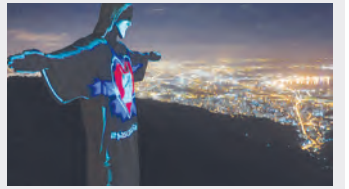
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Brazil's Economic Growth Outlook Higher Than Developed States

RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - A report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), released this month, with data from January, points out that at the start of the year Brazil posts economic growth prospects higher than the average of the 37 countries that make up the OECD and the G7 countries (Germany, Canada, USA, France, Italy, Japan, and the UK), which comprise the group of the world's most industrialized countries.

According to the composite leading indicator (CLI), Brazil's assessment in January 2021 reached 104.2, where 100 represents an average score assigned by the OECD for . . .



India Finance Ministry Considers Cutting Taxes on Petrol, Diesel

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's finance ministry is considering cutting excise duties on petrol and diesel to cushion the impact of record high domestic prices, three government officials close to the discussions said.

A doubling in the price of crude oil over the past 10 months has contributed to record fuel prices at gas stations in India. But taxes and duties account for roughly 60% of the retail price of petrol and diesel in the country, the world's third biggest consumer of crude oil.

As the coronavirus pandemic hit economic activity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government twice raised taxes on petrol and diesel in the last 12 months to boost sagging tax revenues instead of passing on the benefits of low oil prices last year to consumers.

India's Finance Ministry has now started consultations with some states, oil companies and the oil ministry to find the most effective way to lower the tax burden on consumers without federal finances taking a big hit, the sources said.

"We are discussing ways in which prices can be kept stable. We will be able to take a view of the issue by mid-March," said one of the sources.

The sources, who asked not to be named as the deliberations are private, said the government wants oil prices to stabilise before cutting taxes, as it does not want to be forced to change the tax structure again, should crude prices rise further.

India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman recently said: "I can't say when we will reduce taxes on fuel, but (the) centre and states have to talk to reduce fuel taxes".

India's Finance Ministry and oil ministry did not respond to an email requesting comment.

The high fuel prices have prompted some Indian states to cut state-level taxes on petrol and diesel to rein in prices.

Another one of the sources said a decision on fuel taxes may only be made following a meeting of OPEC and major oil producers, also known as OPEC+, later this week. "There is an expectation that OPEC+ would agree to ease oil output curbs, we hope oil prices will stabilise after their decision," this source said.

India has called on OPEC+ to ease production cuts as higher crude prices are hitting fuel demand in Asia's third largest economy and are contributing to inflation.

The high fuel prices could also affect Modi's popularity ahead of state assembly polls in four states in March and April.

Modi and India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party are already facing their biggest political challenge in years with tens of thousands of farmers protesting against three farm laws passed by his government in 2020.

The federal government and states together raised some 5.56 trillion rupees (\$75.22 billion) in revenues from the petroleum sector in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2020, based on government data.

In the nine months of this fiscal year (April-December 2020), contributions from the sector were about 4.21 trillion rupees, despite a significant decline in local fuel demand, the data showed.

Moscow Increases State Borrowings by 40% in 2020

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Facing a budget deficit last year, the Kremlin resorted to increasing borrowings instead of tapping state reserves. The majority of bonds issued by Russia in 2020 was acquired by national financial institutions, as the government avoids to increase foreign debt to ensure economic stability.

Russia's state debt rose by 40% last year, as the country sold trillions of rubles in bonds to prop up lost oil and gas revenues from the pandemic, reports The Moscow Times. According to the Accounts Chamber of Russia, state debt amounted to 19 trillion rubles (\$257 billion) at the end of 2020, which was equivalent to 17.8% of the country's GDP.

After several years of budget surplus, the Kremlin faced a deficit of 4.1 trillion rubles (\$55 billion) in 2020 due to lower tax revenues and higher spending amid the pandemic. Russia lost a significant part of its income from energy exports, as the country agreed to cut back its oil production at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic to help support crude prices. Both the average price of oil and the volume of export saw a decline last year, as global oil demand decreased for the first time in a decade. Overall, taxes on Russia's oil and gas sector brought 5.2 trillion rubles (\$71 billion) to the budget in 2020, while in 2019, the figure was higher by a third, reads the Accounts Chamber's report.

Nonetheless, the government opted against tapping its \$170-billion National Wealth Fund to support the economy. Instead of that, Moscow decided to plug the gap with higher borrowing. Most debt issued by Russia during the pandemic was acquired by its state-backed financial institutions. The Russian government considers bonds held domestically to be safer, as some of the Kremlin's most ardent opponents abroad are pushing a proposal to ban foreigners from holding Russian government debt, says The Moscow Times. Although such a turn of events is considered unlikely, it may trigger panic in the financial markets if overseas holders start to sell their bonds en masse. By the end of 2020, the share of Russia's government debt owned by foreigners fell to 22%.



Yemen Donor Conference Seeks Billions to Prevent Famine

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United Nations has said it hopes to raise \$3.85bn in a donor conference to prevent large-scale famine in Yemen, warning that life in the war-ravaged nation was unbearable, with children enduring a "special kind of hell".

More than 100 governments and donors will take part in the virtual event on Monday – co-hosted by Sweden and Switzerland – as Yemen's Houthi rebels push to seize the government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi's last northern stronghold of Marib.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed and millions pushed to the brink of famine since a Saudi-led coalition intervened militarily in March 2015 in support of Hadi's internationally recognised government, which had been unseated by the Houthis.

But with aid funding dropping in 2020 amid the coronavirus downturn, resulting in the closure of many humanitarian programs, the situation in the country has become even worse.

The UN, which has described the situation in Yemen as the world's worst humanitarian crisis, and its partners received \$1.9bn last year – about half of what was required.

It called on Monday for "immediate funding" to support 16 million people in Yemen, where some two-thirds of the population is in need of some form of aid to survive.

"For most people, life in Yemen is now unbearable. Childhood in Yemen is a special kind of hell. This war is swallowing up a whole generation of Yemenis," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

"We must end it now and start dealing with its enormous consequences immediately. This is not the moment to step back from Yemen," he added.

Speaking later at the conference, Guterres implored all donors to contribute, saying the donations will "make an enormous and concrete difference, in many cases the difference between life and death."

"The assistance you pledge today, will not only prevent the spread of famine and save lives, it will also create the conditions for lasting peace," he added.

France Steps Up Economic Stimulus Rollout

PARIS (Reuters) - The French government is accelerating the rollout of its economic stimulus plan by ploughing an extra billion euros into support for the industrial sector, Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said on Monday.

The recovery plan aims to pull France out of crisis by injecting 100 billion euros (\$120.5 billion) of public money into the euro zone's second-biggest economy by the end of 2022.

Le Maire said there was no need to increase the overall amount of stimulus funds as the extra money for the industrial sector would be redirected from other programs within the recovery plan where take-up was slower.

The wide-ranging plan gives a special focus to boosting the industrial sector, which has long struggled to be competitive and is heavily dependent on a handful of industries such as aerospace, food processing, pharmaceuticals and luxury brands.

He said the extra billion euros was made up primarily of an additional 600 million euros in tax credits to encourage industrial firms to invest in digital technologies.

The ministry would also make available an additional 150 million euros in subsidies for industrial firms considering extending existing plants and a further 250 million euros in subsidies for industrial companies which relocate factories abroad to France.

Le Maire said that the stimulus money was being deployed faster than planned with 11 billion euros spent last year and a further 16 billion euros already this year in addition to 10 billion euros in tax cuts on a myriad of levies which French businesses have to pay.

He said the government was on course to meet a target of 40 billion euros in 2021 and to reach 6% economic growth despite restrictions to limit the spread of the coronavirus.

"My aim is to accelerate the deployment of the recovery plan no matter what the health conditions are," Le Maire told journalists.

Turkey Emerges From COVID-19-Hit 2020 With 1.8% Economic Growth

ISTANBUL (Reuters) - Turkey's economy grew 5.9% in the fourth quarter tmsnrt.rs/3dVombP and 1.8% in 2020 as a whole, annual data showed on Monday, emerging as one of only a few globally to avoid a contraction due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Propelled by a burst of credit in mid-2020, fourth-quarter GDP grew 1.7% from the previous quarter on a seasonally and calendar-adjusted basis, the Turkish Statistical Institute said.

A surge in gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the second half of the year that surpassed Turkey's potential rate was driven by a near doubling of lending by state banks to face down the initial wave of the virus.

While outperforming all emerging market (EM) and G20 peers except China, Turkey's growth came at a price: The cheap lending accelerated a record drop in the lira, drew down the country's foreign currency reserves and helped push inflation to 15%. Also, few jobs were created.

The recovery was "unbalanced and ultimately exacerbated some of the country's external vulnerabilities," said Jason Tuvey, senior EM economist at Capital Economics.

Financial sector activity surged more than 21% last year, driving overall growth, the data showed. Tourism and other services activity dropped by 4.3% and the construction sector, an engine of growth in years past, shrank 3.5%.

The lira firmed to 7.351 against the dollar after the GDP data and was 1% stronger on the day.

The volatile currency tumbled last week after a rally that began in early November when Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan promised a new market-friendly economic era. A new central bank chief has since hiked interest rates, cutting credit dramatically.

Finance Minister Lutfi Elvan, appointed in November, said on Twitter Monday that Turkey would prioritise price stability this year. Analysts say the economy should expand by roughly 5% in 2021 despite tight monetary policy.

In a Reuters poll, GDP was forecast to have expanded 7.1% year-on-year in the fourth quarter of 2020, despite new curfews and curbs on the service sector to address a second COVID-19 wave, and 2.3% for the whole year.

World economies mostly contracted and tumbled into recessions last year, with emerging and developing nations shrinking by some 2.4% according to the International Monetary Fund. The major EM economy has cooled in recent years tmsnrt.rs/3r40BSx from an average 5% growth rate in the last two decades. The rate plunged by 10.3% annually in the second quarter as the pandemic bit, but rebounded sharply by 6.3% in the third.

Ankara is considering lifting some of the latest virus restrictions as of this month.

U.S. Freeze Hits Europe's Fuel Oil Exports



TEXAS (Dispatches) - The freeze-driven shuttering of core sections of the U.S. refining system isn't all good news for rival plants in Europe. Down at the bottom of the barrel, losses are deepening.

While U.S. shutdowns mean less competition for European refiners in supplying gasoline and diesel on both sides of the Atlantic, they also remove an important export market for the remnants of the refining process – products known as fuel oil.

With much of the U.S. Gulf Coast in recovery mode after February's extreme weather, many of those barrels need a new home. That is acting as a drag on margins for those refineries that churn out relatively large amounts of higher-sulfur fuel oil.

"The U.S. is suddenly not taking so many cargoes a month transatlantic," said Hedi Grati, a director at IHS Markit. "It needs to find another outlet."

Gulf Coast refineries regularly import bottom-of-the-barrel feedstocks from Europe and Russia, turning them into higher-value fuels like diesel and gasoline. But with so many outages on the Gulf Coast, there's little appetite from that region for such cargoes at the moment.

As a result, exports toward the U.S. from Europe and Russia of dirty petroleum product – including various grades of mostly high-sulfur fuel oil and vacuum gasoil – have plunged. They sank by 136,000 barrels a day, or about 40%, during the period February 1-23 compared with January, and by roughly 50% year-on-year, according to tanker analytics firm Kpler. The figures don't include dirty shipments known to be low-sulfur.

That's led to diminished demand for European barrels, which is helping to push down the value of high-sulfur fuel oil relative to crude oil, known as the crack spread. In northwest Europe, the measure recently fell to its lowest since May.

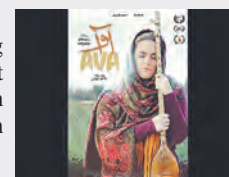
“Ava” to Go on Screen at U.S., UK Film Festivals

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian short film ‘Ava’ directed by Sasan Karimi will take part in two international film festivals in the U.S. and the UK.

Directed and written by Sasan Karimi and produced by Leila Boloukat and Saeed Dadgar, the 26-minute drama will compete at the 15th edition of the Taos Shortz Film

Festival in the US.

According to the website of the Taos Shortz, “After a long uncertain COVID year, Taos Shortz Film Fest, the longest continually running film festival in New Mexico returns with a whole new selection of Global Short Films”. The 15th edition of the event will be held on March 19-21, 2021.



Italy, Spain Enjoy Manufacturing Bounceback as Demand Rises

ROME (Dispatches) - Factories in Italy and Spain are ramping up production to meet rising demand but also face growing shortages of raw materials and rising input costs, according to a closely watched survey of European businesses.

The purchasing managers’ indices published by IHS Markit on Monday were the latest illustration of Europe’s two-speed economic recovery, as the manufacturing sector drives growth while services businesses are still burdened with regulations and lockdowns to curb the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

The manufacturing PMI for Italy, the eurozone’s second-largest manufacturer after Germany, rose to a three-year high of 56.9 in February, up from 55.1 in the previous month, the data showed. Spain’s manufacturing PMI rose faster than most economists had expected to a seven-month high of 52.9, up from 49.3.

A reading above the 50 mark indicates that a majority of businesses reported an expansion of activity.

Manufacturing’s positive performance was also illustrated by upward revisions to the German and French PMIs, lifting them to their highest levels since January 2018.

The pan-eurozone manufacturing PMI hit a three-year high of 57.9, up from 54.8 in the previous month.

This is a level “that has rarely been exceeded in more than two decades of survey history”, said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit.

“Producers are benefiting from resurgent demand for goods in both domestic and export markets, linked to post-Covid recovery hopes driving renewed stock building and investment in business equipment and machinery, as well as improved consumption,” he said.

New export orders at Italian factories increased for the third straight month in February and at the fastest pace since December 2017. Domestic demand also rose; businesses surveyed attributed the improvement to looser Covid-19 restrictions, which helped release pent-up demand.

The increase in activity added to pressure on supply chains. Suppliers’ delivery times lengthened to the greatest extent since the height of the pandemic last April.



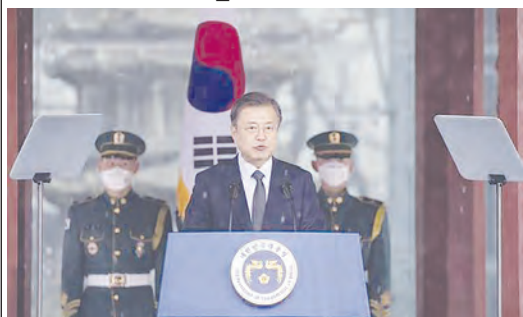
Many Spanish manufacturers reported “supply-side shortages, with strengthened global demand and ongoing transportation delays pushing up delivery times”, IHS Markit said.

Input prices rose at the fastest pace since 2011 as a result of the shortages and factories in Spain raised their prices at the fastest rate since June 2018.

Spanish factories said their backlogs of work increased for the first time in nearly two years. Despite the supply chain problems, confidence about the coming months rose among both Italian and Spanish manufacturers as they anticipated that a further loosening of pandemic-related activity restrictions could boost demand further.

The data “confirms the continued resilience of manufacturing activity across Europe, consistent with little-to-no restrictions being placed on industrial activity as part of the ongoing restrictions aimed at containing Covid-19 infections”, said Nikola Dacic, an economist at Goldman Sachs.

Seoul, Tokyo Urged to Look to Future To Improve Ties



SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korean President Moon Jae-in said on Monday that his government is eager for talks with Japan to improve relations following years of bitter feuding over historical grievances, adding that those unresolved issues should not stand in the way of developing “future-oriented” ties.

“There have been times where issues of the past weren’t separated from those of the future and became intermingled with each other. This has impeded forward-looking development,” Mr. Moon said in a nationally televised speech commemorating the anniversary of a 1919 Korean uprising against Japanese colonial rule.

“The Korean government is always ready to sit down and have talks with the Japanese government,” he said.

South Korea and Japan have been struggling to repair relations that sank to their lowest point in decades in 2019 following South Korean court rulings that ordered Japanese companies to pay reparations to Koreans who were forced to work in their factories during World War II. Those rulings led to further tensions over trade when Japan put export controls on chemicals vital to South Korea’s semiconductor industry.

Another sticking point in relations is the issue of Korean women who were sexually enslaved by Japan’s wartime military, with survivors denouncing the Japanese government for refusing to accept legal responsibility for their slavery.

Japan has insisted that all wartime compensation issues were settled under a 1965 treaty normalizing relations with South Korea and it has reacted angrily to South Korean court rulings saying otherwise. There is a risk for further deterioration of the relationship if South Korean courts eventually order the liquidation of local assets of Japanese companies that have refused to compensate forced labourers.

While Mr. Moon said Seoul will continue to support Korean victims of Japanese wartime atrocities, he stressed that the countries “must not let the past hold us back.” Mr. Moon said improved relations would also benefit the three-way cooperation between South Korea, Japan and the United States, which Washington sees as crucial to dealing with regional issues such as North Korea’s nuclear arsenal and China’s increasing economic and military might.

Mr. Moon expressed hope that this year’s Olympics in Tokyo could provide a stage to renew international efforts to resolve the nuclear standoff with North Korea.

Seoul has placed much of the blame for bad relations with Tokyo on Japan’s former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and has hoped that his resignation for health reasons last September could be a diplomatic turning point.

Japanese Companies Go High-Tech in the Battle Against Food Waste

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japanese companies are ramping up the use of artificial intelligence and other advanced technology to reduce waste and cut costs in the pandemic, and looking to score some sustainability points along the way.

Disposing of Japan’s more than 6 million tonnes in food waste costs the world’s No.3 economy some 2 trillion yen (\$19 billion) a year, government data shows. With the highest food waste per capita in Asia, the Japanese government has enacted a new law to halve such costs from 2000 levels by 2030, pushing companies to find solutions.

Convenience store chain Lawson Inc has started using AI from U.S. firm DataRobot, which estimates how much product on shelves, from onigiri rice balls to egg and tuna sandwiches, may go unsold or fall short of demand.

Lawson aims to bring down overstock by 30% in places where it has been rolled out, and wants to halve food waste at all of its stores in 2030 compared with 2018. Disposal of food waste is the biggest cost for Lawson’s franchise owners after labour costs.

Drinks maker Suntory Beverage & Food Ltd is experimenting with another AI product from Fujitsu Ltd to try to determine if goods such as bottles of oolong tea



and mineral water have been damaged in shipping. Until now, that’s been a time-consuming human endeavour. With the new AI, Suntory hopes to gauge when a damaged box is just that, or when the contents themselves have been damaged and need to be returned. Suntory aims to reduce the return of goods by 30-50% and cut the cost of food waste and develop a common standard system that can be shared by other food makers and shipping firms.

Japan’s notoriously fussy shoppers are showing signs of getting on board, especially as the coronavirus pandemic hits incomes.

Tatsuya Sekito launched Kuradashi, an e-commerce firm dealing in unsold foods at a discount, in 2014 after seeing massive amounts of waste from food processors while working for a Japanese trading firm in China.

The online business is now thriving due partly to a jump in demand for low-priced unsold foods as consumers became more cost conscious amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Sales grew 2.5 times last year from a year before, while the amount of food waste has doubled since the coronavirus cut off food supply chain,” Sekito told Reuters.

20 National Utility Projects Inaugurated in 6 Provinces

TEHRAN (IP)- Twenty utility projects in 6 provinces of Iran with an investment of 580.3 billion tomans were put into operation on Tuesday in the presence of the Minister of Energy, via video conference.

Out of 20 projects, 6 projects are in Kermanshah province, 4 projects in Gilan province, 6 projects in two provinces of East Azerbaijan and Fars, two projects in Bushehr province, one project in Hamedan, and one rural electricity project in 17 provinces of Iran.

Six utility projects in Kermanshah province, including Hersin wastewater treatment, construction and development of three substations, 4.6 km transmission and distribution lines, and a small-scale 8.6 MW power plant aimed at increasing network reliability, reducing energy losses, improving the nutrition of distribution substations Compensation for network voltage drop and power supply for new subscribers was opened.

Also in Gilan province, 4 electrical projects, including increasing the capacity of two substations ‘Lashtansha’ and ‘Lushan’, developing the substation ‘Tarah Tolsh Tales’, and constructing the mobile substation ‘Tolmat’ with a credit of 61 billion Tomans were operationalized.

In East Azarbaijan province, however, three electricity industry projects with an investment of 36.5 billion Tomans and in Fars province two projects to increase electricity capacity in Darabgard and Dorodzan with a total credit of 39.1 billion Tomans were inaugurated.

Two electricity development projects in Bushehr province were operationalized as well.

In Hamadan province, a water project including the first phase of the water supply project to Malayer from the Kalan Dam inaugurated through the implementation of a 38 km - transmission line and capable of providing safe and stable water for more than 170,000 people with a credit of 132 billion Tomans.

83 villages in 17 provinces of the country, including Isfahan, East, and West Azerbaijan, Bushehr, South Kerman, Khuzestan, South Khorasan, Razavi Khorasan, Zanjan, Semnan, Sistan and Baluchestan, Fars, Kermanshah, Lorestan, Markazi, Hormozgan, and Yazd were all supplied with electricity.

For the Love of Shia...

FROM PAGE 1

Accordingly, in the video clip which was published in the YouTube on December 17, 2020, Sheikh Yasser unveiled other dimensions of this movie and went through the sensitivities in the religions. In some part of the clip, he says, “Today I feel very well so that I cannot express it. I think an effective job has been done.”



For making this movie it has been tried very much that everyone by watching the movie can feel the authenticity of the event. In this movie, special effect and professional music have been used as its makers have done their best to paint the picture of Hazrat Zahra (AS) as it has been depicted in the history books and this is of the miracles of the technology as today technology talks in the world. The movie has tried to show all characteristics of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) like his physical appearance, behavioral properties, his personal properties like the way he sleeps, eats, sits or stand up, walks In painting the picture of the Prophet, producers have done so carefully that any examiner is stunned. For example, one of the characteristics of the Prophet which has been said about him is that he had 17 white hair strands on his noble face. All these delicate points have been regarded in making the film and this is the difference between this film with other ones which have been done so far.

Of course this point should not be disregarded that Sheikh Yasser had no script writing experience in the past and therefore one cannot consider his technical views expert ones. But on the other hand, spending a huge budget on the film whose source of finance is not yet known has made the film a fully modern and praiseworthy one. The movie “The Lady of Heaven” can be a source for understanding the beloved daughter of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and at the same time it can lead to taking stands by Sunni ulema because the intention of the screen writer and presence of famous and expensive actors in the movie and above all the background and divisive approach of Yasser Al Habib has increased the ambiguities regarding this movie.

In the past Yasser Al Habib had no problem in insulting Sunni and even Shiite intellectuals for his historical revelation in criticizing the caliphs of Islam, and by writing the totally insulting book of “Obscenity: The Other Face of Aisha” he recklessly went through criticizing and insulting the wife of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Now he has produced the movie which includes the most sensitive issue among the Islamic sects. And this vigilance emphasizes us to watch out and not to consider any seemingly positive voice as insider and we should be aware that the satanic elements in UK have always gained from the division among the Islamic sects.

Tehran Warns IAEA...

FROM PAGE 1

Rabiei complained that the U.S. administration has refused to take even the slightest step that would be reflective of efforts to build trust.

“The Trump regime was deceived by those who saw the JCPOA, from the very first day of its signing, as a blow to their evil dreams for the Iranian people. He chose the evil path, which ultimately resulted in the isolation of the United States within the institutions and organizations that it had once founded,” he said.

“Today, according to the statements of the new US administration’s officials and the world’s observers, the policy of maximum pressure has failed and there is no option for the United States but to return to the JCPOA. We have kept our promise over the past years, and now it is up to the United States to act on its slogan of returning to the world by setting aside the most inhumane sanctions that the world can remember,” the official added.

Rabiei also expressed Iran’s readiness “to hear any fair and honest proposal to resolve the dispute, but more than that, we are waiting to see practical measures that can gradually rebuild the lost trust.”

Unlawful...

FROM PAGE 1

The starving bleeding Yemen is too weak even to cry. The Yemeni crisis is allowed to be protracted for almost 7 long years with a complete lack of empathy at the massacre of the innocents.

For years, the world public opinion has been blatantly gas lighted to mistake and misperceive victims for offenders. It is high time that we called a spade a spade. Blame shifting is not a solution.

We have to use this momentum to address the prime and single cause of this shameful human tragedy. We need to appeal to the world’s conscience to help terminate the military intervention and ask the war’s enablers, the arms suppliers, to stop their complicity in war crimes and collective starvation of the Yemenis.

Addressing the humanitarian situation in Yemen requires a genuine assessment of the underlying causes and an honest political will to work for their removal. The unlawful use of force against Yemen in clear violation of the UN Charter and in defiance of the principle of self-determination of people shall be reversed.

This is a pledging event, and the best one can possibly pledge is to redouble their efforts to help end the conflict and preserve the unity, sovereignty, and political independence of Yemen.

The war enablers must, as well, commit to stop selling arms and ammunitions that are used just to kill innocent lives and further level the already destroyed properties.

Crotone Sack Stroppa as Coach

ROME (Dispatches) - Serie A's bottom side Crotone have sacked coach Giovanni Stroppa, the Calabrian club announced on Monday.

Sunday's 2-0 defeat against Cagliari was their sixth in succession and leaves them eight points behind Torino who are one place outside the relegation zone.

Crotone have won just three matches from 24 in Serie A this season. Stroppa, who has been in charge since 2018, gave Crotone their second promotion when they finished second in Serie B last season.

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Leg Injury Forces World Barty Out of Dubai Championship

LONDON (Dispatches) - World number one Ashleigh Barty will not compete at the Dubai Championships next week because of a leg injury, she said in a statement on Monday.

"Unfortunately I have withdrawn from the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships with a left leg injury," she said in a statement published by the WTA. "I look forward to competing again in Miami in a few weeks' time."

Barty, who also dropped out of the Qatar Open currently underway in Doha, is the reigning champion at Miami.

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SPORTS

WEDNESDAY MARCH 3, 2021

Lakers Blow Out Warriors

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - LeBron James scored 19 points and had plenty of time to sit back and enjoy the Los Angeles Lakers' 117-91 NBA victory over the Golden State Warriors. James, playing in his 1,300th regular-season game, added six rebounds, four assists, two steals and two blocked shots in just 24 minutes on court.

He sat out all of the fourth quarter along with the rest of the starters from both teams as the Lakers closed out what had become a tough February with a dominant victory despite the continuing absence of star forward Anthony Davis. The NBA champions, who lost five of their first six with Anthony sidelined, have now won two straight.

"When you lose a mega-piece like AD, it's going to take some time both offensively and defensively," James said of the adjustments required.

He said careful film study had helped the Lakers tighten up their defense and players had become more comfortable in their roles with Davis sidelined -- an absence that Lakers coach Frank Vogel acknowledged, calling on them to develop a "little bit of a new identity."

Six Lakers scored in double figures as they avenged a narrow loss to the Warriors in January. James capped an overwhelming first half with a pull-up three-pointer that put the Lakers up 73-44.

Eric Paschall led the Warriors with 18 points off the bench as star Stephen Curry was limited to 16. The end of the Warriors' three-game winning streak was made more painful with departure of Draymond Green with a sprained left ankle in the second quarter.

The Lakers' win wasn't even the most lopsided of the night. That belonged to the Memphis Grizzlies, who trounced the slumping Houston Rockets 133-84. However, there was plenty of drama in Boston, where forward Jayson Tatum drove for two baskets in the final 15 seconds to lead the Celtics to a 111-110 come-from-behind victory over the Washington Wizards.

Tatum scored 31 points and the Celtics withstood a 46-point performance from Washington's Bradley Beal to complete their first back-to-back wins since January.

Kemba Walker scored 21 points for Boston, who had 20 points and nine rebounds from Daniel Theis. Russell Westbrook scored 24 points and pulled down 11 rebounds for the Wizards.

The Celtics trailed by five with 46.9 seconds remaining. Tatum cut the deficit with a driving finger-roll layup and with 4.7 seconds left spun and drove through



traffic for the go-ahead basket and the Boston escaped with the win.

"Jayson's will really shone through," Celtics coach Brad Stevens said. "It's been a tough stretch for (Tatum), but this matters to him, he wants to win, and he made big plays."

In Milwaukee, Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 17 of the Bucks' last 22 points in a 105-100 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers. Down by seven early in the fourth quarter, the Bucks took a 101-100 lead on two Antetokounmpo free throws with 1:57 remaining.

With 10.3 seconds remaining, Khris Middleton found Antetokounmpo for a one-handed slam that made it 103-100 and after Kawhi Leonard's potential game-tying three-pointer bounced off the front of the rim Middleton grabbed the rebound and made two free throws to seal the win. The Clippers went scoreless over the last four minutes, with Leonard and Paul George both coming up empty on multiple possessions.

Two-time reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Antetokounmpo finished with 36 points -- his fourth straight game of 36 or more.

Djokovic Ties Federer Record Of 310 Weeks As ATP No.1

LONDON (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic matched Roger Federer's all-time record for the most weeks as ATP world number one on Monday, holding the top spot for the 310th week.

Djokovic's ninth Australian Open title last month ensured the 18-time Grand Slam champion will surpass Federer's record next week.

The Serb reclaimed the top ranking from Rafael Nadal in February 2020 and finished as year-end number one for the sixth time, tying the mark set by Pete Sampras.

This is Djokovic's fifth different stint atop the rankings. He spent 122 consecutive weeks as number one between July 2014 and November 2016. That record is currently held by Federer (237).

The only change in the top 20 on Monday saw David Goffin, who won his first title in over three years at Montpellier on Sunday, rise one spot to 14th at the expense of Milos Raonic.

Barcelona Confirm Police Search at Club Offices

MADRID (Dispatches) - Barcelona confirmed on Monday police raided the club's offices as part of an investigation into the hiring of a company to improve the image of former president Josep Maria Bartomeu.

Several arrests were made, a Catalan regional police spokesman told AFP, just six days ahead of the club's new presidential elections on Sunday.

Spain's Cadena Ser radio said one of those arrested was Bartomeu, who resigned in October, along with CEO Oscar Grau and the club's head of legal services Roma Gomez Ponti.

But Barcelona refused to comment on arrests while the police would not confirm names, saying only that "arrests are taking place" and adding that the operation was being run by officers from the financial crimes unit.

"We are in the process of carrying out an operation right now with agents of the financial crimes unit," the police spokesman told AFP.

Barcelona said the operation is linked to last year's investigation into the 'BarcaGate' scandal, in which the club was accused of covering up payments to a company called I3 Ventures, hired to boost the image of then-president Bartomeu on social media.

Part of the campaign included criticising current and former players, like Lionel Messi, Pep Guardiola and Xavi Hernandez. Messi described the controversy as "strange" in an interview with Catalan newspaper Mundo Deportivo.

A club statement on Monday read: "Regarding the entry and search by the Catalan Police force this morning at the Camp Nou offices by order of the Instructing Court number 13 in Barcelona, which is in charge of the case relating to the contacting of monitoring services on social networks, FC Barcelona have offered up their full collaboration to the legal and police authorities to help make clear facts which are subject to investigation."



teams in Europe's leading five leagues, behind only Bayern Munich's 23 in a row in 2020 and Real Madrid's 22 successive victories in 2014.

City are 12 points clear at the top of the Premier League, face a League Cup final date

Man City Won't Rest on Their Laurels

LONDON (Dispatches) - Pep Guardiola says Manchester City have no time to soak up the plaudits during their record-breaking run as the Premier League leaders chase an unprecedented quadruple.

City have set a record for an English top-flight team after reeling off 20 successive victories in all competitions.

It is the third-best winning streak among

with Tottenham and remain in contention to win the Champions League and FA Cup.

But City boss Guardiola has no intention of letting his players get distracted by the praise with a frantic schedule ahead of them.

"We don't have time," Guardiola said ahead of Tuesday's Premier League clash with Wolves. "There are many games, every three days a game, so we have to rest and think of the next one."

"We are delighted with what we have done so far, we cannot deny it. If no team has done it before it means how difficult it is."

"But, at the end, what counts in the world is if you lift the trophies or not. Still we cannot sit down on the sofa and say how good everything is."

West Ham manager David Moyes described City as the best side in Europe after the London club were beaten 2-1 at the Etihad Stadium on Saturday.

"Written off" Liverpool Still Ready to Fight

LONDON (Dispatches) - Jurgen Klopp believes Liverpool can prove the doubters that have written their season off wrong after snapping a four-game Premier League losing streak to win 2-0 at Sheffield United on Sunday.

The English champions' title defence has been decimated by injuries and they face a battle just to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top-four finish.

Klopp's men remain in sixth, but are now just two points behind fourth-placed West Ham and can leapfrog Chelsea in fifth when the Blues visit Anfield on Thursday.

"Plenty of people have written us off. That's fine," said Klopp. "With all the problems we have had we're still around the exciting places."

Captain Jordan Henderson has been added to Liverpool's long-term injury list, while goalkeeper Alisson Becker was absent after he lost his father to a swimming accident in Brazil this week.

But the Championship-bound Blades proved the perfect opponents for Klopp's men to restore some confidence as Curtis Jones's second-half strike and Kean Bryan's own goal got the Reds back to winning ways.

"This was about us showing we're still there," added Klopp.

"We play Chelsea on Thursday, we have to show it again. We have to win football games, we know that. There's no way into the Champions League without results."

With Alisson's understudy Caoimhin Kelleher also absent due to injury, Liverpool's third-choice goalkeeper Adrian started in the Premier League for the first time since conceding nine goals in two games in October to Aston Villa and Everton.



Rossi Excited by New Challenge With Yamaha SRT

PARIS (Dispatches) - Valentino Rossi is embracing a fresh start with Yamaha SRT after dropping down from the manufacturer's factory team for his 22nd season competing in motorcycling's top category.

Rossi, 42, has won the MotoGP championship seven times but endured his worst season in 2020, finishing 15th overall and missing two races following a positive Covid-19 test.

The Italian will line up alongside compatriot Franco Morbidelli for the Yamaha satellite team, having signed a one-year extension to his contract with the Japanese manufacturer.

"It's a new challenge for me. This is a very young team, but in the last two years they have already been really competitive," Rossi said at the team's virtual launch on Monday. "My targets for 2021 is to be competitive, fight to win races, fight to achieve podiums and also fight for a good position in the World Championship standings at the end of the season."

Rossi has switched places with Fabio Quartararo, the young French rider making the step up to the factory Yamaha team after recording three wins in just his second season among the elite. Morbidelli, 26, finished second in the standings to Joan Mir, who ended Marc Marquez's four-year reign as champion. Marquez missed all but the opening race of the season to due injury.

"We are all very focused on our targets to make the best we can. I think that with Franco we are a very interesting couple of riders as we know each other really well," said Rossi.

"All the whole team has a lot of motivation and I will give my maximum to achieve together the best possible result at the end of the calendar."

Rossi holds records for MotoGP and 500cc wins (89) but he has not won an elite class race since 2017.

