

Iran Chamber of Commerce Is To Hold a Trade Forum With Presence of Textile Activists From India on Wednesday December 11 Where Textile Activists to Explore Ways of Cooperation

IRAN NEWS

Iran Chamber of Commerce Will Host Kazakhstan Economy Day Forum on December 29 Where Economic Capacities and Investment Opportunities of Kazakhstan Will Be Reviewed

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Iran, U.S. Exchange Prisoners With Swiss Mediation

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The U.S. has released Iranian stem cell scientist Masoud Soleimani and handed him over to Iranian officials in Switzerland, which has apparently mediated another prisoner swap between Tehran and Washington.

“Dr Masoud Soleimani, the Iranian scholar and university professor, was released moments ago after one year of illegal detention in the U.S., and handed over to Iranian officials in Switzerland,” the Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Saturday, December 7, 2019.

“Professor Soleimani, who had been detained on the bogus charge of violating the U.S.’ illegal sanctions and were imprisoned in the U.S. for over a year, ... is going to return to Iran over the next couple of hours,” another statement by the Foreign Ministry said later in the day.

“The Iranian professor was released in light of efforts by Iran’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and cooperation from the Islamic Republic of Iran’s security and judicial organizations in a diplomatic process in cooperation with the government of Switzerland,” it added.

See Page 7

Iranian Firms to Rebuild Syria’s Water, Electricity Industry

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Minister of Energy Reza Ardakanian said that competent Iranian companies will reconstruct Syria’s water and power industry.

He made the remarks on Sat. in an interview with IRNA and pointed to the signing and sealing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for improving Syria’s electricity industry and added, “therefore, it is tried to renovate and develop Syria’s water and electricity industry by eligible Iranian companies.”

A few days ago, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was inked between energy ministers of Iran and Syria in Tehran, he added. Under the agreement, Iranian Ministry of Energy promised to improve Syria’s electricity industry in a comprehensive three-year program, including construction of power plants, correcting damaged electricity grids and also training Syrian manpower.

In addition, the two sides agreed to set up a joint strategic committee within a month to follow up execution of provisions as stipulated in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The meetings of the committee were decided to be held once every three months both in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Syria, Energy Minister Ardakanian added.

Tehran, Muscat Bolster Ties By Signing 3 MoUs



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran and Oman will increase joint efforts in areas of maritime transportation, standard, and sports, as the two countries signed three Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) on Saturday in Tehran.

During the meeting of the 18th Joint Commission of Iran and Oman at the venue of the Permanent Fairground of Iran’s International Exhibitions, representatives from the two countries signed three MoUs to boost cooperation in areas of maritime transportation, standard, and sports.

The meeting was co-chaired by Iranian Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Reza Rahmani and Omani Minister of Commerce and Industry of Oman Ali bin Masud Al Sunaidi.

Headed by Al Sunaidi, a high-ranking economic delegation from Oman is visiting Iran to discuss expansion of ties.

The Head of Iran Trade Promotion Organization Hamid Zadboum said on Saturday that trade, investment, industry, chambers of commerce, free zones, the environment, electricity and gas are some common areas of cooperation between Iran and Oman.

According to Head of Iran-Oman Joint Economic Committee, Iran’s exports to Oman reached \$728 million this year, while the two countries’ trade turnover hit \$1.16 billion, indicating a 5.3 percent increase in trade between the two countries in about five years.

Meanwhile addressing the meeting, Rahmani said that Iran as member state of North-South Transport Corridor will interlink the Caspian states to the Central Asian nations to boost trade relations between Caspian Sea littoral states in north and the Central Asian countries in south.

North-South Transport Corridor is a sea, rail, and road route expected to facilitate and boost exchange of goods between India, Russia, Iran, Europe and the Central Asian states.

At the commission meeting, Rahmani expressed hope that this economic event would be taken as an opportunity for reviewing new capacities for maximum development of bilateral cooperation.

About the presence of the Omani delegation in Tehran, Rahmani said the Omani delegation is one of the top-ranking delegations including the private sector coming to Iran over the past several years.

The minister hoped the Iranian private sectors would hold fruitful talks with the Omani businesspersons.

Rahmani reiterated that Iran attaches great importance to seriously develop relations with the neighboring and Islamic countries according to the guidelines of the Supreme Leader and the president.

Iranian minister believes that the two countries enjoy great agricultural and industrial capacities that can be used for further regional cooperation.

He also said that Iran and Oman want to increase their trade volume to \$5b and they need a roadmap for boosting bilateral economic cooperation. He reiterated that there is no hurdle in way of expanding ties between both countries.

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Iran Nuclear Deal Stays Alive After Talks

GENEVA (Dispatches) - European parties to the 2015 nuclear deal have demanded that Iran stop taking steps away from the accord but stopped short of triggering a mechanism that could renew United Nations sanctions, during a rare meeting between the pact’s remaining signatories.

Friday’s three-hour meeting in Vienna, the first with all parties since July, came as tensions continue to rise with Tehran systematically rolling back its commitments under the deal following Washington’s withdrawal last year and imposition of “maximum pressure” sanctions.

Iranian officials have accused the European parties who are working to salvage the accord - the UK, France, and Germany - of not doing enough to protect Tehran from the sanctions, which officials have said justifies their non-compliance.

Since last month, European members have in turn begun raising the possibility of triggering the so-called “dispute resolution mechanism” outlined in the accord, which could lead to the resumption of UN sanctions on Iran.

The talks were further strained by clashes on Thursday over accusations from the UK, France and Germany that Iran is developing nuclear-capable ballistic missiles that were “inconsistent” with a 2015 UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution that underpins the nuclear accord. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called the claims, made in a letter to the UN secretary-general, “desperate falsehoods”.

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Iran’s Share of Iraqi Imports Reaches 25%

TEHRAN (IFP) - One-fourth of the total imports into Iraq come from Iran, an Iranian official has announced.

Chairman of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran Hamid Zadboum says the value of Iranian exports to neighboring Iraq amounts to one-fourth of the Arab country’s total imports.

“Twenty-five percent of the import market in Iraq is held by Iran, as the value of the Iranian goods make up \$10 billion of the total of \$40 billion in import into Iraq,” he told Fars.

Highlighting efforts to increase Iran’s share in the Iraqi market, Zadboum said the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran has for the first time dispatched a commercial attaché to the Iraqi city of Basra.

Iran has the potential for a big rise in the volume of exports to Iraq, he added, citing the difficult trade conditions caused by the US sanctions.

The official finally expressed optimism that Iran would boost exports to Iraq according to the plans, saying the Islamic Republic is expected to gain a larger share of Iraq’s import market by the next year.

More Support Needed for Refugee Education in Iran

GENEVA (Dispatches) - This is a summary of what was said by UNHCR spokesperson Babar Baloch – to whom quoted text may be attributed – at today’s press briefing at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, welcomes Iran’s efforts to extend education opportunities for nearly half a million Afghan children in the country, and recognizes that the country needs greater humanitarian support because of the economic challenges it faces today.

Iran has been one of the world’s leading refugee hosts for decades and currently has some one million registered refugees from Afghanistan. In addition, over two million Afghans are estimated to live in Iran either without documentation or on national passports.

Iran leads by example in including refugees in national services. Since a law introduced in 2015, all Afghan children can go to school, regardless of whether they are refugees, holders of an Afghan national passport or undocumented. Refugee children study side by side with their Iranian classmates, following the national curriculum.

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Sokhan Gostar Institute

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Preparations Underway for Rouhani Visit to Japan

TEHRAN (ISNA) - Iranian deputy Foreign Minister, Abbas Araqchi says he hopes the possible visit to Japan by President Hassan Rouhani later this month will help strengthen economic ties.

Abbas Araqchi told NHK in Vienna, Austria, that arrangements are underway to fix a date for the visit, and he is hopeful it will be decided soon.

He said Japan is an economic partner and provider of technology to Iran, which has always been one of Japan's major oil suppliers.

U.S. Presence in Persian Gulf Theatrical

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Commander of the Iranian Navy Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi described the U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf as “theatrical” and said its warships have no positive effect on the security of the region.

The Iran-controlled waters of the region are completely secure and following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the country's power has been consolidated and there has been no insecurity in these seas, Khanzadi said.

“The forces of other countries that are present in the region are just trying to secure their illegitimate interests,” he said, adding, “...their presence and moves in these seas are theatrical and deceptive and they claim that the region is insecure while we are witnessing no insecurity in the region.”

“As soon as they enter the region, they bring insecurity with themselves,” the commander went on to say.

He added that the Americans, with their presence, suggest that Iran's growing power is a threat to other countries, and intimidate some cowards in the region as they seek to plunder regional assets.

Meanwhile a senior commander said Iran's Navy is keeping a constant watch



on each and every vessel cruising in the northern parts of the Indian Ocean.

Iran has established a base in the southeastern coastal region of Pasabandar to track maritime movements in the northern areas of the Indian Ocean, Deputy Chief of Iran's Army for Coordination Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a ceremony during which the homegrown “Bayandor” destroyer joined the Iranian Navy's fleet in the Konarak region, Sayyari said the base in Pasabandar has been dubbed the ‘Might Office’.

There was no control over the ships travelling in the northern areas of the Indian Ocean in the past, but the Iranian base is now tracking and monitoring every single vessel cruising in that region, he added.

Rear Admiral Sayyari also noted that Iran's naval missions have been extended to an area of over 2 million square kilometers from the Persian Gulf to the northern parts of the Indian Ocean, down to the 10-degrees latitude.

Tehran, Rome Keen On Enhancing Relations

LONDON (IRNA) -

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Sajjadpour and Italian Deputy Foreign Minister Marina Sereni reviewed ways to upgrade bilateral ties and the latest developments in the region.



Sereni said that there are various capacities to enhance level of economic relations, calling for taking advantage of the capacities.

Thanks to regional developments, she called for regular consultations between the two countries.

She once again expressed support for Iran nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Meanwhile, Sajjadpour elaborated on measures taken by Iran over preserving the JCPOA in the framework of maintaining cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and compliance with the commitments.

He noted that the nuclear accord is a bilateral agreement and other parties are expected to implement their commitments.

Pointing to Italy as first trade partner of Iran in Europe, he said using opportunities and removal of the obstacles are of importance for developing relations in line with mutual interests.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian senior diplomat underlined Iran's readiness for regular consultations with Italy.

Iranians Must Meet Spanish Requirements for Receiving Visa

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Spanish Charge d'Affaires Jose Luis Solano told The Spanish visa is not issued to Iranians who do not qualify to apply for visa.

According to ILNA news agency, the charge d'affaires of the Embassy of Spanish to Tehran confirmed that the people who are required to apply for a Spanish visa should verify that they meet all the necessary requirements.

“I think there are very good tourism relations between the two countries. We have many requests from Iranians who want to travel to Spain every year.”

Jose Luis Solano added that during the past year, about 19,000 visas were issued to Iranians to travel to Spain.

All prospective applicants from Iran must apply for a Schengen visa while visiting Spain as their main country of destination. “Every year we see an increase in the number of Spanish tourists interested in traveling to Iran,” The Spanish Charge d'Affaires said.

Solano said “Iran is a country that can attract Spanish tourists and us all here are ready to introduce them Iranian tourism attractions.”



Iran to Hold 40 Exhibitions To Spur Export by Yearend

TEHRAN (MNA) – Chief Executive of Iran International Exhibitions Company (IIECO) Bahman Hosseinzadeh said that as many as 40 exhibitions will be organized in the country for increasing the volume of exports.

He made the remarks on Friday, adding that 40 exhibitions will be organized for exporting products to 15 neighboring countries.

He put the number of exhibitions held last year (ended March 20, 2019) at 75, adding that as many as 107 exhibitions will be organized in the country by the end of this year (March 20, 2020).

The Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade has focused on boosting domestic production in the current year, he said, adding “supporting knowledge-based companies, startups and their active presence on the sidelines of each exhibition have been prioritized by Iran International Exhibitions Co. (IIECO).”

He went on to say that organizing the first exhibition for introducing export opportunities within the framework of Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) inked between Iran and Eurasian Economic union (EAEU) has been put atop agenda of the company and for this purpose, a specialized panel will be earmarked to each province in the exhibition.

Normalizing Ties With Neighbors Is Iran's Policy

MASHHAD (IRNA) - Chief of Staff of the presidential office Mahmoud Vaezi said Iranian government's policy is to establish close ties and to normalize relations with neighbors.

Speaking in the meeting of the work group on facilitating and removing production obstacles in Khorasan Razavi province, Vaezi said Iran has good relations with Afghanistan.

He called for understanding the current situation which is economic war imposed on Iran. Vaezi said enemies are after maximizing economic problems for people, adding, “We should act in a ways that enemy understands its maximum pressure does not work.”

He also called for turning lifting limitations for trade between Iran and European as a total demand. Elsewhere in his remarks, he called for standing against Americans in cultural and economic fields.

50 New Nuclear Achievements Early to Be Unveiled Next Year

TEHRAN (FNA) - Assistant head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Asqar Zare'an announced on Saturday that the country will unveil 50 new nuclear products in the early days of the next Iranian year (to start on March 20).

“50 new achievements will be unveiled on April 9 (National Nuclear Technology Day), including new centrifuge systems and power plant heavy water,” Zare'an said, addressing a ceremony in Karaj city near Tehran.

He also added that Arak heavy water reactor will have new activities on its agenda next year, noting that there will be some good news to be released about it soon.

Zare'an said that the enemies are angry at Iran's full control over the nuclear fuel cycle.

AEOI Head Ali Akbar Salehi had announced last January that the country was taking the preliminary steps to produce what he called “modern 20%-enriched uranium” to fuel the country's reactors.

Ground Ready for Further Iran-Oman Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnasser Hemmati said on Saturday that good political relations between Tehran and Muscat have prepared the ground for economic cooperation between the two countries.

Hemmati made the remarks in his Instagram post on Saturday. In line with the recent good talks with foreign minister and governor of central bank of Oman, Iran will follow up negotiations with Omani trade minister in Tehran, Hemmati noted.

In related development, Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Reza Rahmani said at the 18th meeting of Iran-Oman joint economic commission on Saturday that Iran is determined to implement agreements between Tehran and Muscat Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah visited Iran last week and held talks with top Iranian officials.



SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT



CALL FOR PUBLIC TENDER

(FIRST/SECOND PUBLISH) ONE STAGES TENDER

• Subject of Tender:

Tender No.	Description
FP/05-98/094	P/F: VARCO TOP DRIVE

• Tender descriptions:

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3.221.217	Tender No.: FP/05-98/094 Indent No.:08-22-9745200	27,657,000,000(RIAL)

• Qualitative evaluation of tenderers

Method	Qualification process will be done in plain mode in offers opening session according to presentation of valid practice certificate / legal documents (certificate of corporation/ supply announcement up to latest changes) which should be related to tender subject.
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• Purchasing & Submitting

Tender Document Distribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof	
	Distribution Place	Hall No.:113, 1th floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN 061-34148659 - Room No. 431, 4th floor, Oil central building No.8,Yaghma alley, Jomhori Islami st., Tehran – Iran
Documents Receiving Method	Submitting Method	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491(Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of “NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund” issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank.Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.
	Closing date	14 Days after the last time of Purchasing.
Documents Receiving Method	Address	Hall No. 107, 1stfloor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN.Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569

• Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	1,379,000,000 Rial / 29,000 Euro	Regarding Tender No	FP/05-98/094
Type of guarantee	Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of “NIDC saving account” by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.		
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.		

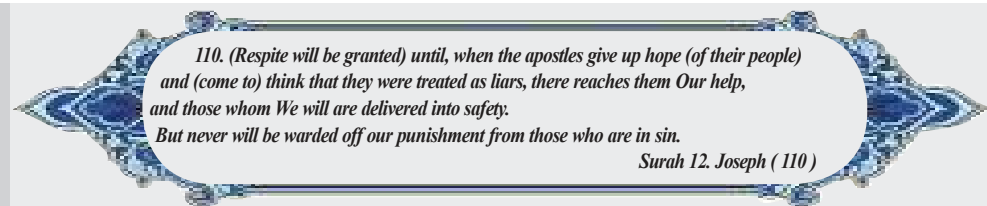
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PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:56
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:10
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:32
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:02



32 European Companies Ready to Cooperate With Iran Oil Industry

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Energy Commission of Iran Chamber of Commerce says 32 European companies have announced their readiness to cooperate with Iran's oil industry.

Speaking at a press conference on the First Iran Downstream Oil and Gas Exhibition and Conference, Reza Paydar said that the economic structure of the country needs to change in the light of social and political developments.

"We designed the production and commercial strategies in the Chamber of Commerce, and this exhibition can be a good occasion to present these strategies," Paydar said.

"The first strategy is production for the domestic market," the official added. "We must accept Import substitution industrialization as an important principle. In the last three decades, we have created the potential and capacity to supply more than 80 percent of the goods to the market, but we still need to develop operational capacity."

According to him, 86 percent of the capacities are state-owned, the private sector does not have the opportunity to change that ratio.

"The strategy of producing heavy machinery through assembly also will be



presented at the exhibition," said Paydar. "Our other strategy for domestic production is national self-sufficiency. We have the largest energy resources as well as the workforce and innovation that we must take advantage of."

The official emphasized that in the equipment sector, there is a need to integrate power and technical knowledge.

"There are 114 medium and small companies in the Chamber of Commerce, and 32 of them announced that they will participate in the exhibition," Paydar said adding that one of the event's goals is to bring together the country's public and private sectors.

He added that European companies have welcomed cooperation with Iran oil industry and 32 companies are ready to attend the event.

Meanwhile head of policy-making council of the exhibition said that the exhibition had limitation for the number of participants, noting that the exhibition can host between 1100 and 1200 companies and over 900 companies are left behind the door. He added that due to limitation for participation, those companies which register first will have chance to attend the exhibition.

The Iran Downstream Oil and Gas Exhibition and Conference will be held Feb. 2-5, 2020, for the first time in Iran. The event participants include Iran's refiners and petrochemical producers who are invited to discuss and find solutions to the industry's growth and technical challenges.

"Museum of Islamic Arts" Book Unveiled



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The "Museum of Islamic Arts" book, written by Swiss Iranologist, Patrick Ringgenberg, was unveiled in Iran, Switzerland and France simultaneously and its distribution began in Iran.

According to Refah Kargaran Bank of Iran, the illustrated book has been written by Ringgenberg and it is aimed at making the French-language countries acquainted with priceless national treasury of Iran which has been published by Shaam and Meh (Candle and Fog) Publishing and it was distributed simultaneously in Iran, Switzerland and France.

The book was unveiled in a ceremony in Tehran in presence of ambassadors of France and Switzerland, Head of National Museum of Iran, the writer of the book Mr. Ringgenberg as well as enthusiasts and university teachers.

The book will be introduced next week in University of Lausanne in Switzerland. The book is to be introduced and reviewed at Sorbonne University in Paris in February in presence of Refah Bank of Iran representatives. The bank is sponsor of the book. This is the 11th work on Iran by this this Swiss writer and researcher of University of Lausanne.

Iran, Russia to Boost Port Cooperation in Caspian Sea

TEHRAN (FNA) - Iran and Russia are holding meetings to further increase maritime cooperation in the Caspian Sea with new agreements to be reached between the Iranian port of Anzali and the Russian port of Astrakhan, provincial head of Ports and Maritime Organization in the northern province of Gilan Hamid Reza Abayee said.

Abayee recounted the details of his recent trip to Russia and his meeting with his Russian counterpart from the Astrakhan port, saying that good measures took place in line with promoting the level of cooperation between the two ports.

"During the trip, cooperation between Anzali and Astrakhan ports were discussed, including the dispatch of vessels to the ports of the two sides. It was decided that the Russian side would follow up and resolve the issues facing vessels sailing with Iranian flags through Russian waters," he added.

Another topic that was followed up during the discussions was organizing training courses between the two sides, Abayee noted.

The Russian side welcomed expansion of coordination and development of activities between Astrakhan, Anzali and Astara ports, he added.

In mid-August, Managing Director of Russia's Astrakhan Special Economic Zone Miloshkin Sergei said that Iran's Southeastern port of Chabahar is very important for Russia, and President Vladimir Putin believes that the port can ease transportation of goods to the Gulf of Oman, other countries and the Indian subcontinent.

BMI Attracts Biggest Amount of Deposits

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Bank Melli Iran has the biggest share of people's deposits in the national banking system as the deposits in the first seven months of the current year have grown significantly.

According to reports, MBI due to people's trust has major share in attracting people's deposits in forms of long-term, short-term, qarzul-hasaneh and forex deposits comparing to other banks in the country. The increase in deposits in the banks will play a key role for granting loans and banking facilities and it will help BMI to take major step for materializing its policy for supporting pick-up in the production.

The bank ranks first in attracting long-term deposit which is 32.48 percent of total long-term deposit in the banking sector.

The deposits in the qarzul-hasaneh account have increased 26.48 percent and the bank ranks first in this category.

The statistics show that qarzul-hasaneh deposits in the bank have grown by 7 percent comparing to the same period last year.

The bank ranks first in total rial or forex deposits in the first seven months by having 22 percent of total amount of deposits in the national banking system.



Golgothar Co. Posts 74% Sale Growth in November

IRAN NEW ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Golgothar Mining and Industrial Company registered the biggest sales growth in November comparing to other giant mining and industrial companies.

According to reports, the company registered sales worth over 1233b tomans in November which shows 74% growth comparing to the previous year and it outrivald giant mining and industrial companies.

The Commodities in its report noted that the sales of mining companies in Tehran Stock Market reached over 12,600b tomans in November and the figure shows 26% growth comparing to the previous year. The report shows that mining companies account for 24% of total sales among the listed companies in the stock market.

The value of total sales of mining chain companies in the stock market in the past 8 months has exceeded 98,000b tomans and Golgothar Mining and Industrial Company' sales worth 8,672b tomans accounts for 9% of total sales in this sector.

Golgothar Mining and Industrial Company is one of the biggest producers of iron concentrate and pelletizing in the company. The company last month and in presence of President Hasan Rouhani brought its 8200b toman project into the network.



Hot Rolling Mill No.2 to Accelerate Production in MSC

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Deputy Industry, Mine and Industry Minister and Head of IMIDRO Dr. Khodadad Gharibpoor believes Hot Rolling Mill No.2 of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) would remove hurdles in way of production and would accelerate it.

During his visit from pavilion of Mobarakeh Steel Company in the 16th International Iran METAFO exhibition, Dr. Gharibpoor said that the ministry's approach to Mobarakeh Steel Company is in line with development, adding that he believes the project of Hot Rolling Mill No.2 should be implemented. And MSC should put on agenda the developmental projects in Hormuzgan Steel and Chabahar Steel companies, he added.

He noted that MSC is one of the biggest industrial units in the country which enjoys great technical knowledge in its engineering complex and this has been a major factor for the company to play technological role, too.

Gharibpoor went on to say that IMIDRO is trying to connect Mobarakeh Steel Company to the mine. It means the company would buy major concentrate and pelletizing production units and to add to its production chain and manage the slogan of "from stone to the color," he added.

He added that IMIDRO is after pushing the company to provide its raw material sustainably and expansion of rolling in the company.

He noted that completion of Hot Rolling Mill No. 2 will meet the country's need to new sheets and will save the forex, adding that it will help the three-million-ton production capacity of Mobarakeh Steel to be activated and production will be accelerated.

SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT

CALL FOR PUBLIC TENDER

(FIRST/SECOND PUBLISH) TWO STAGES TENDER

Subject of Tender:

Indent No.	Description
FP/05-98/147	P/F: GATE VALVE
FP/05-98/148	P/F: GATE VALVE

Tender descriptions:

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No./Indent No.	Estimated value(Rial)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3,221,216	Tender No.: FP/05-98/147 Indent No.:08-22-9845032	5,000,000,000 Rial
	3,221,214	Tender No.: FP/05-98/148 Indent No.:08-22-9845006	3,500,000,000 Rial

Qualitative evaluation of tenderers

Method	Qualification process will be done in plain mode in offers opening session according to presentation of valid practice certificate / legal documents (certificate of corporation/ supply announcement up to latest changes) which should be related to tender subject.
Method	

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Documents Receiving Method	Closing date: 14 Days after the last time of Purchasing. Address: Hall No. 107, 1stfloor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN.Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569

Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	250,000,000 Rial / 2,097 Euro Regarding Tender No FP/05-98/147 175,000,000 Rial / 1,468 Euro Regarding Tender No FP/05-98/148
Type of guarantee	Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

(Foreign Procurement Dept.)

More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir http://sapp.ir/nidc_pr

Qatar Confirms Talks With Saudi Arabia



CAIRO (Reuters) - Qatari foreign minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani said on Friday there have been talks with the Saudis, and expressed his hopes for positive results, Qatar's Al Jazeera media network reported.

The minister also thanked Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah for his role in the mediation. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut diplomatic and trade links with Qatar in June 2017, accusing it of backing terrorism. Qatar denies the charge and accuses its neighbors of seeking to curtail its sovereignty.

Morales Visits Cuba for Medical Appointment



MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Bolivian ex-President Evo Morales is in Cuba for a medical check-up, a former official from his government said on Friday, after the ousted leader sought asylum in Mexico.

"President Evo Morales is in Cuba for a medical appointment with the Cuban medical team that treated him in Bolivia," Gabriela Montano, the former health minister under Morales' administration, told Reuters.

Mexico's Foreign Ministry said Morales departed for Cuba on Friday morning on what was expected to be a brief trip.

No Let-Up in French Strikes With Fresh Turmoil Awaited



PARIS (AFP) - France was on Saturday expecting its most serious nationwide strike in years to paralyze the country over the weekend, with unions warning the turmoil would last well into next week.

The challenge thrown to President Emmanuel Macron over his plans for radical pension reform has seen hundreds of thousands take to the streets and key transport services brought to a standstill.

The strikes, which began on Thursday, have recalled the winter of 1995, when three weeks of huge stoppages forced a social policy U-turn by the then-government.

Unions have vowed a second series of mass demonstrations nationwide on Tuesday after big rallies on Thursday and there is expected to be little easing of the transport freezes over the coming days.

Macron was widely believed to have ridden out the challenge posed by the "yellow vests" whose weekly Saturday protests against inequality in France have shaken the government over the last year.

But the yellow vests have also sought to utilize the momentum of the strike movement and were expected to hold protests across France this Saturday.

With Macron seeking for now to rise above the fray, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe insisted that the government would not abandon the plan even if it was prepared to bring it in more gradually.

He said the government would work with trade unions to introduce a single points-based pension scheme that would require the French to "work a bit longer" and replace dozens of more advantageous plans currently enjoyed by public-sector workers.

But the premier emphasised that the changes, which he said would be unveiled on Wednesday, were going to be introduced "progressively, without harshness".

The SNCF rail operator has warned that disruption at the weekend will be at the same level as the last two days with just 10-15 percent of high-speed and regional trains running.

The Paris metro will remain severely disrupted with nine lines entirely shut, five only partially and just the driverless 1 and 14 lines working normally.

Many cancellations were also expected on the international Eurostar and Thalys services.

Air travel, which has been less impacted by the strikes, is expected to return closer to normal with air traffic restrictions now dropped by civil aviation authorities.

The walkout is the latest test of Macron's mettle after months of protests from teachers, hospital workers, police and firefighters, capping a year of social unrest triggered by the yellow vest movement.

Iraq Protest Death Toll Mounts as Cleric Warns Against Meddling



BAGHDAD (Reuters) - Iraq's top Shi'ite Muslim cleric said a new prime minister must be chosen without foreign interference in an apparent, as armed men killed at least 19 people, including three police, near a Baghdad protest site on Friday.

More than 70 others were wounded by gunfire and stabbings near Tahrir Square, the main protest camp in the Iraqi capital, police and medics said.

It was the most violent flare-up in the capital for weeks and came a week after Iraqi's prime minister, Adel Abdul Mahdi, said he would resign following two months of anti-government protests.

Security sources said they could not identify the gunmen who attacked protesters.

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's comments followed reports that a senior Iranian commander had been in Baghdad this week to rally support for a new government.

Saudi Airman in U.S. for Training Suspected in Deadly Shooting

PENSACOLA (Reuters) - A Saudi Air Force second lieutenant killed four people and wounded eight others on Friday in an unexplained shooting rampage at a U.S. Navy base in Florida where he was training, U.S. officials told Reuters.

Sheriff's deputies responding to the early-morning incident shot and killed the gunman, who was armed with a handgun at the U.S. Naval Station in Pensacola, Navy and local law enforcement officials said.

The shooting, which played out over two floors in a classroom building at the base, marked the second deadly shooting at a U.S. military installation this week, following a similar incident at the joint Air Force and Naval base at Pearl Harbor on Wednesday.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis said the suspect was attending training at the base as part of long-standing Navy program involving members of the Saudi military.

"The government of Saudi Arabia needs to make things better for these victims. They are going to owe a debt here, given that this was one of their individuals," DeSantis said at a news conference.

U.S President Donald Trump said Saudi Arabia's King Salman called him to offer condolences and sympathy to the victims.

"The King said that the Saudi people are greatly angered by the barbaric actions of the shooter," Trump wrote on Twitter.

Salman condemned the shooting in a written statement and said his government's security services were working with U.S. agencies to uncover the cause.

"The perpetrator of this heinous crime does not represent the Saudi people, who count the American people as friends and allies," Salman said.

FBI investigators, who were leading a probe into the shooting, declined to identify the gunman and said at an evening news conference they had not established a motive for the attack.

Chile Urged to Stop Excessive Force

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on Friday condemned Chile's use of "excessive force" in confronting protesters, and called on the government to immediately halt all repressive measures.

The commission, part of the Organization of American States (OAS), said the social unrest in Chile had cost the lives of 26 people since mid-October, with some 12,600 injured and more than 20,600 detained.

The massive protests began with a demonstration against a price hike on metro tickets in Santiago, which sparked violent protests across the country in which demonstrators voiced a host of complaints against the conservative government of President Sebastian Pinera.

"The IACHR condemns the use of excessive force in the context of the social protests in Chile, serious excesses in some demonstrations, and expresses serious concern over the high number of accusations of human rights violations by state agencies," it said in a statement.

"The IACHR calls on the authorities to order an immediate halt to the disproportionate use of force on the part of the state security forces."

Of the 26 deaths during the protests, at least five were attributable directly to state security forces and two occurred in custody, the report said.

The commission voiced "extreme concern" over the high number of people suffering eye injuries due to police crowd dispersion tactics, with more than 280 people allegedly suffering vision problems.

The IACHR also noted "serious excesses" by some groups of protesters who "lobbed heavy projectiles at security forces, destroyed public property such as schools, buses, trains and metro trains, sparking looting and other aggressions."

"The IACHR energetically condemns any act of violence, and notes that social protest is legitimate as long as it remains peaceful," it said.

Pinera said Thursday that police may have broken protocols in responding to the protests, and said prosecutors will investigate whether they violated human rights.



Algerian Protesters March in Last Friday Rally Before Election



ALGIERS (Reuters) - Tens of thousands of Algerians took to the streets on Friday, making a show of strength of their last weekly protest before a presidential election that they have rejected as meaningless.

The protesters have been demonstrating twice a week since February to demand that the shadowy ruling elite that has controlled Algeria since independence in 1962 quits power.

On Friday in central Algiers they chanted "We will not vote" and held aloft banners reading "The people are fed up."

The army, the major force within the Algerian state, sees the Dec. 12 election of a new president as the only way to restore normality after nine months of demonstrations that in April ousted the veteran leader Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

The leaderless opposition movement casts the election as pointless if the ruling hierarchy, including the army, continues to wield power, and wants it put off until more top officials step aside and the military quits politics.

"We will stick to our position. We don't care about next Thursday. We need change," said post office employee Aissa Baha'i, 32.

As the last protesters were still leaving, state television began broadcasting a debate between the five men running for president, all of whom are former senior officials. Some people were watching in Algiers cafes, though others were showing a soccer match, including some protesters who rejected it as political theatre.

"These candidates are part of the same system. They don't have new ideas. It's a shame," said Mohamed Tabi, a taxi driver.

The first question was about Algeria's political system, and candidates tried to mollify the opposition. One candidate, Abdelaziz Belaid, said he would hold a referendum to change the constitution and another, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, said he would grant all the freedoms sought by the protesters.

The debate is the first in an Algerian election, and some people watching in a nearby restaurant said they were interested and were planning to vote.

Farid Hamiti, a state bank employee, said the election was "the only way to stop the situation from getting worse".

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Russia's Condensate Production 833,000 bpd in November

VIENNA (Reuters) - Russia's gas condensate production averaged 833,000 barrels per day (bpd) in November, Energy Minister Alexander Novak told reporters on Friday, up from an October 2018 baseline of 796,000 bpd being used in a global oil output cut deal.

Russia is part of a pact among OPEC and non-OPEC oil producers curbing their oil output to support prices but Moscow wants to exclude gas condensate from its quota calculations, something OPEC members already do. Novak said on Thursday that OPEC agreed to allow participants to exclude condensate, a light crude extracted as a by-product of gas production.



U.S. Job Creation Soars in November, Boosting Trump

NEW YORK (Dispatches) – U.S. job creation soared last month as hospitals, hotels and schools raced to add new workers, a shot in the arm for Donald Trump's economic stewardship as he faces impeachment and a bitter fight for reelection.

The surprise jump in hiring wiped away fears that November would be a lackluster month and suggested the American economy so far is holding up despite a global slowdown.

Payrolls also got a boost as autoworkers were back on the job after a six-week nationwide strike at General Motors plants, according to Labor Department data released Friday.

U.S. firms added a massive 266,000 net new positions, shattering economists' expectations, while the jobless rate fell a tenth of a point to 3.5 percent.

This matched the 50-year low set in September but the November drop was mainly because of a small decline in the workforce.

Job gains in September and October also were revised upward by a total of 41,000, underscoring the strength of labor markets.

"This is wild," Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics said in a note to clients, warning that a downward revision was possible. Economists in recent days had begun to worry that America's appetite for workers was on the wane, as some signs pointed to slackening demand for labor as well as a dwindling supply of workers. But the continued hiring bonanza should bolster the Federal Reserve's decision to keep the benchmark interest rate stable after three cuts this year, with central bankers believing more stimulus is unnecessary.

On Twitter, Trump hailed the "GREAT JOBS REPORT" while top White House economic aide Larry Kudlow said the numbers showed good times were getting better.

"The basic theme here: America is working," he told CNBC.

Job creation has slowed this year, however, as employers on average have added 180,000 workers a month, down from the 223,000 average monthly gains in 2018. Average hourly wages crept 0.2 percent higher compared to October, but that was slower than forecast. Compared to a year ago, however, the increase was 3.1 percent, well above the rate of consumer inflation. The wage gains are unlikely to alter the Fed's view, said economist Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics.

"As for the Fed, these data should support the 'on hold' stance, at least for the time-being," she said in an analysis. Meanwhile, the dip in the jobless rate came with a drop in labor force as people left the job hunt or retired.

Sri Lanka Sets 5-Year Economic Development Target to Achieve Prosperity

COLOMBO (Xinhua) -- Sri Lanka's new government headed by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has set a five-year economic development target to guide the country towards a prosperous future.

The target includes achieving a 6.5-percent economic growth per annum from 2020 and a GDP growth of 6,500 U.S. dollars per individual, Cabinet Spokesperson Bandula Gunawardena was quoted by local media as saying here on Friday.

Gunawardena said that Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa who is also the finance minister had proposed a new policy titled "Vistas of prosperity and splendour" which will give effect to the economic policies laid down in the election manifesto of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

This policy framework includes maintaining the unemployment rate at below 4 percent, keeping inflation below 5 percent per annum, maintaining the budget deficit at below 4 percent, maintaining single digit interest rates and, sustaining the value of the rupee at a stable level, Gunawardena added.

All ministries, departments, government institutions, provincial council and local government bodies will be instructed to follow the guidelines laid out in the framework henceforth.



"In the past five years, revenue has come down, inflation, unemployment and the Cost of Living has gone up, and the economy has lacked stability. The country has gone downhill during this period. We are trying to lift the country out of this situation," Gunawardena said.

Sri Lanka's new interim government was appointed last month following the election victory of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa at the Nov. 16 Presidential Elections.

Upgrading the economic development of the island and providing immediate financial relief to the people were among the main pledges of President Rajapaksa in the run up to the polls.

China to Exempt Some U.S. Soybean, Pork From Tariffs

BEIJING (AFP) - China will waive tariffs on "some" imports of U.S. soybean and pork, it said on Friday, in the latest sign of easing trade tensions between Beijing and Washington as they try to finalize a partial trade pact.

The world's two biggest economies have exchanged blows for more than a year, with levies now imposed on hundreds of billions of dollars in two-way trade.

The olive branch comes as the two sides edge towards a mini agreement Washington says includes a Chinese promise to increase the purchase of U.S. farm products. It is also just before a fresh round of U.S. sanctions are due to kick in on December 15, which observers fear could jolt the negotiations.

"The Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council is carrying out the exclusion of some soybeans, pork and other commodities based on applications from enterprises," the finance ministry said in a statement.

Chinese companies have already "independently imported certain quantities of goods from the United States", the statement said, without offering details.

The duty on soybeans has gone up from three to 33 percent, after two rounds of tariffs -- 25 percent in July, 2018 and another five percent in September.

China is the world's biggest consumer of soybean and has been shopping elsewhere, such as Brazil, to boost supplies.



Turkish Economy on Growth Path Despite Risks

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's economy has entered a growth path but must be wary of risks along the way, international economists told Anadolu Agency.

Piotr Matys, a strategist at Dutch-based Rabobank, stressed that the Turkish economy is recovering from a recession, but raised the question of whether the country's growth will prove sustainable over the long term.

Stating that the economic model based mainly on private consumption fueled by credit and construction has run its course, Matys said: "Turkey must -- and certainly is capable of -- reinventing itself by focusing on high value-added goods that would allow it to integrate closely with global value chains." Matys highlighted that foreign investors expect the government to implement structural reforms to reach its growth target for next year.

"Achieving the official 5% target by injecting a substantial dose of new credit will not impress foreign investors, who expect comprehensive structural reforms that would prevent the current account deficit from widening again when domestic demand increases," he said. The Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) announced Monday that in the third quarter of 2019 the country's economy expanded 0.9% year-on-year.

In the first two quarters of 2019 the economy contracted 2.3% and 1.6%, respectively, on an annual basis.

In 2018 the economy posted annual growth rate of 2.8%, narrowing in the last quarter. The country's new economic program for 2020-2022, unveiled on Sept. 30, targets 5% annual growth rate for each of the next three years.

Matys also recommended that the country unleash the potential of its agriculture sector to bring down "persistently" high food prices while making it an important pillar of the economy.

"Russia is a great example, as the agriculture sector is booming after the government offered various incentives to farmers and food production increased substantially," he said.

Nigel Rendell, London-based Europe, Middle East and Africa analyst for Medley Global Advisors, projected Turkey's economy will grow 1% on a quarterly basis in October-December.

U.S. Monthly Oil Exports Top Imports for First Time

VIENNA (Dispatches) - The U.S.' monthly petroleum exports exceeded imports for the first time on record during the month of September, the country's Energy Information Administration (EIA) said in a statement on Thursday.

In September 2019, the U.S. exported 89,000 barrels per day (bpd) more petroleum, which includes crude oil and petroleum products, than it imported. This marked the first month on record that petroleum exports came higher than imports since monthly records began in 1973.

By comparison, the U.S. was importing 10 million bpd more petroleum than it was exporting in 2009, according to the EIA.

"Long-running changes in U.S. trade patterns for both crude oil and petroleum products have resulted in a steady decrease in overall U.S. net petroleum imports," the statement said.

Although the U.S. currently imports more crude oil than it exports, it exports more petroleum products than it imports, a result of high levels of refining, and this creates a net total of petroleum exports, it added.

"U.S. refineries responded to increasing domestic and international demand for petroleum products, such as distillate fuel, motor gasoline, and jet fuel, by increasing throughput," the statement said.

"Gross inputs into U.S. refineries rose from an annual average of 14.6 million bpd in 2009 to 17.0 million bpd through the third quarter of 2019, and they have regularly set new monthly record highs," it added.

The steep increase in U.S. crude oil production also played a role in the decline of crude oil imports to the country.

Crude oil output of the U.S. rose from an average of 5.3 million bpd in 2009 to 12.1 million bpd this year through September, the EIA said.

This caused a decline in the U.S.' crude oil imports from an average of 9 million bpd to 7 million bpd during the same period, it added.

In December 2015, after former U.S. President Barack Obama lifted the 40-year-old self-imposed ban on exporting domestically produced crude oil, its crude oil exports soared.

"Since then, U.S. crude oil exports have been the largest contributor to U.S. petroleum export growth," the EIA said, as the country's crude oil exports increased from 591,000 bpd in 2016 to 2.8 million bpd in 2019 through September.

Beijing has increased tariffs on U.S. pork three times since the trade war started, raising the total duty from 12 to 72 percent between April 2018 and September this year.

Exempting tariffs on pork could also help ease a surge in prices of China's staple meat, which has more than doubled over a year, with an outbreak of African swine fever last August leading to the culling of nearly of third of the country's pig herd. The country has tapped its strategic reserve of the meat but that has not stopped costs spiralling.

Hopes had risen last month that Beijing and Washington were close to reaching a mini deal. But comments from U.S. President Donald Trump and recent U.S. legislation backing Hong Kong pro-democracy protests and China's Uighur minority appeared to throw the talks off track.

German Industry Slump Sparks Renewed Economic Growth Fears



BERLIN (Reuters) - Germany's industrial output unexpectedly dropped in October, reviving worries about its economic growth outlook as its manufacturing backbone takes a blow from global trade conflicts and disruptions in the auto sector.

Industrial output dropped 1.7% on the month against expectations for a 0.1% rise, Statistics Office figures showed on Friday. Production of capital goods slumped by 4.4% on the month, the steepest decline in more than five years. Europe's biggest economy is going through a soft patch as its export-oriented manufacturers struggle against a backdrop of trade friction, an ailing car industry and uncertainties over Britain's planned departure from the European Union.

"Now the trepidation starts again about GDP growth in the final quarter," said Jens-Oliver Niklasch, economist at Landesbank Baden-Wuerttemberg.

German industry now expects output in the coming months to fall more slowly than was foreseen a month ago, a survey of 2,300 firms in the sector by the Ifo economic institute showed. In its 10th successive year of growth, Germany's economy has been relying on strong consumption as exports weaken, which resulted in a second-quarter GDP contraction of 0.2%.

The economy grew by just 0.1% in the third quarter, narrowly avoiding recession, which economists usually define as two consecutive quarters of negative growth. "Trade conflicts, global uncertainty and disruption in the automotive industry have put the entire German industry in a headlock, from which it is hard to escape," said Carsten Brzeski, economist at ING.

The automobile association VDA said on Wednesday that it expected global car sales to fall by 5% this year and that the crisis would force German companies to cut more jobs in 2020. Many economists have been urging the government to ditch its policy of incurring no new net debt, saying it should instead borrow to finance a stimulus package.

Conservative Chancellor Angela Merkel's right-left coalition government has rejected calls from industry groups and economists for a stimulus package to put the economy firmly back on a growth trajectory.

Zarif Due in Turkey

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif plans to pay an official visit to Turkey today (Sunday) to hold talks with senior officials of the neighboring country.

Zarif is slated to leave Tehran for Istanbul to attend bilateral meetings with the Turkish officials on issues of mutual interest.

It would be the Iranian top diplomat’s fifth visit to Turkey in the current Iranian calendar year, which started in March 2019.



EU to Consider Tougher Tax Haven Listing

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - A group of European Union countries is calling for the bloc to cast a wider net when listing tax havens and to consider imposing stricter sanctions for countries facilitating tax avoidance, according to an EU document and an EU official.

The document, prepared by the Danish government and seen by Reuters, urges a discussion on whether “current criteria provide sufficient protection against tax avoidance and evasion” and pushes for “strengthened” standards and sanctions. Germany and France were among its backers.

It also calls for a discussion on how member states deal with the issue, asking “Do we internally have sufficient safeguards against tax avoidance and evasion?”

This potentially sets up a dispute with EU members Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Ireland, which widely use low tax and other sweeteners to host EU headquarters of foreign firms, depriving other EU governments of tax revenues from profits that corporations make on their territory. At a meeting of EU finance ministers on Thursday, several EU states backed the Danish proposal, one EU official said, naming Germany, France, Spain and Austria among the explicit supporters.

Croatia, which holds the EU chair from January, said the review of the current criteria would be discussed during its six-month presidency, the official said. The review was likely to take place in February or March, the official added.

After revelations of widespread tax avoidance schemes used by corporations and wealthy individuals to lower their tax bills, the EU set up a blacklist in 2017, but its definition of tax havens was narrow. For example a 0% corporate tax rate is not a sufficient condition for being listed.

It also screens only non-EU countries, saying its 28 states were already applying high standards against tax avoidance.

Foreign jurisdictions are blacklisted if they do not meet EU standards on tax transparency and regulation. Countries that commit to changes are included in a so-called grey list until they deliver, and if they miss deadlines, they end up on the blacklist.

The listing has pushed more than 60 countries to pledge changes, but only eight jurisdictions are currently blacklisted. They are mostly Pacific and Caribbean islands



with little financial relation with the EU.

Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Ireland were listed in a report by International Monetary Fund researchers in September as world-leading tax havens, together with Hong Kong, the British Virgin Islands, Bermuda, Singapore, the Cayman Islands, Switzerland and Mauritius. None of them are on the EU list.

The EU Commission supported the Danish initiative, the EU official said. Tax commissioner Paolo Gentiloni has publicly pledged to work for sanctions against blacklisted jurisdictions, which now face only reputational damage and curbs on small EU funding, but no heavier penalties by member states.

Half of Italians Want “Strongman” in Power



ROME (Reuters) - Almost half of Italians are in favour of having a “strongman” in power who does not care about parliament and elections, a survey showed on Friday, casting doubts on the strength of democracy in a major European nation.

Some 48.2% of people think the government should be led by a Messiah-like leader who does not have to worry about being accountable, the survey by Censis research institute said.

The percentage is higher among poorer and less educated segments of the population, the survey showed, reaching a peak of 67% among respondents it described as working class.

Distrust of politics in Italy has grown in recent years, with far-right parties surging in opinion polls as a chronically stagnant economy has failed to recover ground lost during the global financial crisis.

Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, who ruled Italy during the 1920s and 30s, still has support among some hard-right groups, while fascist memorabilia referring to him is still sold freely in some shops and markets.

“I ask Italians to give me full powers to do what we promised to do,” far-right League leader Matteo Salvini said in August when he pulled his party out of the ruling coalition in a failed bid to trigger an early election.

The League’s former ally, the anti-establishment 5-Star Movement, then formed a government with the center-left Democratic Party, forcing Salvini to go into opposition.

Italy has a long tradition of political instability. Since the end of fascism its governments have lasted just over a year on average and bickering is already frequent in the new, three-month-old coalition.

Polls show the League is Italy’s most popular party, with around 33% of voter support and its hard-right ally Brothers of Italy is on 10%, which means they have a good chance of winning power in the event of a snap election.

Italy’s economy, the third largest in the euro zone, looks set to remain weak in the near term, the national statistics bureau ISTAT said on Friday.

The main drag on Italian economic growth is uncertainty over the future, an ISTAT official said last week, as suggested by a steep reduction in inventories which is likely to subtract 0.8 points from economic growth this year.

The Censis survey showed that for 69% of Italians “uncertainty” was the dominant sensation they had over the future. Just 13.8% said they were optimistic and 17.2% said they were pessimistic.

Trade War Goes Digital: Countries Eye Tariffs on Internet Economy

GENEVA (Reuters) - A 20-year global moratorium on imposing tariffs on digital trade could end next week if India or South Africa makes good on threats, according to trade officials and documents, potentially forcing people to pay duties on software and movie downloads.

Since 1998, World Trade Organisation (WTO) members have renewed a ban on import duties on so-called “electronic transmissions”, worth up to \$255 billion (198.75 billion pounds) a year by one estimate.

Some think this favours rich countries, given it received strong backing from Washington at the outset and most of



the lost customs revenues are thought to be born by developing countries.

Pressure is now growing to lift the ban as more books and movies become digital, potentially reducing revenues further.

India and South Africa circulated an internal WTO document, reviewed by Reuters this week, saying that rising digitalization compelled “a rethink of the role of the temporary moratorium” last year, citing the potential of 3D printing to manufacture products. It will be decided on next week and renewal requires full consensus.



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Iran, U.S...

FROM PAGE 1

The prominent Iranian scholar was detained by the FBI on October 7, 2018, on a flight to the United States, where he was planning to visit on a research visa after getting an invitation from a research center in Minnesota.

Soleimani, a 49-year-old Iranian scientist, left Iran on sabbatical last year but was arrested upon arrival in Chicago and transferred to prison in Atlanta, Georgia for unspecified reasons. The brother of Soleimani, a United States-held prominent Iranian scientist, details the prisoner and his family’s plight.

The U.S. authorities had reportedly accused the scientist of violating trade sanctions against Iran in 2016, when such restrictions were non-existent.

Iran Nuclear...

FROM PAGE 1

Chinese delegation head Cong Fu told reporters after Friday’s meetings that all parties remained committed to the deal and the dispute resolution mechanism was not triggered.

“All countries need to refrain from taking actions that may further complicate the situation,” the senior diplomat said. “Bringing this issue to the [UN] Security Council is not in anybody’s interest, except the US maybe,” he added.

The last meeting of the Joint Commission in 2019 proved that despite all the difficulties and all the differences its participants remain fully united in their support and commitment to #JCPOA. This is the major conclusion emerging from today’s discussions.

Other envoys did not talk as they left the meeting.

A European diplomat told the Reuters news agency that the UK, France and Germany stressed the need for Iran’s compliance during the meeting.

“The good thing is it’s still alive,” the diplomat said, underlining the low expectations.

Diplomats have said a decision on triggering the mechanism was unlikely to be made until January, when Iran is expected to further scale back its adherence to the pact, under which it curtailed its nuclear activities in return for relief from sanctions.

A senior Iranian official said “the clock is ticking” for the European parties. “They try to keep Iran in the deal but then take no action against America’s bullying and pressure,” the official said, according to Reuters.

Iran’s envoy to the talks declined to take questions after the meeting. Highlighting the current tension, the Iranian delegation had earlier threatened to boycott the meeting after discovering that an exiled Iranian opposition group planned an anti-government protest outside the hotel where the meeting was due to take place.

Iran Nuclear...

FROM PAGE 1

Official figures estimate that some 480,000 Afghan refugee and undocumented children are currently enrolled in school for the 2019-2020 academic year, a steady increase from the previous years. In 2019 alone, Iran has created places for some 60,000 new Afghan students in its schools.

Particularly in light of ongoing economic challenges, the country needs additional humanitarian support to ensure education and other services to refugees are maintained.

In the past year the cost of living in Iran has skyrocketed, making it harder than ever before for families - Iranians and Afghans alike – to make ends meet.

UNHCR remains concerned that without additional global support for refugee operations in Iran, our ability to continue supporting the government in providing education to Afghan children will be drastically affected.

In 2019, UNHCR co-funded with the government the construction of a dozen school buildings for refugees and Iranians (each with 12 class rooms) at a cost of US\$650,000 each. With increasing construction costs and without enough funding the same may not be possible in 2020.

In 2016, the Government of Iran removed the school fee that refugee families had to pay to secure a place in school for their children, putting refugee families on a par with Iranians. However, an increase in the cost of school supplies and uniforms has put further pressure on families’ budgets, and a recent threefold increase in the price of petrol is expected to raise the cost of transportation to school for families that need it.

Currently, some schools operate on two shifts to give the opportunity to as many children as possible to get an education. But many schools are still overcrowded, with teachers often struggling to allocate enough time to each student. A worrying number of refugee and undocumented families have told UNHCR that, due to increased daily costs, they may have to take their children out of school and send them out to work to so they can contribute to the family income.

So far for our Iran operations, UNHCR has received only 30 per cent of the required US\$98.9 million to date.

Woodland Heads Hero World Challenge

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Gary Woodland will take a one-shot lead into the final round of the Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas as Tiger Woods remained firmly in the hunt on Friday.

U.S. Open champion Woodland surged to the top of the leaderboard after posting a birdie-birdie finish to complete a four-under-par 68 at Albany Golf Club. Woodland leads by one stroke on 13 under from Sweden's Henrik Stenson, who also carded a 68 to finish the day on 12 under for the tournament.

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Maiden Win for Odermatt In Beaver Creek

LONDON (Dispatches) - Switzerland's Marco Odermatt Lswept to the first World Cup victory of his career on Friday, overcoming an early wobble to win the men's Super-G at Beaver Creek in Colorado.

The 22-year-old former junior world Super-G champion, the second skier out of the gate, finished the challenging XFinity Birds of Prey course in a time of 1min 10.90sec. Norway's Aleksander Kilde took second place with a time of 1:11.00, with Austria's Matthias Mayer, winner of last week's opening Super-G in Lake Louise, third in 1:11.04.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2019

Nets Beat Hornets For 5th Win Last 6 Road Games

CHARLOTTE (Dispatches) - Joe Harris scored 22 points, DeAndre Jordan had 16 points and 13 rebounds, and the Brooklyn Nets continued their recent strong road play with a 111-104 victory over the Charlotte Hornets on Friday night.

The Nets (12-10) won for the fifth time in their last six road games, all while playing without injured point guard Kyrie Irving. Taurean Prince also scored 16 points, while Jarrett Allen had 14 points and 10 rebounds. Spencer Dinwiddie finished with 12 assists. Devonte' Graham' scored 29 points for the Hornets.

PISTONS 108, PACERS 101

Blake Griffin broke a tie with a 3-pointer with 41 seconds left and scored 25 points, Andre Drummond had 25 points and 22 rebounds and Detroit beat Indiana.

Derrick Rose had 14 points and set up Griffin's go-ahead shot. The Pistons have won three of four.

T.J. Warren scored 26 points and Domantas Sabonis added 18 points and 13 rebounds for Indiana. The Pacers lost for the second time in nine games.

CELTICS 108, NUGGETS 95

Jayson Tatum scored 26 points and Jaylen Brown added 21 on Friday night to help the Boston Celtics beat the Denver Nuggets 108-95 and remain perfect at home for the season.

Inter Held by Roma After Racism Storm

MILAN (Dispatches) - Inter Milan were held to a goalless draw by Roma at the San Siro on Friday, leaving the way open for Italian champions Juventus to reclaim top spot in Serie A this weekend.

Antonio Conte's side have a two-point advantage on Juventus who play Lazio at the Stadio Olimpico on Saturday.

The match in the San Siro had been overshadowed by a racism storm after Italian sports daily Corriere dello Sport's controversial "Black Friday" headline.

The front-page headline accompanied an article about the first Serie A meeting between former Manchester United teammates Romelu Lukaku and Chris Smalling.

On the pitch, defender Smalling and Gianluca Mancini stifled Inter's prolific strike duo Lukaku and Lautaro Martinez, who between them have scored 18 of their team's goals in 15 league games this season.

Conte's side proved toothless in attack against a well-organised Roma, failing to find the net for the first time this season, days before their Champions League clash against Barcelona.

"The great merit of Roma is having stopped Lautaro-Lukaku," said coach Paulo Fonseca.

"Inter's main chances came from our mistakes, but we always played the ball with courage and that's what I want for the team."

"We did well defensively. Smalling and Mancini had a good game like the whole team, it's certainly not easy against Inter." Lukaku, Marcelo Brozovic and Matias Vecino all missed chances for the hosts as Roma snatched a precious point to move fourth and into the Champions League places.

Inter were lacking in midfield with Stefano Sensi, Nicolo Barella and Roberto Gagliardini all out with Roma missing goalkeeper Pau Lopez while Edin Dzeko started on the bench after flu, but came on for the final 25 minutes.

Midfielder Nicolo Zaniolo took Dzeko's place up front with Roma dominating the first half hour, although Inter had the best chances with Antonio Mirante denying Lukaku after a blundering Jordan Veretout back-pass.



Bradley Beal scored 23 points for Washington, including a 3-pointer late to get the Wizards to 95-94. Butler answered that with a 3-pointer to give the Heat some breathing room, then connected on another 3 with 1:04 left to put Miami up 111-103.

Moritz Wagner had 19 points and 10 rebounds for the Wizards, while Davis Bertans scored 19 points and added nine rebounds.

WARRIORS 100, BULLS 98

Glenn Robinson III scored the go-ahead basket and finished with 20 points to help the Golden State Warriors beat the Chicago Bulls 100-98 on Friday night.

The Warriors beat the Bulls for the second time this season, their only victories in the last nine games. Golden State escaped when Zach Lavine missed a 3-pointer in the final seconds, and Draymond Green secured the rebound.

Alec Burks added 14 points, and Green had eight points, seven rebounds, and four assists.

Green tied it at 92 with a runner in the lane, and Willie Cauley-Stein had a layup to put the Warriors up 94-92 with 5:32 left.

Ledecka Swoops For Lake Louise Downhill Win



LAKE LOUISE (Dispatches) - Olympic snowboard and ski champion Ester Ledecka of the Czech Republic stormed to a maiden World Cup downhill victory on Friday with a surprise win at Lake Louise in the Canadian Rockies.

The 24-year-old Pyeongchang double gold medallist mastered challenging weather conditions to finish in 1min 31.87sec, ahead of Switzerland's Corinne Suter and Austria's Stephanie Venier.

American star Mikaela Shiffrin finished way down the field in 10th place.

Ledecka's win marked another remarkable milestone in her winter sports career.

In 2018 she made history by winning gold medals in both snowboarding and skiing at the same Olympic Games, scoring wins in the parallel giant slalom snowboarding event and the Super-G.

Friday's racing was disrupted after a return of heavy snow which forced a one-hour delay before racing got under way.

Suter appeared to be heading towards her first downhill win after clocking 1:32.22 in the 15th bib to take the lead from Austria's Venier, who set the early pace with a time of 1:32.32.

Wozniacki to Retire After Australian Open

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former world number one Caroline Wozniacki announced on Friday that she will retire after next month's Australian Open, insisting she "has accomplished everything" she wanted on a tennis court.

The 29-year-old Dane won her only Grand Slam singles title in Melbourne last year in her third major final. "I've accomplished everything I could ever dream of on the court," she said in an Instagram post.

"I've always told myself, when the time comes, that there are things away from tennis that I want to do more, then it's time to be done." Wozniacki, who turned professional at the age of 15 in 2005, spent 71 weeks at the top of the WTA rankings after first becoming the world's best player in October 2010.

She has won 30 WTA titles so far in her career, including the 2017 Tour Finals in Singapore.

Wozniacki, who finished 11 straight seasons in the world top 20, is currently ranked 37th after struggling with injuries and poor form in 2019, reaching only one final.

She said she wanted to focus on family life with her husband and former NBA champion David Lee, as well as raising awareness of the auto-immune disease she suffers from, rheumatoid arthritis.



"In recent months I've realized that there is a lot more in life that I'd like to accomplish off the court," added Wozniacki, who was briefly engaged to four-time golf major champion Rory McIlroy in 2014. "This (decision) has nothing to do with my health."

Kohli Leads India To Opening T20 Win Over West Indies



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Skipper Virat Kohli said he is an "all-format player" after his blistering 94 powered India to a six-wicket win over West Indies in the first Twenty20 international on Friday.

The star batsman smashed six fours and six sixes to record his career-best T20 international score in 50 balls as he surpassed his previous high of 90 with a winning hit over the rope.

Kohli arrived with the score on 30 for one to complete his 23rd fifty and soon launched an attack to pulverise the West Indies bowlers as India pulled off their highest ever T20 chase.

"The aim is not to play slam-bang cricket. One of Rohit (Sharma) or I have to play long in this team," Kohli said after his man of the match show.

"That's the role I play in every team I play in. Basic fundamental is that I don't want to change my game too much for T20s. I'm an all-format player. I just want to score runs every game." Kohli has amassed 21,266 runs across all three formats including 70 centuries in Test and one-day since making his international debut in 2008. Left-handed batsman Shimron Hetmyer made 56 -- his maiden T20 fifty -- and put on 71 with skipper Kieron Pollard to lead West Indies to 207 for five after being put in to bat on a good batting wicket.

Man Utd Announce Tie-Up With Alibaba

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United on Friday announced a partnership with China's technology giant Alibaba Group, boosting the club's engagement with its Chinese fanbase.

The partnership will see Manchester United content, including selected first-team matches, highlights and localized original productions, available to around 700 million consumers across Alibaba's platforms, according to the Premier League club.

There will also be a dedicated Manchester United channel on Alibaba's video-streaming platform, Youku. It will feature Academy, women's and first-team tour games, plus first-team matches shown on-demand and global and China-specific content.

The partnership will also involve collaborating to create a future Manchester United flagship store on Tmall, Alibaba's online retail platform, which will become the official online marketplace store selling Manchester United merchandise to Chinese fans.

"We're proud of our passionate and loyal following around the world and our Chinese fans are a huge part of that," said Manchester United Group managing director Richard Arnold.

"We are always looking for new ways to engage with fans there and this partnership with Alibaba enables them to connect with the club directly through one of China's most popular video streaming platforms."

