

Health Ministry Announced on Monday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 122,868 With 276 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major-General Mohammad Bagheri Is Scheduled to Pay an Official Visit to Pakistan in a Bid To Develop Military and Defense Diplomacy of Iran

VOL. XXVII, No. 7334 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

TUESDAY OCTOBER 12, 2021 - MEHR 20, 1400

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Kunduz Attack Shows Dangers of Takfiri Terrorism

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Maj. Gen. Mohammad Hossein Baqeri, chief of staff of Iran's armed forces, has condemned the bombing of a mosque in northern Afghanistan's Kunduz province, which was claimed by the Daesh terrorist group.

In a statement on Monday, the top military official said the diabolical crime once again demonstrated the "dangers of Takfiri terrorism" produced in the "think tanks of hegemonic powers and Zionism as well as the spy agencies of arrogant powers."

He said the resistance axis, after forcing Americans to beat a humiliating retreat from the region, most recently from Afghanistan, is being targeted.

More than 150 people were killed in a ghastly attack at Gozar-e-Sayed Abad Mosque in the Khanabad area of Kunduz, with a predominantly Hazara population, on Friday.

A Daesh terrorist, masquerading as a worshiper, detonated his explosives during Friday prayers. The victims were all Hazara Shias, the third-largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. Describing it as a "great and alarming tragedy", Gen. Baqeri said the incident calls for "unity, security and stability" in the Islamic world, especially in the neighboring country of Afghanistan.

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Iran Rejects Forces' Entry Into Azeri Territory

TEHRAN (IFP) - An informed source has reportedly denied reports published by some media in the Republic of Azerbaijan of Iranian armed forces entering Azeri territory during the 44-day Nagorno-Karabakh war last year.

The suspicious reports accused Iran of military aggression in the Zangilan region and the village of Soltanli.

The Iranian Energy Ministry source told Nour News that in 2016, despite the Armenian occupation of the Zangilan and Soltanli regions, and to consolidate the sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the occupied territories, Iran signed a joint dam construction agreement with Baku on the Aras River.

The source explained that based on the agreement, the responsibility of securing the dam on both sides of the border was transferred to Iran.

The agreement stipulated that after the end of the occupation, securing the dam in the Azeri sector would be handed over to Baku under a new agreement, the informed source noted.

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Iran Gained More Achievements Despite Sanctions



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi says Iran gained more achievements in defense and nuclear industries despite enemies' severe sanctions, noting that they cannot hinder Iran's success.

Speaking at the beginning of the new academic year, President Raisi stated that civilization starts from universities, so the country's problems should be monitored at universities.

The president reiterated universities' critical role in combating coronavirus and said they must keep producing vaccines and medicine.

He pointed that Iran gained more achievements in defense and nuclear industries despite enemies' severe sanctions in these two fields; hence, they cannot halt Iran's success even through imposing sanctions.

Raisi noted that universities must be the center of the country's progress through training elites and scientists since they offer the best possible solutions.

He added that although missile production is a great honor, Iran needs to develop in all fields.

President Raisi said, "University is the central point of creating change in society and universities should be the government's think tank centers in creating change in the society."

"The upstream document of the Second Step of the Revolution pivots around scientific progress and Iran, with its very high academic potential, can have an important place in the world scientific arena," Raisi stressed.

Stating the country needs a science-based change, the president added, "Universities and academics must identify the needs of the country with a central issue and provide solutions to overcome the problems."

Raisi stressed that universities should help the government to solve the country's problems and, above all, be the government's think tank centers, adding, "Intellectuals are those who monitor society's issues as a watchdog, warn of harm in a timely manner and offer solutions to resolve it."

Pointing out that the scientific potential of the country's academics creates the hope that we can recreate the position of Iranian civilization as the scientific authority, the president said, "Wherever we have taken the right path, we have been able to claim our true position, an example of which is the excellent role of university and academics in fighting coronavirus, which I appreciate."

"All parts of society should pay attention to the opinions and words of academics and experts, and the chairs of open-mindedness and theorizing in universities should flourish more than before," the president highlighted.

The president continued his speech by stating that the plans of his government to build a strong Iran require a strong movement in the production of science, adding, "Power is not only in building missiles, although progress in this area is also a source of pride, but should be in other areas. We need to advance in science and technology so that the country becomes strong in various aspects".

Raisi described the strong movement for the production of science as the need of the government today, especially in creating the transformation of basic science in the country, said, "In this regard, the role of university is a pivotal role that is not possible only with the efforts of the Minister of Science. All universities in the country, especially universities in Tehran that have a central role in this field, should cooperate with the government in the field of solving problems and providing solutions".

Yemen, Persian Gulf Issues Part of Iran-Saudi Arabia Talks

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Stating that Iran and Saudi Arabia have held 4 rounds of talks, Saeed Khatibzadeh said that bilateral and regional issues, especially the Persian Gulf and Yemen were among the most important issues discussed during the talks.

Speaking in his weekly press conference, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh answered questions on a wide range of topics.

Answering a question about Iran-Saudi Arabia talks in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, Khatibzadeh said, "Baghdad has been a good host to date, and there is no need to change the location of the talks as long as possible. The two countries are discussing more serious issues."

"Iran has always pursued its policy and believes that talks between regional actors and Iran and Saudi Arabia can be one of the pillars of peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region," he added.

"Iran and Saudi Arabia have held four rounds of talks in Baghdad and bilateral and regional issues, especially the Persian Gulf and Yemen were among the most important issues discussed during the talks," the Iranian diplomat noted. "The fate of Yemen will be determined by the Yemeni people and their will. What Saudi Arabia has to do is stop the war and the cruel siege and the conditions that have led to human tragedy."

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Iran to Pay Energy Projects Investors in Crude

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Oil Minister Javad Owji says the country would seek to attract investment into major petroleum projects through a barter system involving crude.

Owji said that paying investors in oil and condensate, which is a very light form of oil, would mostly cover unfinished energy projects in the Iranian oil and gas sector.

"There are many construction projects in the country which have been left unfinished for several years and we would try to secure funds for the projects through bartering oil and condensates," said the minister while speaking to reporters in the Iranian parliament.

He said Iran would welcome any initiative involving swap of crude for investment in both the upstream and downstream sections of the petroleum industry in the country.

The remarks come a day after Iranian government authorities said they would allow using crude for settling payments related to imports of goods, machinery and staples.

The system would allow importers to pay suppliers without any need for accessing banking services that have been targeted by U.S. sanctions against Iran.

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Inhumane Sanctions Paralyzed Supply of Medicine, Medical Equipment

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of health, remedy and medical training said here inhumane sanctions despite coronavirus pandemic was one of Iran's major problems, which affected the medicine and medical facilities, as well.

In a meeting with the representatives of the international organizations in Iran, Bahram Einollahi asked their representatives: How could the organizations that care about the humanitarian issues encounter the inhumane sanctions against various countries, including Iran?

"Are the sanctions in line with the objectives of those international organizations? The sanctions are great injustice against Iran, but our nation has a great attitude, which enables them to resist against these sanctions, and they will do the same also from now on," he added.

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Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Road Transport Corridor Begins Operation

ANKARA (Dispatches) - A welcoming ceremony was held on Oct. 8 by the Turkish Trade Ministry in Istanbul after the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Road Transport Corridor Project successfully carried commercial cargo on Pakistani trucks to Turkey.

The trucks departed Sept. 27 from Karachi and reached the Turkish metropolitan city of Istanbul on Thursday, covering 5,300 kilometers (3,293 miles).

Pakistan's envoy to Turkey, senior Iranian officials, Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), International Road Union (IRU), Turkey's Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB) and other participants representing the public and private sector attended the ceremony.

The Project was launched by Turkey's Trade Ministry and counterparts in Iran and Pakistan under the aegis of ECO.

"I would only like to say there is a saying in almost every language, in our language, Urdu, also, that drops, when they are taken together become a river," Pakistan's ambassador to Turkey said at the event.

These are the first drops that will become a river of commerce between and among Pakistan, Iran and Turkey, and bring all three people together, said Syrus Sajjad Qazi.

Asli Çalik, head of department, transport and logistical systems at TOBB, said: "It is an extremely important corridor for the development of our road trade with the Middle East and regional countries."

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Leader Congratulates Iranian Greco-Roman Wrestlers

TEHRAN (IFP) - Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has congratulated Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers on their victories in the 2021 World Wrestling Championships in Norway.

In a message, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "Kudos to Iran's Greco-Roman wrestlers and their coaches who made all Iranians, most particularly the youth, happy. I hope you will be successful, God willing".

The Iranian Greco-Roman wrestling team bagged 4 gold and 2 bronze medals in total to finish in second place with 146 points in the 2021 World Wrestling Championships on Sunday.

Swiss National Council President Discusses Food Security With Qalibaf

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Swiss National Council President Andreas Aebi met with Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, his Iranian counterpart, and both sides confer on food security challenges.

The Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, hosted the Swiss National Council President Andreas Aebi, on Monday in the Baharestan premises.

After the meeting, Qalibaf said in a press conference: "There is an ancient and deep tie between Iran and Switzerland in terms of political, social, cultural and economic, and we hope this visit at a critical time in the depth of bilateral relations in terms of bilateral and multilateral, would be influential. Majlis Speaker further stated that the Swiss Embassy is also in charge of relations between Iran and the United States, Canada, and Saudi Arabia, adding: "These relations were also discussed at this meeting."

Referring to the negotiations that took place in the field of JCPOA and nuclear issues, Qalibaf said: "In this meeting, we also talked about issues of agriculture, water, animal husbandry, etc., and cooperation in these areas will continue."

The heads of Iran's parliament's agriculture and national security commissions will also meet with the Swiss National Council President, Qalibaf said.

"The visit to Iran was based on a personal decision because Iran has an important role in the region and has a rich history," said Andreas Aebi at the press conference, expressing satisfaction with his presence in Iran.



Iran also has extensive forests and natural resources, so in terms of the conditions of the two countries and the fact that I am a farmer, in this meeting, a lot of emphasis was placed on agricultural issues, The Swiss National Council President said in this press conference.

Aebi added: "The issue of food security is an important issue that we are aware of as a challenge, so since there is plenty of water in Switzerland and a lot of land in Iran, we need cooperation in this issue."

Referring to the tourism industry, he added: "In terms of tourism, the two countries have vast capacities."

The Swiss National Council President Andreas Aebi arrived in Tehran yesterday evening with the welcome of Seyed Nizamuddin Mousavi, the Speaker of the Presidium of the Parliament.

Army Ground Force Chief Celebrates Largest Chopper Fleet in Region

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian Army's Ground Force possesses the largest chopper fleet in the region and enjoys self-sufficiency in the field of combat and surveillance drones, the commander of the force has said.

"We have the largest fleet of helicopters in the region. Today, our helicopters are outfitted with the best night-vision cameras and precision missiles," Brigadier General Kioumars Heydari said.

"We have also achieved important milestones in the field of UAVs. At present, we have achieved self-sufficiency in the field of combat and reconnaissance drones."

Iran's Defense Ministry has declared self-sufficiency in manufacturing military drones. However, the Islamic Republic frequently reaffirms that its military power poses no threat to friendly nations.

Last month, Israel's minister of military affairs confessed to Iran's drone power, saying the Islamic Republic is in possession of "accurate" and "destructive" drones that can cross thousands of kilometers.

In his remarks, Heydari also underlined the necessity of tapping young talent, saying that by doing so, the Army's Ground Force has managed to reach a very favorable position in designing and manufacturing military equipment and parts.

"Today, we will produce and operationalize what we need in the field of equipment with the presence of pious and proficient youth in the Organization of Research and Jihad for Self-Sufficiency and the country's defense industry," he remarked.

"A country that has a workforce of young talent and scientists is deemed the most powerful country in the world."

Heydari's remarks came a week after his forces staged a drill, codenamed Fatehan-e Kheybar, in northwestern Iran in a show of force amid heightened tensions in the area over the Israeli regime's presence near Iran's borders.

Navy Force Ready to Defend Iran's Maritime Border

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's Army Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani said that the Navy Force of Iran is ready to respond harshly to any enemies' threat and defend the maritime borders of the country with all its might and power.

Speaking among staff and personnel of Bushehr Maritime Base on Monday, Rear Admiral Shahram Irani pointed to the self-sacrifice of martyrs of Bushehr Maritime Base and said that sacrifice of martyrs of Bushehr Maritime Base is immortal and remains in the

all-time history of Islamic Iran.

Thanks to the extreme power of Iran's navy in the international arena, the enemy does not dare attack Iran's maritime borders, Rear Admiral Shahram Irani emphasized.

Referring to the braveries and self-sacrifices of combatants during the eight years of Sacred Defense (Iraqi imposed war against Iran in 1980-1988), he said that those brave youths stood and resisted against enemies which had been armed to teeth.

Education Not Halted at Iran's Universities

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Science, Research, and Technology stated that the education process is not halted at universities during the pandemic, so the students of MA and Ph.D. degrees can attend in-person to resume their studies by using university welfare facilities while the coronavirus protocols and guidelines are still necessary for all.

Mohammad-Ali Zolfigol, in an exclusive interview with Iran Press on the sidelines of the ceremony of the beginning of the academic year of universities and higher education institutions, stressed that with the approval of the National Task Force Against Coronavirus, MA and Ph.D. students have been able to attend the university since October 7th.

"The Undergraduates will attend the universities from November 6 on", Zolfigol noted.

During the meeting with the presidents of the universities affiliated with the Ministry of Science, Research, and technology, they were told that they would be supposed to prioritize the presence of students according to their facilities, remarked the minister.

He also expressed hope to contain the disease soon.

The ceremony of the beginning of the academic year of universities and higher education institutions was held on Monday morning in the presence of President Ebrahim Raisi, Iran's Health Minister Bahram Einollahi, Mohammad-Ali Zolfigol, the Minister of Science, Research and Technology head of Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus, Alireza Zali and other top governmental officials at Tehran University in full compliance with hygienic protocols.

21st International Industry Exhibition Opens

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The 21st International Industry Exhibition of Iran started at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds. More than 190 domestic and foreign exhibitors from China, Turkey, and Germany are presenting their recent industrial products and services in this four-day exhibition, the report stated.

The head of Iran International Exhibitions Company, several parliament members and the Chairman of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA)'s Industry committee were present at the inauguration ceremony.

The exhibition includes several areas like machinery and production lines, industrial and workshop equipment, tools, advanced industries, industrial automation, technical services, engineering and consulting, safety and health equipment, sales and after-sales services, etc.

Iran to Continue Efforts for More Economic Activity in Eurasia

TEHRAN (IP) - The head of the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) stressed Iran's efforts for more economic activity in Eurasia.

Alireza Peymanpak, Head of the Trade



Promotion Organization of Iran, said: "We will activate alternative routes to the Republic of Azerbaijan for trade with Eurasia. One of these routes is through Armenia, which will be activated within a month."

The second route is the sea route, for which the construction and purchase of ships are on the agenda, he added.

Peymanpak also said: "Iran will increase non-oil exports as much as it can to shore up the competition in the region. Therefore, in TPO, we have set up a political and commercial plan that will help develop exports."

Hossein Kakhki, Director General of the International Cooperation Department of Iran (IRICA), had previously announced that in the first five months of this year in the Iranian calendar (Starting from March 21, 2021), Iran's exports to the Eurasian Economic Union member states amounted to 420 million and 823 thousand dollars, which has increased by 37% compared to the same period last year.

Iran-Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship Delegation in Islamabad

TEHRAN (IRNA) - A delegation of member of Iran-Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship Group arrived in Islamabad on Monday.

The delegation has traveled to Pakistan at the invitation of Navid Qamar, the head of Pakistan's Iran-Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship Group, to discuss strengthening of parliamentary relations and cooperation.

Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan and Pakistani MP Sardar Nasrullah Khan Dreshak welcomed Iranian delegation at Islamabad International Airport.

Iran-Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship delegations headed by Ahamad Amirabadi will have meetings with chairs of Pakistan's National Assembly and Senate, members of Pakistani parliamentary friendship group as well as several Pakistani government officials.

Iran and Pakistan parliamentary friendship groups will then pay a visit to Karachi, south Pakistan to meet state officials.

FM to Travel to Baku, Yerevan Soon

TEHRAN (MNA) - Stating that focusing on Iran's neighbors is one of the foreign policy priorities of the new administration, the Iranian Foreign Minister said that he will travel to Armenia and Azerbaijan at the appropriate time.

"Focusing on neighbors, including the northern neighbors, is one of the foreign policy priorities of the new Iranian government," said Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in an interview with the Russian television channel.

"The Azerbaijan Republic and Armenia are two good neighbors of the Islamic Republic of Iran, so we can not work against each other," he added. "Iran's foreign policy is a balanced foreign policy. Therefore, in line with the common interests of Iran with Azerbaijan and the common interests of Iran with Armenia, we are regulating relations between the two countries."

"As the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia visited Tehran a few days ago, there is an opportunity for the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan to visit Tehran, and I will also visit the two countries at the appropriate time," the foreign minister said.

Iran Ready to Aid Lebanon If Officially Asked

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Iran's foreign minister says the Islamic Republic is ready to help Lebanon weather its current economic crisis if the Lebanese government officially asks for it.

In an interview with Lebanon's al-Manar television network in Beirut, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian made it clear that Iran respects Lebanon's sovereignty.

He stressed that the Islamic Republic is ready to provide Lebanon with all kinds of aid despite the difficult economic situation that Iran itself is facing.

Iran began to send fuel to Lebanon in August through the Lebanese resistance group Hezbollah, which announced the purchase of Iranian fuel shipments after the Lebanese government's failure to deal with the country's crippling fuel shortages.

The third tanker carrying Iranian fuel has already reached Syria to be transferred to neighboring Lebanon, while Tehran has expressed readiness to sell its fuel directly to the Lebanese government.

Pointing to Iran's support for the Lebanese resistance to preserve the Arab country's security and sovereignty, the Iranian foreign minister said such support will continue.

The chief Iranian diplomat also told al-Manar that Iran supports any peace effort in Lebanon and warned against France's interference in the Arab country's domestic affairs.

During the interview, Amir-Abdollahian mentioned Iran's latest military exercise in its northwestern area, saying the drill's message was one of peace and friendship with neighbors and preventing the presence of the Zionists in the region.

"We told the Republic of Azerbaijan that the presence of Israel in that country is not in the interest of peace in our region," he said. Early this month, the Iranian Army's Ground Force staged a drill, codenamed Fatehan-e Kheybar, in northwestern Iran.

Amir-Abdollahian maintained that the Islamic Republic's military presence anywhere in the region, whether in northern Iran or the Persian Gulf, has always carried a message of peace and security.

The Zionist regime, according to Amir-Abdollahian, has received the message of resistance.

"The Zionist regime cannot expand in the region. They are imprisoned in a large jail called the occupied territories," he added. The Iranian foreign minister says the Israeli regime's presence in the region is a cause for serious concern. Elsewhere during the interview, Amir-Abdollahian stressed that the US military's withdrawal from the region will definitely happen.

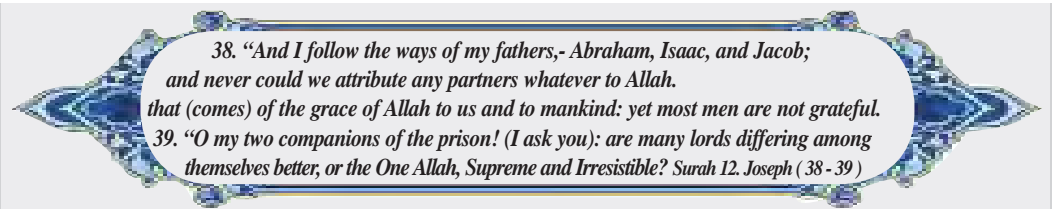
"The Americans do not see their continued presence in the region in their favor, although they continue to push for a small military presence in parts of the region. This form of large American presence in the region is going to come to an end," he said.

He also commemorated Iran's legendary commander, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated in Iraq by the US military in January 2020, hailing him as a national and international hero in the fight against terrorism.



PRAYER TIME

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| ■ Noon (Zohr) | 11:50 |
| ■ Evening (Maghreb) | 17:51 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr) | 04:46 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Sunrise | 06:09 |



Iran, Kazakhstan Can Touch \$6b Trade Volume

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran and Kazakhstan believe they can enhance their trade volume and to raise it to \$6b if the grounds and infrastructures are provided, it was announced yesterday in the opening of the two-day Iran-Kazakhstan Business Forum at Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA).

Addressing the opening session of the forum, Head of International Affairs of ICCIMA Mr. Mohammadreza Karbasi pointed to the historic relation and commonalities between the two states and said the Islamic Republic of Iran's priority is to boost its ties with its neighbors and Kazakhstan, as the biggest and important country in the Central Asia, has a special place in Iran's policies.

He added that during the COVID pandemic, the borders of Kazakhstan were never closed to Iran's trade and the trade between the two states continued through their water border. Karbasi said that Iran and Kazakhstan can cooperate in many fields like agriculture, technical and engineering services, oil and petrochemicals, shipping, construction materials and chemicals.

He said Kazakhstan's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union and Shanghai Cooperation Organization has made the country a special one. He admitted that despite good relations of the two countries, the bilateral trade volume is not satisfactory, adding that the trade volume of the two countries stood at \$235m in 2020. He also called for boosting relation between the enterprises and related bodies for enhancing the trade, reiterating that easing visa process will help the bilateral trade to rise.

He also emphasized that activation of the north-south corridor will also enhance the trade and reduce the final cost of goods and cost of transportation.

He also called for improving the marine infrastructures, adding that easing the financial issues and visa can help the two countries to increase their trade. He claimed that according to the studies, Iran and Kazakhstan can increase their trade volume to \$6b and it is possible if the grounds are paved.

Karbasi noted that in the past years, some Iranian companies have participated in the developmental projects in Kazakhstan and they have gained reputation. He expressed hope that by improving the infrastructures, the economic relations between the two states would soar.

Meanwhile Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Iran Askhat Orazbay, for his part, pointed to the good relations between the two states and their commonalities and briefed Kazakhstan's economic achievements on the eve of the country's 30th independence anniversary. He added that the interest of the Iranian business in Kazakhstan's Trade and Economic Mission demonstrates huge mutual interest of the countries in developing the trade and economic ties.



"Over the past year Iranian investors attracted \$4.3 million of direct investment into Kazakhstan's economy. The figure has amounted to \$1.7 million in the first quarter of 2021. A host of new projects is being implemented. For instance, Iran signed a contract with the Kazakh side to build a commercial and logistics complex on the territory of the Aktau Sea Port," Orazbay. He expressed hope the ties between the two countries would bounce.

Meanwhile in his remarks at the Kazakh-Iranian Business Forum within the framework of the event Vice Minister of Trade and Integration Kairat Torebayev noted that Kazakhstan gradually implements its strategic goals aimed at the development of trade and economic relations of the country by integrating hundreds of SMEs with external markets.

"Last year the coronavirus restrictions had a negative impact on Kazakhstan-Iran two-way trade as it dropped by 37%. However, in the past eight months of this year we were able to increase the volume of last year's trade turnover. This speaks loads about the potential of trade between our countries," Kairat Torebayev stressed.

He added that the trade volume between the two states stood at \$318m in the first eight months of 2021.

Kazakhstan's Vice Minister of Trade and Integration welcomed the negotiations on turning the interim agreement on a free trade zone between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union member states into a full-fledged one which will boost trade turnover between our countries.

Head of the ICCIMA Mr. Gholam-Hossein Shafei also pointed to the good relations of the two countries and pointed to some fields for cooperation between Iran and Kazakhstan.

He also called for easing facilities for trade by the governments of the two countries.

President of Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Chamber of Commerce Amir Abedi also raised some proposals for improving the bilateral ties and called for the launch of such a chamber by the Kazakhstan for between exchange of information and preparation for trade.

The Logistics director of Kuryk Port Development of Kazakhstan Mr. Nurzhan Aitbay, for his part, briefed the participants of the investment opportunities of this port and urged Iranians to invest in this port and transit their goods via this port which will be cost-saving.

In conclusion, it was noted that there are all necessary mechanisms in place to step up Kazakhstan-Iran cooperation.

Dozens of Kazakhstani machine building, food, pharmaceutical, and construction materials companies are to showcase their export potential have participated at this event and they hold B2B meetings with their Iranian counterparts.

Iran Importing Tea From Germany

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Executive Manager of Iran's Tea Factories Syndicate Mohammad Sadeq Hassani says that Iran has exported 10,000 tons of tea for 97 cents per kilo in the first five months of the current year and in return the country has imported some 33,437 tons of tea for \$5 per kilo.

Speaking to ILNA, Sadeq Hassani said that in the past years and with fewer number of factories, Iran used to produce some 70,000 tons of tea per year while today with the rise in the number of the factories the tea production does not even reach 30,000 tons per year and currently 50 percent of tea plant farms have been ruined or turned into villas.

He reiterated that drought has not affected the tea production and said Iranian tea farmers almost provide 30 percent of the national tea consumption and considerable amount of the Iranian tea is exported, and if the country stops exporting, it will face problem to meet the domestic needs. Hassani added that he does not agree exporting tea and stipulated that the country has exported some 10,000 tons of tea for 97 cents per kilo while it has imported 33,437 tons of tear from 24 kilos for \$5 per kilo. He noted here a question is raised what the advantage of this export is for the country.

He said if each kilo of Iranian tea is consumed in the country, it will help the national economy and will save \$4 per kilo in the current condition. He went on to say that even the tea-rich countries import Iranian tea, adding that Iranian tea has conquered the markets of India, Kenya, Turkey and China. He said Russia, Iraq, Pakistan, Germany, Lebanon, Qatar, the Netherlands, Georgia, Turkmenistan, the UAE and Ukraine are the other tea importers from Iran.

Hassani stated Iran imported some 5,125 tons of tea from India in the first five months of the current year and the country has also imported tea from Sri Lanka, the UAE, Turkey, China, Kenya, Vietnam and Germany, reiterating that Iran is currently importing tea from Germany while there is not even a tea farm in that country.

Tehran, Montevideo Can Boost Trade Through Bartering

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran and Uruguay believe they can boost bilateral trade through bartering oil for basic goods.

In a webinar held on Saturday by Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA), Iranian and Uruguayan business activists explored ways for expansion of trade between the two states.

Head of International Affairs of ICCIMA Mr. Mohammadreza Karbasi in the webinar said there is possibility for provision of oil and petrochemical products required by Uruguay through bartering them for basic goods like rice and meat. He said Iran's trade with Uruguay during the 8-year Iraqi war was in high level through bartering oil for rice, adding that in a condition that Iran's trade volume with some countries of the Latin American region is over \$2b of direct trade, the trade volume of Iran with Uruguay has been very low and insignificant in recent years.

Karbasi emphasized that exchange of economic data and information between the two states, exchange of trade delegation and participation in the exhibitions. He then referred to the joint cooperation and investment considering experiences of the two states in creating industrial, agro, technological sets for exports to the third party countries.

He added that both countries can sign basic agreements (preferential trade, free trade) for paving the path of trade of the two states. Karbasi then pointed to the signing of the MoU between the two states in the field of livestock health and also plant quarantine that they can be a ground for the growth of bilateral relations of the two states.

In the meeting both sides called for holding B2B meetings between member companies and trade and economic enterprises of the chambers of commerce of Iran and Uruguay virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Karbasi also said Expo 2020 Dubai has provided a good ground in the post-COVID for Uruguayan companies to get in touch with their Iranian counterparts. He then pointed to the capacities of Mercosur (South American trade bloc) for exports of Iranian products to that region.

Then director of institute for economic and foreign trade studies of Chamber of Commerce and Services of Uruguay



Ms. Ana Laura Fernandez, for her part, said that the chamber is ready to negotiate with the member states and explore grounds for cooperation, and identify the potential capacities for cooperation.

She added that the chamber has had coordination with Iran's embassy in Uruguay for helping Uruguayan companies in identifying Iran's market and it will be ready for holding B2B

sessions in months of February and March 2022.

Fernandez reiterated that Uruguay Chamber has now representative in the EXPO 2020 Dubai but Uruguayan President to visit the expo on February 21 which has been named after Uruguay by the organizers. She added that 21 companies custodian of Uruguayan foreign trade are in charge of designing the Uruguayan pavilion in the exhibition.

Iran's Rice Imports up by 33%

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian customs administration (IRICA) figures show that rice imports into the country rose by nearly a third in volume terms in the six months to September 22 amid attempts by the government to control rising prices of the domestically grown rice.

IRICA spokesman Rouhollah Latifi said rice shipments arriving in the country in the first half of the current calendar year had risen by 33% compared to the previous similar period to reach a total of 714,773 metric tons.

Rice imports had also increased by 24% in value terms year on year in March-September to reach over \$607 million, said Latifi.

The increase comes despite a seasonal ban imposed on rice imports into Iran from July to November.

The price of high-quality rice grown in northern Iran has reached 570,000 rials (\$2.07) for each kilogram of some top varieties.

That comes as rice imported from India, Pakistan and Thailand have much lower prices despite tariffs imposed on shipments and problems facing the importers to settle payments with foreign suppliers.

Reports on Saturday suggested that a new Iranian administration that came to office in August is willing to allow the use of funds blocked in India because of US sanctions for settlement of imports payments, including for rice shipments.

Colors of Autumn Displayed At "Mehr-e Rang"

IRAN NEWS ART DESK

TEHRAN – October 19 and in association with colorful nature of autumn, the painting exhibition "Mehr-e Rang" (Mehr of Color), which is the collection of works of some painters, was inaugurated at Rasoul Mehr Gallery by director general of the Culture and Islamic Guidance of Tehran MR. Ahad Javdani.

The curator of the exhibition Mr. Najafi Asadollahi touching upon the exhibition said that getting inspiration from the colors of the nature based on the seasons is the motivation for him for holding some exhibitions and this exhibition with the colors of the autumn is the third art event of this type of collection of activities.

Asadollahi also has some of its painting works in this exhibition, saying that the exhibition has been held both in-person and virtually and all works of the artists with full details are available on the website of the gallery.

In this painting event, 30 works have been selected to be displayed from several entries in free style and techniques. Works from Saeedeh Arian, Elnaz Ebrahimi, Soheila Ostad Mohammadi, Akram Afzali, Sima Amir Sardari, Setareh Javan Bakht Dalir, Abolhasan Riyazi, Farahnaz Karimi Tabesh, Sepideh Majd Kian, Reza Mir Shafiei, Hassan Norouznia and Asadollahi have been out on the display and enthusiasts can see them.

Media advisor of the exhibition Maryam Vahidnia says dissemination and reports of such art events have created joy and elegance in the society and it can lead to blossom of artistic talents and cultural delicacies. "Mehr-e Rang" is open to the public visit from Monday to Friday from 14 to 18 pm at the location of the gallery in Tehran: Morvarid Alley, Sardar-e Darya St., Darya Boulevard, Saadat Abad St.



HOSCO Wins Award for Customer Satisfaction

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Hormozgan Steel Company (HOSCO) shone during the 8th National Conference of Managing Customer Satisfaction and received plaque of honors and statue for customer satisfaction.

According to reports, the CEO of Hormozgan Steel Company Mr. Ataollah Maroufkhani received the plaque of honor and statue for the company's excellence and strategic role in promoting business and creating jobs during the pandemic era.

Addressing the conference and touching upon the issue of the customer-orientation in the company, Maroufkhani said that offering timely services with good quality can win the heart and soul of the customer and it can distinguish the brand of the company against its rivals. He added therefore it is necessary for the company to pay more attention on offering services and quality of the products.

He added that Hormozgan Steel Company does its best to offer good quality product and service by studying the opinions and satisfaction of its customers and improving the quality of products.

On the importance of customer-orientation policy in the company, he said that paying attention to the customers' demands in fact is indication to the significance of attention to the needs and expectations of the customers.

Maroufkhani reiterated that considering the idea of customer-orientation will lead to the profitability and creating value in the company, adding that if the company prioritizes demands of its customers, ten more customers will be enthusiastic to buy the products of the company and they will trust on the products of the company and it will lead to more profits.

He then highlighted priorities of the company in the field of customer-orientation and said that one of the approaches of the company is to produce its products based on the latest international standards and offering services based on those standards.

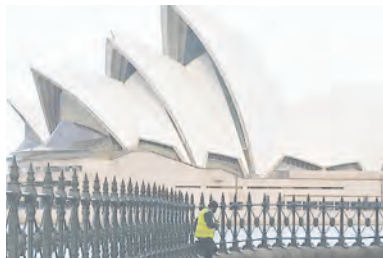


Sydney Lockdown Ends After 106 Days

SYDNEY (AFP) - Elated Sydneysiders were emerging from almost four months of "blood, sweat and no beers" early Monday as a long coronavirus lockdown was lifted in Australia's largest city.

Sydney's more than five million residents have been subjected to a 106-day lockdown, designed to limit the march of the highly transmissible Delta variant.

With new infections now falling -- New South Wales state recorded 477 cases on Sunday -- and more than 70 percent of over-16s double vaccinated, Sydney was dusting off the cobwebs.



Five Dead in Yemen Blast

ADEN (Dispatches) - Five people have been killed in a car-bomb attack targeting the governor of Aden, the seat of Yemen's internationally recognized government, security sources said on Sunday.

Aden, in southern Yemen, is home to a separatist movement that last year precariously integrated into the central government, and both have long been aligned against Huthi rebels in a grinding civil war.

Aden governor Ahmed Lamalas and Salem al-Socotri, a government minister, both survived the blast which went off as their convoy passed, the sources said.



Thousands Rally Against Tunisian President Saied



TUNIS (Dispatches) - More than 5,000 Tunisians rallied on Sunday against a presidential power grab in the only democracy to have emerged from the Arab Spring uprisings a decade ago.

Despite checkpoints and security screening of protesters, it was the biggest in a series of Sunday rallies in central Tunis both pro and against the actions of President Kais Saied.

On July 25, after months of political stalemate, Saied sacked the prime minister, suspended parliament and granted himself judicial powers, a move he followed up in September with measures that effectively allow the president to rule by decree. A police source said at least 3,000 had gathered at the start of the rally, and the crowd kept growing. Witnesses later said more than 5,000 people were flowing toward Bourguiba Avenue, the main thoroughfare in central Tunis.

The size of Sunday's rally exceeded that of an estimated 2,000 who demonstrated against Saied's "coup d'etat" two weeks earlier on Bourguiba Avenue. On October 3, an estimated 3,000 people rallied on the same avenue in support of the president, and local media reported that about 2,000 other pro-Saied supporters demonstrated elsewhere in the North African country.

"The people against the coup d'etat," "Raise your voice, the revolution is not dead," the anti-Saied demonstrators called, waving red-and-white Tunisian flags. Many identified as supporters of the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party, which was the biggest in the now-suspended parliament.

Some complained to AFP about alleged police intimidation to prevent them moving forward. Helmeted, black-clad riot police were deployed, and demonstrators were forbidden from entering a stretch of Bourguiba Avenue.

"The rally is blocked," and "shame on you," one voice in the crowd called.

Tunisia was the birthplace of the Arab Spring uprisings, with the resignation of the country's dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011.

Although Saied's July measures enjoyed significant public support, civil society groups have warned of a drift away from democracy.

"Father of Pakistan's Bomb" A.Q. Khan Dies at 85

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - Abdul Qadeer Khan, the founder of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program who was accused of smuggling technology to Iran, North Korea and Libya, has died at 85, authorities said Sunday.

The atomic scientist, who spent the last years of his life under heavy guard, died in the capital Islamabad, where he had recently been hospitalized with Covid-19.

Khan died after being transferred to the city's KRL Hospital with lung problems, state-run broadcaster PTV reported.

He had been admitted to the same hospital in August with Covid-19. But after being permitted to return home several weeks ago, he was transferred back after his condition deteriorated, it said.

Austria FM Set to Replace Embattled Kurz

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Austria's top diplomat Alexander Schallenberg was expected to take over the chancellorship, a day after Sebastian Kurz announced he would step down amid graft claims, capping the spectacular rise of one of Europe's youngest political leaders.

The 35-year-old conservative announced late Saturday that he was stepping down as chancellor, bowing to pressure to resign after he was implicated in a corruption scandal.

Saying he wanted to "make space to prevent chaos," Kurz -- who has headed two governments over the last four years -- has suggested foreign minister Schallenberg to take over the chancellery.

The 52-year-old diplomat was to meet President Alexander Van der Bellen following a meeting with Vice Chancellor Werner Kogler of the Greens. Schallenberg has yet to speak publicly, but Kogler indicated late Saturday that his party would support him to keep the conservative-Greens coalition in government.



Czech Voters Oust Communists From Parliament

PRAGUE (Dispatches) - Czech voters evicted the communists from parliament for the first time since the end of World War Two, voting out a party whose forebears ruled the central European nation from 1948 until the Velvet Revolution of 1989 that ushered in democracy.

The communists jailed tens of thousands in forced labor camps in the 1950s and brutally repressed dissidents such as playwright-turned-president Vaclav Havel, but remained in parliament following the revolution.

In this week's election, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia took 3.62% of the votes with nearly all precincts reporting, less than the 5% needed to enter parliament and potentially marking a final chapter for a party that has gradually shrunk as its ageing membership dwindled.

"It pleases me, it pleases me a lot," Jiri Gruntorad, 69, a former dissident who signed the dissident Charter 77 statement and was jailed for subversion from 1981 to 1985 by the communist authorities, told Reuters. "But it's coming too late."

"It was one of the last communist parties in the world apart from the Chinese and Cuban ones that held on to its name. The others have at least renamed themselves and started behaving a little differently," Voters also handed a defeat to Prime Minister Andrej Babis' ANO party against center-right opposition group Together in a surprise result.

After 1989, the communists sought to appeal to senior citizens and working class Czechs but they never resonated with younger voters and failed to shake the party's history with others as a totalitarian rulers who had stifled freedom. "I am very disappointed because it is a really big failure," said Communist Party leader Vojtech Filip, who also resigned.

Havel opposed banning the party -- which resisted the country's European Union and NATO membership and kept warm ties with Russia and China -- despite calls from the public to do so.

The communists lingered mostly in isolation after 1989, though they cooperated with other parties seeking votes to pass legislation in parliament. They were also close to current President Milos Zeman.

Italian Police Arrest Far-Right Party Leaders After Riot

ROME (Dispatches) - Italian police said on Sunday they had arrested 12 people including the leaders of the extreme right-wing party Forza Nuova, after clashes in Rome a day earlier over a government drive to make the COVID-19 "Green Pass" mandatory for all workers.

Thousands of people took to the streets of the Italian capital on Saturday to oppose the move. Some tried to break past police in riot gear guarding access to Prime Minister Mario Draghi's office, while a separate group broke into the headquarters of Italy's main CGIL trade union and turned its offices upside down.

Overnight, dozens of protesters also tried to break into the accident and emergency unit at Rome's Policlinico Umberto I hospital, where one of them was being kept for treatment, forcing health workers to barricade themselves inside, emergency department head Francesco Pugliese told reporters on Sunday.

Draghi introduced the pass - a digital or paper certificate confirming its holder has either received at least one vaccine dose, has tested negative or has recently recovered from the virus - in the summer to help prevent infections and encourage people to get vaccinated.

The certificates were initially needed to enter many cultural and leisure venues, but their scope has gradually been widened. Last month, the government made it compulsory for all workers.

More than 80% of all Italians over the age of 12 have been fully vaccinated as of Oct. 10.

Under the green pass system for workers, accepted by unions and employers, any worker who fails to present a valid health certificate from Oct. 15 will be suspended with no pay, but cannot be sacked.

"It was a fascist squad attack, and it is unacceptable," CGIL's head Maurizio Landini said on Sunday, speaking to supporters in front of the union offices in Rome.

The riots drew widespread condemnation, including from Matteo Salvini and Giorgia Meloni, the leaders of the rightist League and Brothers of Italy parties, respectively.

The police said in a statement that 38 police officers were injured during the Rome anti-vax clashes.

Emanuele Fiano, a lawmaker from the centre-left Democratic Party, said his party would present a parliamentary motion on Monday to dismantle groups such as Forza Nuova that espouse extreme neo-fascist ideologies.



Taiwan President Says Island Will Not Bow to China

TAIPEI (AFP) - Taiwan will not bow to pressure by Beijing and will defend its democratic way of life, President Tsai Ing-wen said Sunday, following a spike in incursions by Chinese warplanes into its air defense zone.

Self-governed Taiwan's 23 million people live under the constant threat of invasion by authoritarian China, which views the island as its territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary.

"The more we achieve, the greater the pressure we face from China," Tsai said in a speech marking Taiwan's National Day, adding: "Nobody can force Taiwan to take the path China has laid out for us."

She described Taiwan as "standing on democracy's first line of defense." "We hope for an easing of... relations (with Beijing) and will not act rashly, but there should be absolutely no illusions that the Taiwanese people will bow to pressure," she added. The two sides have been ruled separately since the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949.

Tensions have risen to their highest in decades under Chinese President Xi Jinping, who broke off official communication with Taipei following Tsai's election five years ago and ramped up economic, diplomatic and military pressure.

The latest flare-up has been a surge in flights by Chinese fighter jets and nuclear-capable bombers into Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ).

Some 150 sorties were made into the zone in the days surrounding China's own National Day on 1 October -- a record number.

Xi has made taking Taiwan a key goal of his leadership which he looks set to extend to a third term in 2022.

On Saturday, he declared in a speech that "the complete reunification of our country will be and can be realized".

He said he favored "peaceful reunification" but his words come after months of increased military threats, including the recent surge in air incursions as well as heavily publicized military drills simulating an invasion of Taiwan.

Last year, there were a record 380 sorties. There have already been more than 600 this year.



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250sq.m, 4bdrs
S/pool, S, J
L.balcony
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

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

Parsian

Velenjak (\$1400)
2bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F

Kamranieh Apt (\$2800)
300sq.m, 4bdrs
S/pool, S, J, pkg
balcony, & F.F

Niavaran Villa
800sq.m, 4bdrs, yard

Vanak (\$1000)
2bdrs, pkg, F.F

Elahieh bldg (\$5000)
4storey, 13bdrs, pkgs

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UAE Issues First Sovereign Bonds

DUBAI (Dispatches) - The UAE, the Arab world's second-largest economy, issued multi-tranche sovereign bonds for the first time as a federation as the country looks to raise fresh funding amid low interest rates globally. The bond package denominated in US dollars includes conventional medium and long-term 10 and 20-year tranches, as well as 40-year dual-listed Formosa bonds, the UAE's Ministry of Finance said in a statement. Formosa bonds refer to debt issued in Taiwan by foreign borrowers in currencies other than the Taiwanese dollar. The Ministry of Finance, however, did not provide details on the total amount it plans to raise through the issuance.



Italy Risks Missing Out On Halal Tourism Boom

ROME (Dispatches) - Italy is missing out on huge revenue opportunities presented by halal tourism, an academic study presented at the Turin Islamic Economic Forum has warned.

According to a study by the Management Department of the University of Turin led by Paolo Biancone and Silvana Secinaro, Italy has "no overall approach" to create an extensive halal hospitality network, which would entice Muslim travelers to the country.

In the international halal tourism market, researchers said, Italy's competitive capacity is "so low" that the country does not even appear among the top 10 destinations in the Global Muslim Travel Index, placing well below Germany and France, the European countries that have done the most to promote halal tourism.

The pre-pandemic Islamic tourism market was estimated to be worth about \$220 billion. But this figure is expected to double rapidly due to the demographic increase of the Muslim population as well as a growing middle class.

Turin researchers said that in 2000, Islamic travelers numbered about 25 million, but by 2020 had risen to 158 million worldwide. It is expected that by 2026, the value of Muslim traveler revenues will reach \$300 billion. But Italy is almost completely excluded from this scenario.

"Italy boasts about 58.3 million tourists a year from all over the world. Being the country outstandingly rich in places and monuments that tell of centuries of encounters and fusion between Western and Muslim cultures, Italy should be among the first destinations of Muslim tourists," Biancone said.

But instead, he added, "the country lacks an overall approach capable of creating an extensive hospitality network which takes into account the peculiarities of a tourism which has special needs, but is also usually high spending and qualified."

His comments came at an Islamic finance forum organized in Turin between the local chamber of commerce and university.

The Turin University study said that Italy's problem with halal hospitality "is first of all based on a cultural challenge and on a lack of understanding of its great opportunities, especially in the post-pandemic revival period."

One issue facing Italian hotels in attracting Muslim tourists is the presence of alcoholic drinks in hotel minibars, but also the absence of copies of the Quran in rooms and a lack of prayer rooms.

A lack of alcohol-free cosmetic products and Arabic speakers also presents problems for the Italian tourism industry.

"Halal certified food is also a key element in the attraction of big spending tourists from the (Persian) Gulf countries. We found that the halal food and beverage sector in 2019 reached a value of \$1.4 billion worldwide, with continuous growth rates year on year," the study said.

Turkey's Industrial Exports Post Highest Monthly Figure

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's industrial exports reached the highest monthly export figure in history in September, totaling \$15.87 billion (TL 141.32 billion), according to official data.

Turkey's overall exports increased by 30% last month compared to the same period of 2020 and reached \$20.78 billion, an Anadolu Agency (AA) report said Friday, citing data by the Turkish Exporters Assembly (TIM).

Industrial exports, meanwhile, jumped by 29.8% year-on-year. Turkey's industrial exports accounted for 76.4% of total exports last month.

In September, agricultural exports increased by 13.2% to \$2.74 billion, and mining exports increased by 39.1% to \$584.37 million.

The steel sector made the highest contribution to the record exports seen in the industrial sector.

The steel industry foreign sales were worth \$2.61 billion in September. It has left behind the automotive industry, which generally took the lion's share in Turkey's industrial exports.

In the same period, the automotive industry's exports worth \$2.47 billion; chemicals and products worth \$2.29 billion;

Iraq Aims to Boost Crude Output to 8m bpd by 2027

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraq, OPEC's second-largest producer, is in talks with the international oil majors operating in the country to help boost its crude production capacity by 60 per cent to about 8 million barrels per day, in the next six years, the country's oil minister said.

Ihsan Ismail also said Baghdad considered oil trading between \$75-\$80 per barrel range as a "fair price for both producers and consumers".

Eighty-five per cent of Iraq's revenue is dependent on hydrocarbons and it currently has a production capacity of 5 million bpd.

The country has three oil output scenarios: high, medium and low, and "we agreed in Iraq to go with the medium scenario, which speaks about 8 million bpd", Mr Ismail told an online panel at the Energy Intelligence Forum. Iraq is engaged in discussions with international oil companies including Shell, BP, Exxon Mobil, Lukoil and Italy's Eni that operate in the country to help it boost its crude output, he said.

"There is a new discussion with all our partner IOCs to optimise the production to about 8 million bpd by end-2027," the minister said.

"I think we have completed about 90 per cent to 95 per cent of these discussions."

Iraq is also investing in new infrastructure to expand its export capacity, the minister said.

"Our target is to reach more than 6 million bpd by the end of 2024."

The country, Mr Ismail said, was already in the process of bidding for a new offshore pipeline, which will help boost its export capacity from the current 4 million bpd.

In June, Iraq's oil ministry spokesman Aseem Jihad said the country planned to export its crude to global markets in "America, Asia and Europe". Higher oil prices and larger export volumes support oil producing economies of the region and lower their fiscal breakeven prices, according to the International Monetary Fund.

The fiscal breakeven price is the base price needed to balance the budgets of oil-exporting countries.

UK, Persian Gulf Nations Negotiate Trade Deal

LONDON (Dispatches) - The United Kingdom and the six Persian Gulf Cooperation Council states have begun preliminary talks on a free trade agreement, Bahrain said, as London seeks to bolster its trade position post-Brexit.

"It brings me great joy and pleasure to officially announce the official launch of FTA negotiations between PGCC countries and UK today," Zayed bin Rashid al-Zayani,

Bahrain's minister of industry, commerce and tourism, said late Friday.

It is an "initiative that we have worked tirelessly on realizing since the kingdom of Bahrain's assumption of the PGCC presidency at the beginning of this year", added Zayani. The UK already enjoys strong economic links with the nations of the PGCC, comprised of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman.

"We shall collectively embark on a new chapter, which will solidify our long standing trade and investment cooperation and build upon the strong foundations forged over the past centuries," Zayani said.

Trade between the UK and the Persian Gulf nations topped 30 billion pounds (\$41 billion) in 2020, according to the British government.

"A trade agreement with the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council is a huge opportunity to liberalize trade with a growing market for British business and deepen ties with a region that is vital to our strategic interests," said International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan.

"We want a modern, comprehensive agreement that breaks down trade barriers to a huge food and drink market and in areas like digital trade and renewable energy which will deliver well-paid jobs in all parts of the United Kingdom," she said in a statement.

Friday's talks marked the launch of what the UK government has termed a "14-week consultation calling for the public and business to share their views ahead of negotiations starting in 2022".

Since its exit from the European Union, London has sought to bolster trade ties with partners including the United States, Australia and hydrocarbon-rich Persian Gulf countries.

IMF Extends Debt Relief of \$124m for 24 Low-Income Countries

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund's executive board approved the extension of \$124 million in debt relief to 24 eligible low-income countries until January 10, suspending debt servicing by the states for the next three months.

Approval of the fourth tranche of debt service relief from the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT) brings the total debt relief since April 2020 to \$973m, the Washington-based lender said in a statement. The three previous tranches were approved on April 13, 2020, October 2, 2020, and April 1.

"This debt service relief helps free up scarce financial resources for vital health, social, and economic support to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic," the fund said. "Subject to the availability of sufficient resources in the CCRT, debt service relief for all beneficiary countries could be provided for the remaining period from January 11 to April 13, 2022."

Across the world, but especially in developing regions, the damage from the Covid-19 pandemic has been greater than that from the 2008-2009 global financial crisis, most notably in Africa and South Asia, according to the UN Conference on Trade and Development. Renewed international support is needed for developing countries facing the threat of a "lost decade" amid an uneven global economic recovery, it said last month.

The recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic remains "hobbled" and the world economy could sustain as much as \$5.3 trillion in losses over the next five years if the vaccine divide is not reduced, the IMF said.

In March 2020, at the start of the pandemic, the IMF's managing director Kristalina Georgieva began an urgent fundraising effort to raise \$1.4 billion in grants to help the CCRT provide debt relief for up to a maximum of two years, while leaving the trust sufficiently funded for future needs.

So far, donors have pledged contributions totalling about \$860m, including from the EU, the UK, Japan, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, Norway, Singapore, Greece, China, Mexico, the Philippines, Sweden, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, and Malta, the IMF said.

The fund's executive board emphasised that "additional resources are needed to ensure that adequate grant resources are in place for other CCRT qualifying shocks in the future while continuing to provide debt service relief for the remaining period through April 2022".

The resources freed up so far by CCRT debt service relief have helped mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the recipient countries, the directors said.

India's Economy Expected To Grow by 8.3% in 2021-22



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - The World Bank has revised the country's growth forecast to 8.3 per cent for the current financial year 2021-22, compared to the earlier estimate of 10.1 per cent. The World Bank stated in its latest report that the Indian economy - South Asia's largest will register the growth aided an increase in public investment and incentives to boost manufacturing.

Due to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in India, the economic recovery paused and the high frequency data suggested that the recovery also declined for a brief period, according to Hans Timmer, World Bank Chief Economist for the South Asia Region.

Earlier this year, the World Bank said that India's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth for the current fiscal could range from 7.5 to 12.5 per cent in its South Asia Economic Focus report released ahead of the annual Spring meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The Indian economy had been slowing prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, said the World Bank in its report released on March 31. After reaching 8.3 per cent in the financial year 2016-17, the economic growth decelerated to four per cent in the financial year 2019-20. The slowdown was caused by a decline in private consumption growth and subsequent shocks to the financial sector, according to World Bank.

Meanwhile, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)-led Monetary Policy Committee in its fourth bi-monthly policy review for the current fiscal yesterday, retained the GDP growth at 9.5 per cent for financial year 2021-22.

The central bank also trimmed the inflation projection to 5.3 per cent as it evaluated the economy at a time when there is a steady pick-up in activity with a calculated progress in the vaccination drive. As of now, a quarter of India's adult population being fully vaccinated and almost 71 per cent partially vaccinated, as per government data.



“The Recess” Grabs Award In Progeny Festival

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian short film ‘The Recess’ directed by Navid Nikkhah Azad won the best short film award from Progeny Short Film Festival in the United States.

According to its website, The Progeny Short Film Festival takes place annually in Blacksburg, Virginia, hosted by Virginia Tech’s School of Performing Arts.

‘The festival aims to provide a platform for independent filmmakers and students around Southwest Virginia. Progeny seeks to uplift filmmakers producing thought-provoking content showcasing a diverse range of styles, genres, and interests.’



Russia Has Substantial Scope to Boost Europe’s Gas Supplies

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia has substantial scope to boost Europe’s gas supplies and alleviate the energy crisis in Europe and the UK, according to Fatih Birol, the head of the International Energy Agency.

Mr Birol said Russia has the capacity to send substantially more gas to Europe, with his intervention strengthening claims the country is withholding crucial supplies.

Mr Birol was referring to President Vladimir Putin’s suggestion on Wednesday that he would boost shipments to the continent.

“If Russia does what it indicated yesterday and increases the volumes to Europe, this would have a calming effect on the market,” Mr Birol told the Financial Times. “I don’t say they will do it but if they wish so, they have the capacity to do it.”

Mr Birol urged Russia to prove it is a “reliable supplier” by delivering on its suggestion, in turn easing a supply crunch that has sent energy prices soaring and threatened the global recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Europe’s soaring gas prices dropped on Thursday following Mr Putin’s suggestion that his country could sell more gas to European spot buyers via its domestic market, in addition to existing long-term contracts.

Rapidly growing demand amid the global economic recovery from the pandemic has driven Europe’s rising gas prices, along with a cold winter and less power generation by alternative sources, Mr Putin said, during a government meeting on energy issues.

However, the Russian leader said the EU’s efforts to switch from long-term supply contracts to spot trading in gas played a key role.

“I would like to underline that the situation in the European energy markets is a bright example of the inadmissibility of hasty and politically-motivated moves in any sphere, particularly in energy issues that determine stability of industries and welfare and life quality of millions of people,” Mr Putin said.

UK wholesale gas prices rose 37 per cent in 24 hours to trade at £4 (\$5.4) per them on Wednesday, up sharply from £0.60 at the start of the year. The high cost of wholesale gas has caused several UK energy firms to collapse and seen production halted across a number of sectors.

“There are increasingly concerns that the UK is being caught in an inflationary spiral, with little end in sight for soaring prices,” said Susannah Streeter, senior investment and markets analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown.

“President Putin may have promised to plug some shortfalls in the supply of gas, but the lack of LNG storage facilities amid high demand from Asia, and warnings of a cold winter to come, are likely to see further price spikes.”

The IEA first said last month that Russia could boost its supplies to Europe, without being more specific.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said on Wednesday that starting operations on the new Nord Stream 2 pipeline — intended to take Russian gas to Germany — would quickly stabilise European energy markets, a statement considered by some in Europe as an attempt to encourage regulators to certify the new pipeline faster.



The line, which runs through the Baltic Sea, will bypass Ukraine, which has been engaged in a war with Russia since 2014.

On Thursday, the Kremlin said Russia has the potential to boost natural gas supplies to Europe, with spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying existing gas transit routes allow for bolstering supplies before the new Nord Stream 2 pipeline starts operating

“There is a potential,” Mr Peskov said. “It all depends on demand, contractual obligations and commercial agreements.”

Fawad Razaqzada, market analyst at Think Markets, said Russia’s offer to ease Europe’s energy crunch was the biggest talking point in the markets on Thursday, as gas prices fell.

“Russia wants to get the ball rolling on its controversial Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline, which according to Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak would be one way to solve Europe’s energy crisis. Although it remains uncertain whether Russia will be granted the approval, investors know the pressure is growing on European leaders to do something about surging energy prices — and fast,” Mr Razaqzada said.

However, Mr Birol said Russia was not the only factor in Europe’s energy crisis, with the rapid recovery from pandemic lockdowns, extended maintenance on certain projects and the weather also contributing factors.

He added that governments should do more to protect consumers from rising prices, and the problem could also accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels.

“Very clearly the gas market is not getting good marks from consumers around the world. It has been presented globally as a clean reliable source to complement the energy transition, but it may be casting a shadow on this image,” Mr Birol said.

Climate Change Pledges Must Be Turned Into Action



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Countries need to turn their climate pledges and policies into concrete action for the world to achieve its climate risk mitigation targets, a senior UN official has said.

The planet is currently going in the wrong direction in terms of carbon emissions, despite 191 countries submitting their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), James Grabert, global head of the UN Climate Change Secretariat’s Mitigation Division, said.

“NDCs are looking towards 2030, so they are short-term [targets] that are there, but what we are not seeing enough of are concrete policies,” he told a panel discussion at the World Green Economy Summit in Dubai, being held as part of Expo 2020 Dubai.

“We are going to need much more ... this next decade is critical. If we don’t have policies that are really having [an] effect and we have to constantly [monitor and revise] them, we are not going to meet the targets.”

NDCs are non-binding national plans that highlight climate actions. These include climate-related targets for greenhouse-gas emission reductions, as well as policies and measures that governments intend to carry out under the 2015 Paris Agreement. The UN has published commitments from 191 signatories of the Paris accord before its climate change conference in Glasgow next month.

There are 86 new or updated NDCs communicated by 113 signatories to the Paris accord, according to the UN data.

However, trends are not encouraging. When all NDCs are aggregated, it indicated that “we are on an increase in emissions from 2010 [levels] by 16 per cent by 2030”, Mr Grabert said.

“We are in the wrong direction if we add all that up.”

NDCs from signatories have set targets for renewable energy generation and there is a clear shift to low-carbon fuels and energy efficiency. “We are beginning to see policies towards more efficient transport ... circular economy, waste-to-energy and recycling,” he said. There is also a lot of push on “carbon pricing as a mechanism to drive the low-carbon behavior that is needed”.

Demand Jumps for Renewable Energy

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanon is witnessing significant demand for the installation of solar power units, amid a severe energy crisis that saw the country plunged into a total blackout on Saturday.

Two main power stations went offline because they ran out of fuel, said the state electricity company Electricite du Liban, with people rushing to find alternative sources of energy in anticipation of such a blackout.

People have also been looking for space on the roof of their building to install solar panels, said one electrical engineer.

They wanted the least amount of energy in order to keep food in the fridge, and their lights, internet and television on.

“In the last three months, the demand for installing solar energy or installing UPS batteries has increased to the point that this equipment disappeared from the Lebanese market and reservations for obtaining them took a month,” electrical engineer Bilal Rahm told Arab News. “Most of those who want to install solar energy are either rich or have children abroad who provide them with fresh money, and some poor people borrow money to get this solar energy. Everyone needs lighting, especially those who have children in schools and universities. One of my customers is a greengrocer who decided to turn to solar energy.



“Sometimes the residents of the building disagree about using the roof for personal benefit, so they ask us to dismantle these panels, but these disputes began to subside because everyone felt that they needed this method and residents agreed to build an iron top on the roof of the building to install solar panels on it. Merchants are taking advantage of this demand and

have raised the prices of imported equipment under the pretext of the high cost of air freight.” Merchants were importing the equipment from different countries, including China, Germany, England and the UAE, he said.

Dealers of electrical appliances, including Marwan Tabbara, described the demand for UPS devices as “frightening” with the onset of winter. People were looking for an alternative to subscribing to a private generator, where the bill was twice the minimum wage.

The Interior Ministry warned people a few days ago to verify “the durability” of solar energy equipment on the rooftops of buildings before the onset of winter and storms that may cause them to fall and “cause ominous damage” to people and property. The country’s electricity network was completely disconnected after the Al-Zahrani and Deir Ammar power plants stopped as a result of a drop in energy production to below 200 megawatts.

Yemen, Persian Gulf...

FROM PAGE 1

He also expressed hope that Iran and Saudi Arabia relations will contribute to the peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region.

The FM spokesman also spoke about the relations between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan, saying that the two countries have always pursued a logical procedure in their relations.

“It is unnatural to disrupt relations between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan. Iran has told its concerns to the Azeri side, and they have also said they will address those concerns. We told the Azerbaijani side that some of Iran’s concerns should be resolved,” he added.

“We have never closed our airspace to Azerbaijan. The land route is also open between the two countries and the two sides should not allow third parties to affect relations,” Khatibzadeh underlined.

Speaking about the Vienna talks and the negotiating team, the spokesperson said, “The Vienna talks will be held and followed up through the Foreign Ministry. There won’t be any negotiations on new text or agreement.

“We strongly condemn the terrorist attack on a mosque in Kunduz, Afghanistan. We believe that the Taliban have a responsibility to maintain security. Iran has said many times that we must have an Afghanistan free of violence and terrorism. The noble people of Afghanistan are tired of terrorism and killing,” said Khatibzadeh.

He also called Afghanistan a constructive actor in international relations.

Kunduz Attack...

FROM PAGE 1

He said the formation of an inclusive and broad-based government in the war-ravaged country will rid it of terrorism, bolster public security and pave the way for return to normalcy.

He also urged the Taliban’s caretaker government to identify and punish the perpetrators of the heinous crime and take necessary measures to prevent the recurrence of such attacks.

Friday’s attack is among the deadliest terrorist attacks in Afghanistan since the US-led invasion 2001, and the first since the Taliban announced an interim government in Kabul last month.

The attack is being seen as an attempt by the Daesh terrorist group to undermine the Taliban’s newly-established government and to continue its long-running campaign aimed at ethnically cleansing the minority Hazara Shia community.

Iran Rejects...

FROM PAGE 1

During the 44-day war between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the Azeri military forces, while advancing to liberate the occupied territories, demanded the withdrawal of the Iranian guard forces from the northern part, with no regard for the previous agreement and refusing to clarify the technical and security details. It was not logical or possible at all, he explained.

The informed source went on to say that the Iranian Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan later reached a deal and the security of the northern part of the dam was handed over to the Azeri forces in the presence of border guard commanders of the two countries.

Tensions have been running high on the border between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan in recent weeks.

Iran to Pay...

FROM PAGE 1

Owji, who was in the parliament to discuss the crude-for-goods barter proposals, said that there would be some good news around the case in the very near future.

He said the crude barter system would mostly eye countries where demand for energy consumption is expected to increase after the easing of coronavirus restrictions in the future months.

However, the minister said Iran would continue its normal sales of oil in the meantime while trying to promote swap deals to facilitate trade and to get round U.S. sanctions that have targeted exports since 2018.

Inhumane Sanctions...

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Einollahi said that up to the beginning of the summer season 5 million doses of vaccines were injected in Iran, but today we have reached 64 million doses, which is a success gained thanks to the contributions of the people and various organs and organizations, that can serve as a model for the countries whose vaccination has been delayed.

The health minister said that the goal is vaccinating at least 85% of our population, but of course a small portion of the people, like in many other countries, are scared of becoming vaccinated, but at any rate we wish to reach the 85% and the lowering of the disease casualties.

He said that the foreign countries’ citizens in Iran who have not received vaccines, too, are vaccinated at all vaccination centers throughout Iran, because we care about their health.

Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul...

FROM PAGE 1

Çalık said that thanks to the project, Pakistan is now more integrated into international trade and also Turkey’s exports to China will be able to be developed through Pakistan on the route.

Shaukat Abbas, General Manager Marketing at National Logistics Cell (NLC), said the project would enhance the relationship between all three countries.

Javed Hedayati, General Director at Iran Transport Ministry, also emphasized Iran’s full commitment to supporting the project, adding “it’s a good sample for doing with other neighbors and regional collaboration.”

The decision to establish the road transport corridor was made at the 8th Meeting of ECO Ministers of Transport and Communications in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, in 2011.

Ko Grabs Four-Stroke Lead At LPGA Founders Cup

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - South Korea's Ko Jin-young fired a two-under par 69 to seize a four-stroke lead after Saturday's third round of the LPGA Founders Cup. World number two Ko stood on 13-under 200 after 54 holes at Mountain Ridge Country Club in West Caldwell, New Jersey. A second-place pack four adrift on 204 included South Korea's Ryu So-yeon, Americans Lindsey Weaver and Elizabeth Szokol and Yuka Saso of the Philippines.

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

Tura Wins Chicago Marathon

CHICAGO (Dispatches) - Ethiopia's Seifu Tura won the men's Chicago Marathon in 2:06:12 on Sunday, after breaking away from the pack late in the race and battling through warm and windy weather. It was the first major title for Tura, who held off 2017 champion Galen Rupp through the final stretch to finish 23 seconds ahead of the American. Tura's compatriot Shifera Tamru got the field off to an aggressive start, leading by a 15-second margin through the first 15 kilometres but he faded to finish fifth.

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SPORTS

TUESDAY OCTOBER 12, 2021

France Fight Back to Win Nations League

MILAN (Dispatches) - Kylian Mbappe fired France to Nations League glory on Sunday after netting the winner which completed a comeback from a goal down to beat Spain 2-1 in Milan. Mbappe struck with 10 minutes remaining to win the title for world champions France after Karim Benzema had levelled just two minutes after Mikel Oyarzabal put Spain into a 64th-minute lead. The win will ease some of the pain created by an early exit from Euro 2020 at the hands of Switzerland and highlighted just how powerful France are going forward. "I really wanted to win a trophy with France, and now it's done," said Benzema, who returned the France fold ahead of the Euro, to M6. "We showed strength of character, because this team is very strong, never gives up and we have proven it today. "It is the sign of a great team not to panic, to be patient and to wait for the right opportunity." Les Bleus came out on top of a match at the San Siro which came to life after Oyarzabal slid home the opener.

As well as the two goals from their superstar attackers, France had other opportunities to score through Mbappe before a frantic finish in which Spain launched an assault on the French goal. Didier Deschamps can thank Hugo Lloris the match didn't go into extra-time after the France captain pulled off a fine stoppage time save to deny Yeremi Pino a late leveller.

Earlier Italy took third place after beating Belgium 2-1 in Turin through goals from Nicolo Barella and Domenico Berardi. France started the strongest and should have been ahead with five minutes on the clock when Benzema was put through perfectly by Paul Pogba.

The Real Madrid striker tried to dribble around Spain goalkeeper Unai Simon but went too far wide and ended up aimlessly hitting a low pass across goal which was easily cut out by Cesar Azpilicueta.

Two minutes later a lightning passing move led to Aymeric Laporte, playing against the country of his birth for the first time since obtaining Spanish nationality, cutting out a low cross.

There was little more in the way of goalmouth incident in the opening period as Spain held off France's attacking by keeping a stranglehold on possession -- 64 percent in the first half.



A previously niggly contest suddenly got going in the 63rd minute when a sweeping French passing move started by Benjamin Pavard ended with Theo Hernandez smashing a first-time finish against the crossbar.

Just seconds later Spain took the lead through Oyarzabal, who swept home a precision left-foot finish to the delight of the Spanish fans gathered behind that goal.

However no sooner had those supporters stopped celebrating than France were level through Benzema, who curled home an outstanding strike after being fed by Mbappe.

Mbappe then had two chances in quick succession to put France head, first chipping way over with Simon off his line in the 68th minute and then hitting a tame shot at the Athletic Bilbao goalkeeper after being set up by Benzema.

The Paris Saint-Germain forward had his goal with 10 minutes remaining though, outfoxing Simon with some deft footwork before slotting home after being set free by Theo Hernandez.

Spain responded by going all out for the equaliser, but Lloris first palmed away a Oyarzabal volley in the 90th minute and then got his hand to Pino's strike to ensure the trophy went to Paris.

Ronaldo Sets Another Int'l Record



LISBON (Dispatches) - Cristiano Ronaldo marked a record 181st international appearance with a goal as Portugal defeated World Cup hosts Qatar 3-0 in a friendly game on Saturday.

The Manchester United star surpassed Sergio Ramos, who has played for Spain 180 times, as the most-capped international for a European nation.

Ronaldo opened the scoring in the 37th minute with Jose Fonte adding a second three minutes into the second half.

RB Leipzig striker Andre Silva completed the scoring in the last minute of the game.

Portugal resume their World Cup qualifying campaign on Tuesday when they host Luxembourg.

They are currently second in Group A, a point behind Serbia but with a game in hand.

Fury Knocks out Wilder To Retain WBC Crown

LAS VEGAS (Dispatches) - Tyson Fury retained his WBC heavyweight crown with a spectacular 11th-round knockout of Deontay Wilder as their trilogy fight delivered a boxing classic.

In an epic battle in front of 15,820 fans at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, both fighters were knocked down on multiple occasions in a contest full of improbable twists and turns as the two rivals traded blows.

Fury looked to have gained the upper hand after flooring Wilder in the third round, only for the 35-year-old from Alabama to respond with two knockdowns of Fury that had the English champion clinging on desperately in the fourth.

But it was the bigger, heavier Fury -- landing the cleaner and more damaging blows -- who finished the stronger, and the champion had Wilder down once again in the 10th with a right hook.

Wilder responded bravely to that knockdown by wobbling Fury in return. But the brutal energy-sapping nature of the fight, and Fury's relentless physicality, finally took its toll on Wilder in the 11th.

With the American exhausted and on the ropes, Fury landed the decisive combination.

A right uppercut scrambled Wilder's senses before Fury crashed a right hook into his opponent's temple that sent the challenger tumbling to the canvas, barely conscious.

"Don't ever doubt me," Fury said afterwards. "When the chips are down I will always deliver.

"I give him the glory for the victory. He's a tough man -- he took some big shots tonight.

"It was a great fight tonight as well as any trilogy in history."

The bout was the third instalment of an acrimonious rivalry between Fury, the trash-talking self-styled "Gypsy King" and Wilder, the heavy-handed knockout specialist regarded as one of the most destructive punchers in the sport.

Fury had scored a seventh-round knockout of Wilder in their second fight 20 months ago, after the two men shared a controversial draw in their first meeting in Los Angeles in 2018.



Neuer Fit to Play Against North Macedonia

HAMBURG (Dispatches) - Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer will be fit to play in tomorrow's 2022 World Cup qualifier against North Macedonia, coach Hansi Flick said, with his team a win away from clinching a spot in next year's tournament.

Neuer missed Friday's 2-1 victory over Romania with a minor muscle injury but has returned to training.

"I expect that it will work with Manuel for tomorrow," Flick told reporters before the

team's departure. "I am certain that it will be possible."

Flick has no other injury concerns with Germany seeking their fifth win in five matches since he took over this year.

"We are on a good path. It is understandable that some things may not work yet 100 percent but we are on the right track," Flick said.

The four-times world champions, who suffered a shock 2018 World Cup first-round exit and were eliminated in the round of 16 at this year's European Championship, will secure qualification with two games to spare if they win in Skopje and Armenia drop points against Romania.

Germany top Group J on 18 points, ahead of North Macedonia and Armenia on 12 with three matches remaining.

Medvedev Cruises Into Third Round At Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS (Dispatches) - U.S. Open champion Daniil Medvedev made a smooth return to ATP action, downing American Mackenzie McDonald 6-4, 6-2 to reach the third round at Indian Wells.

The second-ranked Russian -- the top men's seed in the combined WTA and ATP Masters hard court tournament -- played his first ATP match since capturing his maiden Grand Slam title at Flushing Meadows -- where he denied Novak Djokovic a rare calendar Grand Slam sweep.

Since then, Medvedev helped Team Europe beat Team World at the Laver Cup, and kept things rolling with a convincing win over 57th-ranked McDonald.

Medvedev didn't face a break point, and converted three of his seven break chances against the American to wrap things up in 72 minutes.

"I'm actually really pleased, because usually I haven't played well in Indian Wells and I haven't been playing that well in practices before (the tournament)," said Medvedev, who was 3-3 in prior appearances in the California desert.

"Really happy with my performance," he added. "That's the most important no matter how I played before the tournament.

"Mackenzie is a really strong opponent, he can put pressure on everybody," Medvedev said. "I'm happy to be through quite fast."

Women's top seed Karolina Pliskova also eased into the third round as fifth-seeded Garbine Muguruza was toppled by Ajla Tomljanovic.

Pliskova, ranked third in the world, needed 80 minutes to get past 23-year-old Polish qualifier Magdalena Frech 7-5, 6-2.

Pliskova fired six aces to take her WTA-leading tally to 387 for the season, converting five of six break chances against Frech.

It was the 106th-ranked Frech who grabbed the first break of the match, taking a 4-3 lead in the opening set.

But Pliskova promptly broke back and leading 6-5 the Czech gave herself a set point with a backhand winner before Frech fired into the net.



Bottas Wins in Turkey as Verstappen Retakes F1 Lead

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Valtteri Bottas ended his year-long drought with a dominant victory in Turkey today while unhappy Mercedes team mate Lewis Hamilton finished fifth and lost the Formula One championship lead to Red Bull's Max Verstappen.

Verstappen, 24, was runner-up and 14.584 seconds behind the Finn at a wet Istanbul Park to overturn a two-point deficit to Hamilton and walk away six points clear with six races remaining.

Red Bull team mate Sergio Perez finished third with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc fourth and ahead of seven-times world champion Hamilton, who had started 11th due to an engine penalty.

"It's been a while, but feels good. I think from my side probably one of the best races I've had ever," said Bottas, who started on pole position and was never threatened.

"Apart from that one little slide, everything was under control."

The victory was the Finn's first since Russia in September last year.

Verstappen, who started on the front row, had a quiet race and said it had all been about tyre management.

"I'm happy to be on the podium. I think it's been close the whole year and I'm pretty sure in Austin it will be a good battle with Mercedes, so we just have to keep pushing, keep trying," he said.

The U.S. Grand Prix in Texas is the next race on Oct. 24.

Hamilton might have also been on the podium but Mercedes called him in, against his judgement, for a late stop from third place for a fresh set of intermediate tyres with the track drying.

He pointed out afterwards that Alpine driver Esteban Ocon, who finished 10th, had managed to make one set of tyres last the entire race.

Had he stayed out and kept third, Hamilton would be only a point behind Verstappen.

Spaniard Carlos Sainz was voted driver of the day for going from the back of the grid, due to power unit penalties, to eighth for Ferrari.

AlphaTauri's Pierre Gasly was sixth with Lando Norris seventh for McLaren and Lance Stroll ninth for Aston Martin.

