

Health Ministry Announced on Tuesday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 129,177 With 132 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Iranian Short Film "Mostafa", Directed by Alireza Teymouri, Has Been Selected to Participate in the Competition Section of the 18th Accordi @ DISACCORDI - International Short Film Festival

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Illicit Weapons Trade Fuels Crime, Terrorism

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's permanent ambassador to the United Nations says illicit trade in small arms and light weapons not only exacerbates violence in all its forms, but also fuels crime and terrorism across the world.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi made the remarks in a Monday address to the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly for the Appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons.

"We share the concerns about humanitarian, socio-economic and security consequences of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their diversion to unauthorized recipients," Iran's UN envoy said, adding that the "Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects" (PoA) is the only universal framework to address these multifaceted challenges.

"As a victim of foreign-backed terrorists, and faced with the threat of organized crime and trafficking in drugs linked to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, the Islamic Republic of Iran highly values the Program of Action and calls for ensuring its balanced, effective and full implementation including through identifying and addressing its implementation challenges," Takht-Ravanchi said.

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Iran, IAEA to Work on Resolving Differences



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi said on Tuesday in Tehran he seeks common grounds to deepen mutual cooperation between the UN nuclear agency and Iran, days before the resumption of talks in the Austrian capital city of Vienna on the removal of the United States' sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

"We agreed to continue our joint work on the clarification of a number of issues. We also agreed to continue and deepen the dialogue with the government of Iran. As you know, I have the honor to meet the [Iranian] foreign minister in a couple of hours," Grossi said at a joint press conference with head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), Mohammad Eslami.

He noted that his work in Tehran has been "intense." He reiterated that Iran is serious in its nuclear program.

"We are continuing our negotiations at this point with the view of finding common grounds. There are a number of issues that we are working on. We will multiply our efforts with the view of concluding our exchanges today on a positive note. We are working very hard," the UN nuclear chief pointed out.

Eslami, for his part, said Iran is determined to pursue its civilian nuclear activities, stressing that Tehran's nuclear activities are in full compliance with international regulations and treaties.

He stressed that the AEOI is set to resolve technical issues with the IAEA concerning their cooperation, away from the politicization of the matter.

Eslami highlighted that the UN nuclear watchdog has testified that there is no diversion in Iran's nuclear work and that it will not consider plots hatched by Iran's adversaries to politicize cooperation between the two sides.

"What is of paramount importance is that Iran is strong-minded to pursue its nuclear program. Utilization of all aspects of nuclear technology is high on our agenda and the IAEA will provide assistance in this regard," the senior Iranian official said.

"Grossi has repeatedly stated today that he has not seen any deviations in Iran's nuclear program and that Iran is pursuing its nuclear activities in accordance with treaties and regulations," he added.

Eslami underscored that Iran intends to generate at least 10,000 megawatts of nuclear power, especially by means of small power plants with a maximum production capacity of 300 megawatts.

He said the IAEA will encourage and support countries that possess relevant technology and industries to help Iran boost its nuclear power generation.

Grossi arrived at Imam Khomeini International Airport on Monday evening and was received by the spokesman of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), Behrouz Kamalvandi.

On Monday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman called on the IAEA not to allow certain countries to abuse its name for the sake of achieving their own political objectives.

Annual Inflation Falls 1% To 44.4% in November

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's annual consumer price inflation slipped one percentage point in November to 44.4% while the month-on-month CPI figure dropped to 2.5% from 3.7%, according to latest figures by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI).

The SCI said that urban inflation rate in November had decreased 1.1% to 43.6% while the rural rate had also dropped 1.3% to 48.3%.

Iran has seen high but controlled levels of inflation in recent three years as the country has been grappling with economic impacts of American sanctions as well as restrictions on business and manufacturing activity because of the spread of the coronavirus.

An administrative government that came to office in early August has vowed it will contain inflation through tightening monetary policies and relying more on the domestic economic and manufacturing activity.

SCI figures showed that the fall in annual inflation rate reported at the end of November was larger than a 0.4%-drop reported for the year to October.

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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

U.S. Hegemony Approaching Its End

For years Iranian officials and also freedom-seekers in the world have claimed the U.S. is on the verge of decline and the U.S. hegemony is nearing its end but this claim has been mocked and some have accused Iranians and freedom-lovers in the world of living in delusion but events one after the other have bespoken of accuracy of this belief and prediction, and in recent proof to this prediction, a famous American political scientist has joined the Iranians to approve the U.S. hegemony is nearing its end.

In an article published recently on The Economist's special 2022 outlook issue, called The World Ahead 2022, Francis Fukuyama, a senior fellow at Stanford University, predicted the end of the U.S. hegemony, with a deeply polarized society affecting the country's foreign policy.

Fukuyama is known for his book The End of History and the Last Man (1992), which argues that the worldwide spread of liberal democracies and free-market capitalism of the West and its lifestyle may signal the end point of humanity's sociocultural evolution and become the final form of human government.

In the article he said the United States suffered a humiliating defeat when it withdrew from Vietnam in 1975, but it regained its dominance within little more than a decade.

The peak period of American hegemony was recorded between the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the financial crisis of 2007-09, he added.

"The height of American hubris was the invasion of Iraq in 2003, when it hoped to remake not just Iraq and Afghanistan (invaded two years before), but the whole Middle East. America overestimated the effectiveness of military power to bring about deep political change, even as it underestimated the impact of its free-market economic model on global finance. The decade ended with its troops bogged down in two counterinsurgency wars, and a financial crisis that accentuated the inequalities American-led globalization had brought about," Fukuyama explained.

He also noted that the biggest policy debacle of U.S. President Joe Biden's administration in its first year has been its failure to plan adequately for the rapid collapse of Afghanistan.

The U.S. military led the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 in what it proclaimed was a war on terror meant to eradicate the Taliban.

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Iran Gets Sanctions Instead Of Financial Support for Hosting Refugees

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran gets sanctions instead of receiving financial support for hosting millions of Afghan migrants and refugees, amidst a new wave of Afghan civilians fleeing from the crisis-wracked country, a member of the European Parliament laments.

"Iran is host to some 3.6 million #Afghan Refugees, and unlike Turkey, doesn't get billions from the #EU for minding them," Mick Wallace, a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) from South Ireland, wrote in a tweet on Tuesday.

"Another 300,000 have entered since Taliban took over #Afghanistan - instead of financial support, #Iran gets Sanctions," Wallace added, expressing doubt about whether the EU cares about Afghan refugees.

Afghanistan is facing what UN agencies have described as "one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters" since the collapse of Kabul in mid-August, which came after the United States' disastrous withdrawal from the country.

The U.S. military withdrew its forces from Afghanistan 20 years after they invaded the country to topple the Taliban, in a war that killed, according to one estimate, between 897,000 and 929,000 people.

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Gov't Working With Spirit and Thinking of Basij

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Emphasizing that problems can be overcome by maintaining and strengthening a spirit like Basij, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi says, "I am honored to be a Basij member and the whole government is working with the Basij spirit and thinking to serve and create openness in the people's livelihood and economy."

Speaking on Tuesday, in a meeting with the head and a group of commanders of the Basij Mostazafin Organisation, while congratulating the Basij Week, President Raisi said: "The Basij is a strong, fruitful tree that was formed with the wisdom of the Late Imam Khomeini (RA) and with each day passing by, it is giving more and more fruits to the Iranian nation and the Islamic community."

Referring to the comprehensiveness and reassurance of the Basij for the Iranian nation, the President said: "At the head of this revolutionary complex, the Supreme Leader of the Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei and in its body, the people across the country are present and the Basij goes beyond political, partisan and group currents."

Raisi described it as necessary to strengthen the Basij's missions to solve people's problems and said: "Opposition movements seek deviations in thought and action in various cultural, social and political fields, but Basij is a strong barrier against these deviations."

The President added: "The enemy, with its money, power and media, seeks to reduce the revolutionary forces and make changes in the lifestyle and morals of the people, but because the growth and expansion of Basij's missions are high, they have always failed."

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Champions, Cultural Ambassadors

TEHRAN (IP) – Majlis Speaker stated that Iranian champions are the country's cultural envoys and symbols of the country in the world.

Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf, who spoke at the unveiling ceremony of Asian Game pioneers' busts, said: "Sport is a precious asset for the present and the future."

Qalibaf emphasized having a long-term plan and proper management, especially in the challenging economic and coronavirus status.

He asserted, "The Parliament will solve all problems of sports."

He expressed hope to shine in international arenas, the Olympics in particular.

The unveiling ceremony of the Asian Game pioneers' busts was held on Tuesday, Nov 23, 2021, in the presence of Minister of Sport and Youth Hamid Sajjadi, Parliament Speaker Qalibaf, Chairman of the National Olympic Committee Reza Salehi Amiri, as well as deputies, presidents of sports federations, veterans, and champions.

President Receives Four New Ambassadors To Tehran

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi on Tuesday received the credentials of the new ambassadors of New Zealand, Spain, the Netherlands, and the Vatican to Tehran.

The new ambassadors of New Zealand, Spain, the Netherlands, and the Vatican held separate meetings with President Raisi and officially started their mission by submitting their credentials to the Iranian president.

In a meeting with the new Dutch Ambassador to Tehran, President Raisi emphasized the development of bilateral relations, saying that there are long-standing and historical relations between Iran and the Netherlands in trade, economic and cultural fields.

"Deep-rooted countries such as the Netherlands should be independent and not be influenced by the views of the current of domination," the president stressed.

Referring to the existence of hundreds of mosques in the Netherlands, Raisi said that respect for the rights of Muslims strengthens culture and civilization in Europe.

Welcoming the Netherlands' readiness for trade and investment cooperation, the President called for strengthening cooperation in the field of technology, especially environmental and water issues.

"Today, the system of human rights has become a pretext for pressure on developing countries, while we, based on religious and revolutionary teachings, have a duty to respect human rights, such as hosting 4 million Afghans in Iran," he said.

At the same meeting, the new Dutch envoy conveyed the greetings of the King of the Netherlands to President Raisi, saying, "Iran-Netherlands relations are 400 years old and Iran has always been an important trade destination for us".

"Iran is a powerful country in the region and there are many good opportunities in trade and investment between the two countries", the new ambassador of the Netherlands noted.

Referring to the situation in Afghanistan, he said, "We appreciate the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting a large number of Afghan refugees".

Later in his meeting with New Zealand's new ambassador to Tehran, President Raisi emphasized the necessity of expanding relations between Tehran and Wellington.

New Zealand's new ambassador, for his part, said that New Zealand is also concerned about climate change.

He also expressed hope that the Iranian people would defeat coronavirus.

Emphasizing that attention to God and spirituality is essential for human society today, Raisi said while receiving the credential of the new Vatican envoy to Tehran.

"Based on Quranic teachings, the common ground of Abrahamic religions bring us closer to each other. Those who are oppressive in the world today will no longer be oppressed if they heed the teachings of Christ, and the Vatican can play an active role in this regard," he also said.

"The concepts of the religion of Christ and what the Holy Prophet (PBUH) taught us should be discussed in scientific meetings to bring the views closer to each other", the President stated.

"The current level of economic relations between Iran and Spain is not acceptable and efforts should be made to further develop these relations", Raisi told the new Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain to Tehran.

"We are determined to develop economic, political, cultural and sports relations with Spain, and there are good capacities in the two countries to improve relations", the President emphasized.

At the same meeting, the new Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain to Tehran conveyed the greetings of the King of Spain to President Raisi.

"I will do my best to enhance diplomatic and economic ties between Iran and Spain", the Spanish envoy said.



Iran Welcomes Turkey's Caucasus 3+3 Format Proposal

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador to Ankara said that the Islamic Republic of Iran welcomed Turkey's proposal to create the 3+3 format in the South Caucasus region.

Mohammad Farzmand said in an op-ed article in Anadolu Agency on Monday that Iran welcomed Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's proposal to create a 3+3 format consisting of three South Caucasian states Republic of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia as well as Iran, Russia, and Turkey.

He said that Iran's support of the initiative was reaffirmed by former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in his regional tour last year to Baku, Yerevan, Moscow, Tbilisi, and Ankara. The initiative would help the region to solve problems, minimize tension grounds, expand cooperation, and create a powerful region through synergy between the regional states, the diplomat said.

He further explained there is a great level of collective determination, common interests, and mutual understanding as well as perseverance to realize a 3+3 or even 3+2 format.

The Islamic Republic of Iran as a country with good ties with all the states within the aforementioned format, Farzmand said, is eager to implement the initiative and believes that it could unlock bright horizon of political, security, trade, economic, and transportation cooperation to the nations in the region.

Russian and Turkish foreign ministers met on the sidelines of G20 summit in Rome and discussed the 3+3 format, according to Farzmand, who added that Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and his Turkish counterpart Erdogan had also previously suggested holding a six-party talks. The Iranian ambassador said that other than Turkey as the proposer, Azerbaijan Republic, Georgia, Iran, and Russia have welcomed the initiative.

Iran Devolves More Economic Powers to Provinces

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian government will allow its provinces to have more economic powers as part of its drive to spur growth in those regions by speeding up the launch of manufacturing and infrastructure projects.

Iran's Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi said that the government is intent on giving provinces more devolved powers on economic funding and management. "The projects will be mostly planned in the provinces ... and resources will generally be planned and spent in the provinces," said Vahidi after a meeting with governors from Iran's 31 provinces in the capital Tehran.

The minister said the devolution will be in line with changes in Iran's budgeting system which he said will be implemented in the country's annual budget for the year starting late March.

Under the new plan, Provincial Funds for Development and Progress will allow local authorities to have quicker and easier access to financial resources they need to carry out infrastructure and manufacturing projects. Vahidi said part of those funds will be allocated from national or public resources which are currently controlled by the central government in Tehran.

He said local officials will be authorized to sell surplus properties and assets in the province to strengthen the Funds and to boost funding for their development programs.

Earlier media reports had suggested that the Funds will be similar to Iran's sovereign wealth fund (NDFI) where resources are only used for key infrastructure projects that are deemed necessary for public purposes. "Naturally, extra powers will be devolved to the provinces and with decentralization we will witness a good and quick progress in those regions," said Vahidi.

Tehran Attaches Great Importance to Regional Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) - Stating that Tehran attaches importance to regional cooperation, President urged the ECO Secretary-General to adopt a proper solution for activating the member countries' potentials for the development of economic cooperation.

Speaking on Tuesday in a meeting with the Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Khosro Nazeri, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi considered identifying and removing obstacles and problems to increase the level of relations and cooperation between member countries necessary, saying, "Any kind of obstacles and problems in the development of cooperation must be removed so that exchanges and economic relations between ECO member countries can be carried out at a higher and superior level."

"Each member of ECO has a lot of economic potential in various fields, the activation of which can lead to economic prosperity in the region," he added.



Referring to the capacities of ECO member countries in the fields of energy, trade, transport, digital economy, maritime economy and tourism, the Iranian President said, "Comprehensive plans and actions of the ECO Secretariat to activate these capacities can boost the region's economic prosperity and bring about the development and prosperity of ECO member countries."

Emphasizing that the Islamic Republic of Iran supports the activation and development of ECO activities, Raisi added, "Tehran attaches special importance to regional cooperation in the framework of the Economic Cooperation Organization and supports such activities."

During the meeting, Khosro Nazeri, Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), also presented a report on the plans made for the ECO Summit in Turkmenistan.

The 15th Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Summit will be hosted by Turkmenistan in Ashgabat on December 28, 2010.

West Uses Terror Designations as Tool to Criminalize Support for Palestine

TEHRAN (PresSTV) – Iran says Western countries resort to "terrorist designations" as a tool to criminalize support for the Palestinian people, stressing that such acts primarily target civil societies in the West.

"'Terrorist designations' by Western countries have become a tool to criminalize grassroots support for the Palestinian cause," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said via Twitter on Monday evening.

Khatibzadeh also said such "phony designations" do not merely target groups that resist Israeli Apartheid, noting that they primarily target civil societies in the West.

The remarks came after Instagram social networking service deleted a post by Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian that condemned the British government's recent decision to ban the Gaza-based Hamas resistance group.

The top Iranian diplomat said that holding a referendum with the participation of the original inhabitants of Palestine (Muslims, Jews, and Christians) is the sole political solution to the Palestinian issue, adding, "The rights of the Palestinian people cannot be violated by distorting realities."

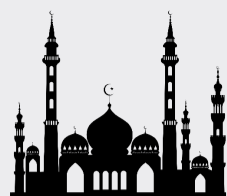
Last Friday, British Home Secretary Priti Patel announced the decision to designate Hamas in its entirety as a "terrorist organization" during a speech for the right-wing Heritage Foundation think tank in Washington DC.

Iran, Portugal Review Vienna Talks

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The managing director of the Iranian foreign ministry for Europe affairs and the managing director of Portugal foreign policy discussed bilateral ties, regional issues, and developments regarding Vienna talks, Iran envoy to Portugal said.

The two sides reviewed bilateral relations and stressed taking advantage of all capacities for developing ties with regard to important regional issues, namely developments in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria and the Persian Gulf, Morteza Damanpak Jami wrote in his Twitter account on Tuesday.

The senior diplomats reviewed developments regarding the upcoming negotiations in Vienna, the necessity of lifting illegal sanctions against Iran, and all parties' compliance with implementation of Iran nuclear deal, as well as the importance of diplomacy.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:51
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:12
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:22
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:50

87. "O my sons! go ye and enquire about Joseph and his brother, and never give up hope of Allah's Soothing Mercy: truly no one despairs of Allah's Soothing Mercy, except those who have no faith."

Surah 12. Joseph (87)

Brazil Accounts for 60% of Iran's Basic Goods Imports

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Iran-Brazil Joint Chamber of Commerce says Iran almost imports 60 percent of its basic goods from Brazil and the country is keen to expand its trade with this Latin American country.

Speaking to ILNA, Seyed Fakhreddin Amerian said that Iran imports over \$5b worth of basic goods with the maximum 4 percent tariff levied by Brazil but the country's exports to Brazil are less than \$100m, adding that Brazilian Government gets more than 100 percent tariffs from Iran's exports to this Latin American state. He noted he has demanded a bill to be approved by Iran's Majlis to adjust custom tariffs based on the preferential tariff.

The tariff comes from a small number of goods exported from Iran to Brazil, where Iran imports more than 50 to 60 percent of its imports of basic goods from Brazil.

Touching open the inauguration of the office of the joint chamber in Sao Paulo, Amerian said that the office was inaugurated last week in presence representatives of Majlis and an Iranian trade delegation.

He went on to say that Iran imports more than \$5 billion worth of basic goods from Brazil, but Tehran's exports to the country are less than \$100 million.



Amerian also noted that the chamber is seeking to clear goods with Brazil as well as to amend the tariff status between the two countries.

He noted that by reducing the custom tariff the trade balance will be much better and logical and Iran can export goods like petrochemicals, gas oil, pistachio, date and raisins that Brazil requires.

He went on to say that Iranian agriculture Minister supports extraterrestrial cultivation by the private sector in Brazil and the ministry gives guarantee to buy the products of from those who invests in cultivation in Brazil. He stated that the minister has also vowed to remove all hurdles in way of trade between the two states.

Amerian also said that some of the slaughtered meat in Brazil is exported to Iran and Brazil has good areas for cultivation of corn and soya that Iranians can cooperate in those fields in Brazil. He reiterated that the main goal behind the formation of this chamber is to boost direct trade between Iran and Brazil and to eliminate the third party countries or middlemen.

He also stated that Iran is in a condition that it can have the most barter trade with countries like Brazil which provides 60 percent of Iran's basic goods and the joint chamber seeks to materialize it.

Iran-Austria Economic Cooperation Will Be Facilitated

TEHRAN (IP) - Hamed Forouzan, Director for International Affairs of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare of Iran, stated at the Iran-Austria Economic Cooperation Summit: "The purpose of holding this summit is to facilitate relations between the economic and trade complexes of Iran and Austria."

Emphasizing the capacities of Iran Social Security Investment Company (SSIC, also known by its Persian acronym SHASTA), Forouzan said: "We officially invite the Austrian Ambassador to visit the holdings of SHASTA's subsidiaries."

"The draft memorandum of cooperation in the activities related to the ministry and Austria is ready, which we hope will be signed and operational," he added.

PGSOC Wins Medal for "Green Management"

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Manager of HSSD of Persian Gulf Star Oil Company (PGSOC) says the company achieved to win the medal of green management for efficient using of resources and reducing maximum pollution.

Mehrdad Dehdari announced this achievement and said the company by implementing the laws of the sixth five-year development plan of the country has acted in compliance with its social responsibilities in the field of environment protection, reducing the amount of emission of the greenhouse gases and it has put on agenda noble approaches.

He added that one of the measures which have been put on the agenda in the oil industries recently is the green management, adding that green management means converging the economic responsibilities with environmental responsibilities and this approach can be weighed and controlled in some dimensions.

Dehdari pointed to developing efficient using of resources in the industry is from the headquarter to the operation as one of the fields in green management, adding that fields like energy, water, administrative equipment, transportation, water waste and raw materials have always been monitored and optimized at the PGSOC.

He reiterated that PGSOC with reliance on the green management approach with efficient using of resources and maximum reduction of pollution has won this medal of green management this year.

Dehdari noted that the company has always been after reducing environmental pollution by implementing projects in this regard and the company also does its best to observe its social responsibilities especially in protecting the environment.

He reiterated that the company observes all the environmental indexes in providing water for its refinery and return of the consumed water into the sea.



Tehran, Minsk to Expand Cooperation in Eurasian Region



TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian agriculture minister said that cooperation between Iran and Belarus will be promoted in the Eurasian region.

Seyyed Javad Sadatinejad made the remarks in his meeting with the Ambassador of the Republic of Belarus to Iran Dmitry Koltsov in Tehran on Monday during which he also said that the two countries of Iran and Belarus can cooperate with each other in the Eurasian region using the common capacities and capabilities existing between the two states.

Turning to the impact of oppressive foreign sanctions on relations between the two countries, Sadatinejad added that Iran can use the capabilities of Belarus in such fields as fisheries, agriculture, agricultural inputs, equipment and machinery.

Sanctions made it impossible for Iran to have access to heavy tractors, he said and expressed hope that these problems would be resolved by developing bilateral relations.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Iranian agriculture minister pointed to the veterinary medicines and stated that the two countries can share their experience in the field of producing medicines so that the two nations are able to work together in producing those medicines that they have to currently import them in order to be self-sufficient.

Ambassador of Belarus to Iran, for his turn, said that his country welcomes expansion of relations with Iran in the field of agriculture, adding that developing and broadening economic ties between the two countries is the main task of the embassy.

The diplomat added that "Belarus has good capabilities in the fields of manufacturing agricultural equipment such as tractors, combine harvesters and other agricultural machinery, and we need to cooperate with Iranian companies in this field."

He expressed hope that an interim agreement to establish a free trade zone in the Eurasian region between Iran and Belarus will become a permanent deal next year.

New Gov't Determined to Broaden Interactions With Regional States

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of culture and Islamic guidance said in a meeting here on Monday with Nezamoddin Zahedi, Tajikistan's ambassador to Iran, that having broader interaction in various cultural and artistic fields with regional countries is President Raisi's government's definite policy.

Mohammad Mehdi Esmaili said in the meeting that the two Iranian and Tajik nations talk the same language with each other needless of translators, or interpreters, which shows the depth of the two nations' cultural commonalities.

"Our people consider the Tajik government as a brother of theirs, and the Tajin nation as a friendly neighbor," added Esmaili, arguing that Iran and Tajikistan's joint ancient culture is a cause for pride for both nations and the Iranians have always felt intimacy and closeness to Tajikistan.

Esmaili said that all the Persian speaking countries in Central Asia and the region, including Tajikistan, are particularly in the focus of attention for the current Iranian government, "since we are all in a single linguistic complex and this singularity shows we have lots of reasons for joint cultural interactions."

"The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance both welcomes and supports holding Tajikistan Culture Week in Tehran and the other Iranian cities," said head of the country's Arts Council.

He, meanwhile, proposed cultural cooperation in



such fields as cinema, music, fine arts, dramatic arts, and literature.

The minister also referred to President Raisi's first foreign trip to Tajikistan, in which resuming cultural and artistic relations were highlighted, and announced that the Culture Ministry is ready for expansion of cultural ties with Tajikistan.

The member of Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution also referred to possible joint cultural programs, such as Nowruz celebrations, "as a shared historical heritage" for all Persian speaking nations that belongs to them all.

Tajikistan's Ambassador Zahedi, too, in the meeting referred to the great cultural and artistic commonalities between the two nations, expressing hope that Iran and Tajikistan's cultural cooperation will from now on expand more than ever before in practice.

He said that President Raisi's visit of Tajikistan marked the opening of marked the opening of a new chapter in bilateral cooperation, especially in cultural and artistic fields, adding: Such cooperation must be in the framework of signed memoranda of understanding (MOUs).

Tajikistan's ambassador also spoke about the holding of Tajikistan Culture Week in Tehran, inclusive of poem nights, screening of movies and music, stressing that holding such activities in Tehran will lead to putting the train of bilateral cultural relation on its rails.

Tehran, Paris Conduct Joint Archaeological Excavations

TEHRAN (IP) - The third round of archeological excavations in the Viran Shahr (Ruined city) of North Khorasan province was carried out in a memorandum of cooperation between the Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Research Institute and the Louvre Museum in Paris.

Meysam Labbaf Khaniki, the Iranian head of the Archaeological Board, said: "The excavations have reached important results about the architecture of the Parthian and Sassanid era in the northern region of Khorasan."

Labbaf Khaniki added: "In addition to architectural remains, significant amounts of Parthian and Sassanid period pottery have been obtained from the area." Archaeological studies in the historical site started in 2020.

The historical site of Viran Shahr is located about 10 km north of the city of Faruj and in the east of North Khorasan province.

This region, which is home to the Atrak springs, has long been the focus of human societies, and the passage of one of the most critical arteries connecting East to West has added to the biological importance of that region.

The first chapter of the archeological studies ended with the guidance of a group consisting of archaeologists from the University of Tehran and the Louvre Museum in Paris in November last year.

Over 136k Tons of Alumina Powder Produced

TEHRAN (MNA)- Iran has produced 136,640 tons of alumina powder during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 22).

As reported, the figure shows two percent decline as compared to the output in the seven-month period of the previous year, which was 139,307 tons.

Aluminum oxide, which is commonly called alumina, is an inert, odorless, white amorphous material often used in industrial ceramics. Alumina is an important ceramic material for industrial applications. The numerous fields of application range from construction materials, to filling materials, as well as abrasives and catalysts.

Iran, Georgia Discuss Persian Gulf-Black Sea Corridor

TEHRAN (IRNA) - A senior official in Iran's Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization said on Tuesday that Iran and Georgia were holding talks to solve transportation issues and accelerate signing the agreement to create the Persian Gulf-Black Sea corridor.

Javad Hedayati, the director-general of Transit Office in Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, said that Iran and Georgia had held a two-day meeting last month, adding that such meetings are of significance in solving transportation and trade issues and removing operational ambiguities and obstacles.

Hedayati highlighted three-decade long record of international transportation agreements between Iran and Georgia, terming it as a successful example of cooperation and partnership in regional transportation.

In the meeting last month, according to Hedayati, Iranian and Georgian officials discussed various transportation-related issues, including border and traffic ones, the necessity of accelerating the Persian Gulf-Black Sea corridor agreement, and how the two countries could use each other's ports.

Mutual support for membership in transportation conventions and unions and the topics of the next six-party meeting of Armenia, Azerbaijan Republic, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, and Iran were also discussed, as said by the official.

Dutch PM Lashes Out at "Idiots"

AMSTERDAM (Dispatches) - Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte lashed out at "idiot" rioters who rampaged through cities across the Netherlands this weekend when protests against coronavirus restrictions turned violent.

More than 100 people were arrested during three nights of violence, which saw police open fire at rioters in Rotterdam on Friday. "This was pure violence disguised as protest," Rutte said in response to the worst disturbances since a full lockdown led to widespread disorder in January.

"There is a lot of unrest in society because we have been dealing with the misery of corona for so long. But I will never accept idiots using pure violence just because they are unhappy."



Romania's Ciuca Designated PM

BUCHAREST (Dispatches) - Romania's centrist Liberals and the leftist Social Democrats finalized their grand coalition and the country's president nominated retired army general Nicolae Ciuca as prime minister, hoping to end a two-month long political stalemate.

Romania, one of the European Union's poorest members, has been in political paralysis since a centrist coalition government splintered in September, threatening economic recovery and efforts to cut large budget and trade deficits.

"We've been working to create this solid coalition, and this government that is able to ensure Romania's stability ... Romanians are waiting for solutions to fight the impact of pandemic and the energy crisis," Ciuca told reporters.



Europe Urged to Resist Belarus Migrants' "Blackmail"



BRUZGI (Dispatches) - Europe must not be blackmailed into accepting thousands of migrants stranded on its border with Belarus, Austria said, after Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko pressed the bloc to let them in after months of growing tension.

Lukashenko, who denies European Union allegations he fomented the crisis, said he did not want a cross-border clash as that could lead to war, while reiterating that the EU should accept some migrants while Belarus repatriates others.

Poland's border guard said Belarusian forces were still ferrying migrants flown in from the Middle East to the EU frontier, despite clearing camps near the border last week and moving many of the migrants to a warehouse.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, whose country, like other EU neighbors of Belarus, has sent armed reinforcements to the border, said on Sunday that the crisis might be a prelude to "something much worse". On Monday Lukashenko said an escalation could be catastrophic.

"We don't want confrontation. We don't need it. Because we understand that if we go too far, war is unavoidable,"

Lukashenko was quoted as saying by state-owned Belta news agency. "And that will be a catastrophe. We understand this perfectly well. We don't want any kind of flare-up."

Exiled Belarus opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya urged the bloc to get tougher on Minsk, which the EU says flies people in and pushes them to cross via Poland, Lithuania and Latvia in response to sanctions over Lukashenko's crushing of protests against his disputed re-election last year. read more

The plan proposed by Belarus last week would entail EU countries taking in migrants, while Minsk would send another 5,000 back home, and Lukashenko said Belarus was preparing a second migrant repatriation flight at the end of this month.

Faced with an initial rebuff from the bloc, Lukashenko said on Monday he must insist Germany - the preferred destination of many migrants - take in a number of them. Germany, and others, quickly rejected his renewed call.

"The idea of having a humanitarian corridor to Germany for 2,000 migrants is not a solution that is acceptable to Germany or the EU," a government spokesman said on Monday, which Austrian Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg echoed in a joint news conference with Tsikhanouskaya.

"The EU must not give in to blackmail from Lukashenko. We have to respond united and very clearly to this state-sponsored hybrid attack on the European Union," Schallenberg said.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda, speaking to reporters after meeting with Lithuanian troops deployed at the border with Belarus, said he was reassured that Germany was not trying to agree any separate deals with Minsk.

Covid Riots Paralyze France's Guadeloupe



POINTE-A-PITRE (Dispatches) - School cancelled, barricades on the street and pharmacies trashed: days of rioting against measures to curb the spread of Covid-19 have brought normal routines on France's Caribbean island of Guadeloupe to a standstill.

Paris authorities sent elite police and counter-terrorism officers to Guadeloupe over the weekend in a bid to quell the violence, the latest Covid-related headache in France's overseas territories for the government of President Emmanuel Macron.

Vaccination rates in France's overseas territories, in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and the Pacific, have generally been far lower than those on the mainland and there has been repeated unrest over anti-virus measures.

Protests in Guadeloupe, a territory of roughly 400,000 people, broke out after an announcement that coronavirus jabs would be mandatory for all healthcare workers, with the demonstrations marred by clashes and looting.

Overnight Sunday, police arrested 38 people after curfew violators looted and torched shops and pharmacies, and two security forces were injured.

Macron acknowledged the gravity of the situation and urged local politicians not to mix the pressing issue of Covid with colonial-era grievances and also longstanding complaints the territory is economically neglected by Paris.

"We will not give in to lies, distorting of information and the exploitation by some people of this situation," he told reporters on a visit to the northern French city of Amiens, calling the situation "very explosive".

"We do not play with health and we will not let the health of the French be played with for the sake of political infighting," he added.

Bangladesh Demonstrators Demand Foreign Treatment for Ailing Ex-PM

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh police fired tear gas and around 20 people were injured Monday as thousands of opposition demonstrators demanded the government allow ailing ex-premier Khaleda Zia to fly abroad for treatment.

Zia, 76, arch-rival of current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, was admitted to the critical care unit of a Dhaka hospital early this month after her health worsened, one of her doctors told AFP.

She is currently barred by a court from travelling overseas after being convicted on graft charges in 2018.

"She is critically ill and now urgently needs treatment in developed countries such as the United States, Germany and Britain. There is no treatment for her in the region," doctor A.Z.M. Zahid Hossain said.

Organizers said a protest Monday outside Dhaka's National Press Club drew more than 15,000 activists and supporters of Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), but police put the number at around 7,000.

Hundreds of police were deployed. The BNP, which was last in power from 2001 to 2006, also staged demonstrations in dozens of other cities and towns across the country of 169 million people.

In the northern district of Natore "about 20 people were injured including three journalists" when BNP activists clashed with police who tried to thwart a procession, a police inspector told AFP.

"They (BNP activists) threw rocks at police, who fired tear gas and (rubber bullets) from shotguns to disperse them," he said.

Hossain, who is a vice president of the BNP, said Zia was suffering from liver disease, chronic kidney disease and a heart complaint in addition to her existing conditions of rheumatoid arthritis and diabetes.

Hasina last week appeared to reject her family and party's pleas for treatment abroad.

"I have done whatever I can for Khaleda Zia. Now the law will decide the next course of action," Hasina told a press briefing.

Five Dead After SUV Plows Into Wisconsin Christmas Parade

WAUKESHA (Dispatches) - A speeding SUV plowed into dozens of people, including children, during a Christmas parade in a small Wisconsin city on Sunday, leaving a scene of chaos and carnage in its wake, with at least five people killed and about 40 injured.

Police Chief Dan Thompson told reporters that one person was in custody and a sport utility vehicle had been recovered after the incident in Waukesha, about 20 miles (32 km) west of Milwaukee. The number of dead and injured could change, authorities said.

The suspect appeared to be fleeing another incident when the vehicle sped through the parade route, CNN reported on Monday, citing law enforcement sources. Although the investigation was in its early stages, authorities have found no connection to terrorism, the sources told CNN.

The incident also appeared to be unrelated to Friday's not-guilty verdict in the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse, who was charged with the fatal shooting of two men and the wounding of a third during racial justice protests in nearby Kenosha, Wisconsin, CNN reported.

A video posted online showed a red sport utility vehicle driving at speed alongside and into the parade, appearing to run over more than a dozen people before crowds ran from sidewalks to offer assistance.

An officer fired shots at the vehicle in an attempt to stop the carnage, Thompson said. Another video on

social media appeared to show police firing on the vehicle as it crashed through street barriers. Police did not believe shots had been fired from the vehicle, Thompson added, contrary to earlier reports.

Jodi Singsime, a 42-year-old nurse, took shelter in a store with members of her family before going out to help the injured. "I heard and saw the people being hit, but what you could do more than seeing is hearing, and just that sound was insane," she said.

She choked up as she described coming across a small boy in the road:

"I felt his neck for a pulse, and he had one, but his eyes were barely open and his face - all I can remember is his sweet little innocent face was purple. He wasn't really with us." Another family had planned to march in the parade with their Catholic church, but Belen Santamaria, a 39-year-old factory worker, woke up on Sunday with a backache, so the family watched the procession from the sidewalk instead.

"The SUV came by at full speed," she said. "Then I started to hear people screaming."

She hid in a restaurant with her 3-year-old daughter while her husband, 39-year-old delivery worker Jesus Ochoa, ran to try to help injured people. He said he heard through other members of their church that roughly 10 members of the congregation, both adults and children, were injured.



Duterte Condemns South China Sea Flare-Up

BEIJING (Dispatches)

- Philippines President

Rodrigo Duterte on

Monday condemned

the latest flare-up in

the disputed South China

Sea after Chinese coastguard

ships fired water

cannon at Filipino boats.

Duterte made the remarks

at an Asian regional summit

hosted by Chinese

President Xi Jinping, who

vowed his country would

"never seek hegemony,

and certainly not bully the

small".

China claims almost all

of the waterway, through

which trillions of dollars

in trade passes annually,

with competing claims

from Brunei, Malaysia,

the Philippines, Taiwan

and Vietnam.

Beijing has ignored a

2016 ruling by The Hague-

based Permanent Court

of Arbitration that its

historical claim is without

basis.

Tensions over the

resource-rich sea spiked

last week when Chinese

coastguard vessels fired

water cannon at Philippine



boats delivering supplies to Filipino marines on Second Thomas Shoal, in the contested Spratly Islands.

Manila expressed outrage at the incident, but Beijing said the Philippine boats had entered its waters without permission.

"We abhor the recent event in the Ayungin Shoal and view with grave concern other similar developments," Duterte told the meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and China, using the Filipino name for the shoal.

"This does not speak well of the relations between our nations and our partnership."

Duterte's remarks were unusually strong for a leader who has fostered warmer ties with Beijing since taking power in 2016 in the hope of extracting promised investment and trade.

It is not clear if Xi was participating in the meeting when Duterte was spoke.

For his part, Xi told the gathering "we must jointly maintain the stability of the South China Sea and build the South China Sea into a sea of peace, friendship, and cooperation".

The renewed tensions over the waters have drawn international concern.

The United States on Friday warned China that an armed attack against Philippine public vessels would invite a U.S. response under its treaty obligations to the Southeast Asian nation.

Shanon
(adviser)

Parsian

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S/pool, S
J, balcony
marble fl
fireplace
Fully Furn

Darrou Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
marble floor
green garden
Fully Furn

(\$1400)
Velenjak Apt
140sq.m, 2bdrs
S/pool, S, J, pkg
balcony, & F.F

Farmanieh Apt (\$2200)
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Britain, Persian Gulf States Negotiating Free-Trade Agreement

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Britain and Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) countries are negotiating a free-trade agreement, Britain's investment minister, Gerry Grimstone, said.

A deal will be concluded within 12 months, Grimstone said at a conference in Dubai. The PGCC is already an important trading partner for Britain, with almost 22 billion pounds (\$29.57 billion) of British exports and bilateral trade worth over 30 billion pounds in 2020, showed a British government website.



Americans' Economic Worries Rise to Pandemic High

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Americans' economic worries rose to a pandemic high this month, according to Gallup, but the level of concern still remains relatively low compared to historical trends.

Twenty-six percent of Americans told Gallup in a new poll that an economic-related concern is the top problem facing the country. Ten percent of those polled said the economy in general is the top problem in the U.S., while 7 percent cited the high cost of living/inflation and 5 percent said unemployment/jobs. Concerns over the federal budget deficit/federal budget, the gap between rich and poor, wage issues, fuel/oil prices and lack of money each received one percent in the poll.

By contrast, 74 percent of respondents named a non-economic issue as the top problem the U.S. is facing. Republicans and independents were more likely to cite an economic issue as the top problem, according to Gallup.

Thirty percent of Republicans and 29 percent of independents pointed to an economic problem when asked about the most pressing issue facing the U.S., compared to only 18 percent of Democrats.

This month was the first time since January 2017 that a double-digit percentage of Americans cited the economy in general as the most important problem facing the U.S., according to Gallup. In September and October of this year, only 6 percent of Americans said it was the top issue.

Respondents citing inflation as the top issue has also increased amid the pandemic. Just 1 percent pointed to inflation as a leading problem in September, which rose to 5 percent in October. The Labor Department released new statistics earlier this month showing that inflation is at a 30-year high.

The last time at least 7 percent of Americans said inflation was a leading problem in the U.S. was in April 2001, according to Gallup.

While the level of economic concern in the U.S. rose to a pandemic high this month, it is still relatively low in the context of Gallup's historical trend data, which includes numbers beginning in 1991.

Economic concern in the U.S. hit a peak in February 2009, reaching 86 percent, when the country was grappling with the Great Recession and financial crisis.

The new polling numbers come after President Biden signed his \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure package into law, which includes investments in projects like roads, bridges, broadband, water and rail. Congressional Democrats are now looking to send their social spending and climate package to Biden's desk, which includes funding for health care and education, among other initiatives.

That bill, which comes in at roughly \$2 trillion, is causing concern among Republicans that inflation will skyrocket if it is signed into law. Democrats, however, are arguing that the bill will serve as a solution to the rising inflation in the country.

Gallup surveyed 815 adults in the U.S. through telephone interviews between Nov. 1 and Nov. 16. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Saudi Holds Top Oil Supplier to China in October

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia held its position as the biggest supplier of crude oil to China for an 11th month in a row in October, with volumes up 19.5% from a year ago, customs data showed.

Saudi oil arrivals totalled 7.1 million tons, or 1.67 million barrels per day (bpd), data from the General Administration of Customs showed, which is 19.5% higher than 1.4 million bpd a year and compares with 1.94 million bpd in September.

Inflows from Russia, including pipeline oil, inched up by 1.3% from a year ago to 6.6 million tonnes last month, or 1.56 million barrels per day (bpd). That compared with 1.49 million bpd in September.

The growth in Russian supplies, primarily of its flagship oil ESPO blend, followed China's release of fresh import quotas in August and October that allowed independent plants to lift purchases of one of their favorite grades.

Still, China's overall October crude oil imports fell to the lowest in three years amid Beijing's broad cap on independent refiners' imports.



Supplies from Brazil were down 53.2% from a year earlier, while those from the United States slumped by 91.8%.

Reuters reported China's imports of Iranian oil have held above half a million barrels per day on average between August and October, as buyers judge that getting crude at cheap prices outweighs any risks from busting U.S. sanctions.

Most of these barrels were passed on as exports from Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Malaysia, weighing on competing supplies from Brazil and West Africa.

Official data has consistently shown China has imported zero oil from Iran or Venezuela since start of 2021, as national oil companies stayed on the sidelines on worries over U.S. sanctions.

Pakistan, IMF Reach Agreement On \$6b Loan



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - The IMF, in a bailout package in 2019, pledged to provide the support under Extended Fund Facility (EFF) when Pakistan's economy was in a critical stage and badly needed assistance to meet the balance of payment challenge.

Cash-strapped Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have reached a staff-level agreement to complete the sixth review of an assistance package needed to restore the stalled \$ 6 billion program.

The IMF, in a bailout package in 2019, pledged to provide the support under Extended Fund Facility (EFF) when Pakistan's economy was in a critical stage and badly needed assistance to meet the balance of payment challenge.

The sixth review of the facility has been in recess since April and with it the loan facility, creating doubts in the mind of investors.

The IMF announced in a statement on Monday that staff-level understanding is subject to approval by the Executive Board, following the implementation of prior actions, notably on fiscal and institutional reforms.

"Available data suggests that a strong economic recovery has gained hold, benefiting from the authorities' multifaceted policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic that has helped contain its human and macroeconomic ramifications," the IMF said.

The approval of the agreement will make available 750 million in Special Drawing Rights (SDR), equivalent to \$1,059 million, it said.

The SDR is a basket of mixed currencies made available to member countries of the IMF.

In its statement following discussions with Pakistani officials, the IMF acknowledged the country's progress in implementing the program, "despite a difficult environment".

The IMF also acknowledged Pakistan's progress in improving its anti-money laundering and combatting the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) regime but it said that the additional time was needed to strengthen its effectiveness.

It predicted that Pakistan's economic growth rate would reach or go beyond 4% in the current fiscal year and 4.5% in fiscal year 23, adding that talks with Pakistan officials also focused on policies to achieve sustainable and resilient growth.

The restoration of the program will provide over \$ 1 billion to Pakistan, leading to release of about \$ 3 billion in over two years.

It is far less than what had been agreed in May 2019 if the program had not been derailed first in January 2020 and then in June this year.

S. Korea to Provide \$100m Loan for Post-Covid Recovery

DHAKA (Dispatches) - The South Korean government has recently approved a concessional loan of \$100 million from the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) to the Bangladesh government to help the recovery of Bangladesh's economy hit by the corona pandemic.

Earlier, in December 2020, Korea provided \$50 million loan as budgetary support to Bangladesh from the EDCG, which is Korea's development financing program for assisting the socio-economic development of developing countries.

The latest approval of \$100 million loan is the second provision of this type of concessional loan and also the first EDCF loan to be implemented under the new EDCF Framework Agreement for the years 2021 through 2025 that was signed between the two Governments on 24 October 2021.

According to the Agreement, the Korean government will provide up to \$700 million as concessional loans to the government of Bangladesh for the five-year period.

The new concessional loan of 100 million U.S. dollars will be used to implement several projects aimed at advancing public finance management system and improving small and medium-sized businesses struggling from the repercussion of the pandemic, read a press statement.

The amount would be released as soon as the Loan Agreement is signed between the Korea EXIM Bank and the Bangladesh Government which is expected to be done within the year.

Bangladesh is the second largest recipient of the EDCF loans worldwide in aggregate amount. So far, the Republic of Korea has funded 24 development projects of Bangladesh with total amount of \$1.2 billion through the EDCF, added the statement.

Japan, India Working on Release of Oil Stocks

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japanese and Indian officials are working on ways to release national reserves of crude oil in tandem with the United States and other major economies to dampen prices, seven government sources with knowledge of the plans told Reuters.

U.S. President Joe Biden has asked China, India, South Korea and Japan for a coordinated oil stocks release as U.S. gasoline prices soar and his approval ratings plummet ahead of next year's mid-term congressional elections.

The request came after the U.S. government was unable to persuade OPEC+ to pump more oil with major producers arguing the world was not short of crude.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida signalled his readiness to release stocks over the weekend, read more

Three Indian government sources said on Monday they were holding consultations with the United States on the release of oil from strategic reserves.

Japan, the world's fourth-biggest oil buyer, is restricted on how it can act with its reserves - made up of both private and public stocks - which typically can only be used in times of shortage.

One Japanese source said the government was looking into releasing from the portion of the state-held stocks outside the minimum amount required as a legal workaround.

Japanese officials are also looking at private stocks that are part of the national reserve, which some advisers argue can be released without restrictions, a second source said.

Japanese oil companies' reserves have been tapped during the 1991 Persian Gulf War and following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami disasters.

Brent crude was down 0.7% on Monday due to impending lockdowns in Europe and plans to release oil.

Japan's oil reserve held 145 days' worth of daily petroleum consumption at the end of September, according to official data, well above the minimum 90 days required by law.

Japanese private companies including refiners hold about 175 million barrels of crude and oil products as part of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR), enough for around 90 days' consumption, according to state agency Joggmec, also exceeding the minimum 70 days' requirement.

India holds about 26.5 million barrels of oil in the SPR.

Turkish Consumer Confidence In Economy Down in November



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish consumer confidence in the economy declined in November compared to last month, according to data published by the country's statistical authority.

The index is a vital gauge of the economy's overall performance, indicating people's sentiments on financial standing and the general economic situation, along with expenditure and saving tendencies.

The consumer confidence index was 71.1 this month, down from 76.8 in October, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) said in a statement.

All sub-indices deteriorated in the month with the financial situation expectation worsening the most.

The financial situation expectation index over the next 12-month period dropped 8.8% month-on-month to 68.9 in November.

The general economic situation expectation index fell 8.1% to 68.2 this month, while the index for the financial situation of household dropped 7.5% to 56.1.

"Assessment on spending money on durable goods index over next 12 months compared to the past 12 months period which was 96.6 in October decreased by 5.4% and became 91.4 in November," it said.

The consumer confidence index is calculated from survey results and evaluated within a range of 0-200, indicating an optimistic outlook when the index is above 100 and a pessimistic one when it is below.

Croatia Seeking to Deepen Ties With Iran

HAMEDAN (IRNA) - The ambassador of Croatia to Iran said on Tuesday that his country was trying to deepen economic and political ties with Iran although the sanctions had faded good thoughts and objectives they had on this area.

Speaking in a meeting with economic agents in Hamedan Province in western Iran, Drago Štambuk said that the coronavirus pandemic, in addition to the

sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran, caused problems in Iran-Croatia relations, but he added that they hoped the deficiencies would be remedied.

He pointed to Croatian president's trip to Iran in 2016, saying that representative of 100 Croatian companies accompanied her during the visit that lead to signing of several MoUs in different areas and the Croatian government follows up implementation of these agreements.



UN Warns Afghan Banking System on Brink of Collapse

KABUL (Dispatches) - Afghanistan's banks have fallen into disarray following the Taliban's takeover of the country, a UN report says. The world body has called for urgent measures to prevent the banking system from a "colossal" collapse.

The Afghan financial system is starting at a collapse within months as it reels from a worsening cash liquidity crunch and a spike in bad loans, a new report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said.

The UN body called for urgent "prompt and decisive" action, warning that the economic cost of a collapse and the resulting social fallout would be "colossal."

Afghans have been facing an acute cash shortage since the Taliban's takeover of Kabul in August that led to international sanctions. The latter saw the country's international reserves frozen and most foreign grants suspended. The liquidity crunch forced the Taliban regime to cap weekly bank deposit withdrawals.

Abdallah al Dardari, head of UNDP in Afghanistan, said the collapse of the financial system was slowing down the fast-diminishing economic activity in the country and could undermine international aid efforts as "banking is also one of the most important connectors of the country to the outside world."

"Without the banking sector, there's no humanitarian solution for Afghanistan," he said in a statement. "Do we really want to see Afghans completely isolated?"

Total banking system deposits in the country fell to 194 billion afghanis (€1.8 billion, \$2 billion) in September from 268 billion afghanis at the end of 2020, the report found. The deposits are expected to fall further to 165 billion afghanis by the end of 2021, a drop of about 40% from last year.

Bad loans have also been climbing in what is a relatively small credit market. Nonperforming loans soared to 57% in September from around 30% at the end of 2020.

The current crisis has prompted banks to stop extending new loans, worsening the predicament, especially for smaller firms.

"In addition to the decline in economic activity, problems in the banking system will further reduce MSMEs' [Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises] probability of survival, which is critical for the Afghan economy and people," the report said.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects the Afghan economy to shrink by up to 30% this year.

The Afghan financial system, while still underdeveloped, had been growing steadily since the ouster of the Taliban in 2001 when the banking sector had virtually collapsed.

The banking sector has 12 commercial lenders, including six private commercial banks, one private Islamic bank, three state-owned banks and two foreign bank



branches. Private domestic banks accounted for roughly two-thirds of overall banking sector assets at the end of 2020.

The majority of the banks' over 400 branches are in the capital Kabul, Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif.

The banking system is heavily reliant on dollars, with about 60% of bank deposits made in foreign currencies.

While the Taliban have ordered banks to reopen after weeks of closure following the Taliban's victory, the lenders are struggling to find enough cash to service their customers as dollar inflows have stopped and worried Afghans stash cash for even worse times.

Al Dardari told Reuters news agency that of the \$4 billion worth of afghanis in the economy only about \$500,000 worth is in circulation.

"The rest is sitting under the mattress or under the pillow because people are afraid," he said.

Among measures to prevent a collapse of the Afghan banking system, the UNDP has proposed a deposit insurance scheme, adequate liquidity for the banking system to meet both short- and medium-term needs and credit guarantees plus loan repayment delay options.

"The longer the delay in the full restoration of the financial and banking systems, the longer the recovery period, due to the subsequent lack of confidence by international markets," the UNDP report said. "This erosion is hard to repair and could take decades."

Australia to Allow Skilled Workers, Students Entry From December

SYDNEY (Dispatches)- Australia will allow foreign visa holders to enter the country from the start of December, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Monday, as it takes further steps to restart international travel and support the economy.

Australia shut its international border in May 2020 and allowed only restricted numbers of citizens and permanent residents to enter in a bid to curtail the spread of COVID-19.

The rules were relaxed in recent weeks to allow foreign family members of citizens to enter, and Morrison said this will be scaled up from December 1 to allow vaccinated students, business visa holders and refugees to arrive.

"The return of skilled workers and students to Australia is a major milestone in our pathway back," Morrison told reporters in the capital, Canberra.

Australia will also allow in vaccinated tourists from South Korea and Japan from December 1, he said.

The return of international students, who are worth about 35 billion Australian dollars (\$25bn) a year to the Australian economy, will be a significant boost for the education sector. Many Australian universities have come to rely on international students and the border closure led many higher education facilities to lay off hundreds of staff.

Annual Inflation...

FROM PAGE 1

The figures showed that month-on-month consumer price index for food and beverage had increased 3.1% in November, down from a surge reported in October. Month-on-month inflation rate rose 2.1% for non-food and services in the same month, according to the data.

The Iranian statistics agency normally updates the

CPI measured on a point-to-point scale which reflects changes in prices once compared between two similar months in two consecutive years.

The agency figures showed that Iran's point-to-point inflation rate had reached 35.7% in November, meaning that households had spent 35.7% more on goods and services compared to November 2020.

Iran Gets Sanctions...

FROM PAGE 1

Since the Taliban regained power in Afghanistan, the US and its allies have imposed sanctions on the Central Asian country and deprived Afghans of any aid and assistance on the pretext of pressuring the Taliban.

However, human rights activists maintain that economic sanctions generally do not punish the rulers, but rather, hurt the population, lead to mass starvation, and fuel extremism in the targeted country.

Wallace's Tuesday remarks were a reply to an earlier tweet by Iran's EU mission, which had urged the international community to shoulder responsibility for the Afghan people's situation.

"Winter is coming and Afghan refugee crisis is intensifying, putting the neighboring countries under increasing pressure," the Iranian mission wrote.

"Preventing a humanitarian disaster in #Afghanistan and among the #refugee population is a shared global responsibility. Iran needs concrete int'l support," it added.

Winter is coming and Afghan refugee crisis is intensifying, putting the neighboring countries under increasing pressure. Preventing a humanitarian disaster in #Afghanistan and among the #refugee population is a shared global responsibility.

"It's so infuriating because this suffering is man-made," he added.

Gov't Working With...

FROM PAGE 1

The President described the Basij as one of the most important components of the country's power and said: "The pervasive current of the Basij has become the key to protecting the Islamic system due to its responsibility, risk-taking and presence in various stages."

He described the Basij programs and actions in various fields of social, cultural, scientific, technological, resistance economy and especially civil engineering and construction in deprived areas as valuable solutions to solve people's problems and said: "The government is determined to use Basij's capacity to solve people's

concerns and problems."

The President stressed the importance of efforts and planning to revive and strengthen the spirit of hope and trust among the people and said: "The enemy's strategy is to spread despair and hopelessness in society, and in this situation it is necessary to put all the system's capacities together for creating a change in the lives of the people and solving the problems of the country, give the people hope for the future, and in this regard, the government is ready to support with all its might."

Pfizer Says Covid Shot 100% Effective in Adolescents After 4 Months



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Pfizer and BioNTech said Monday their Covid-19 vaccine remained 100 percent effective in children 12 to 15 years old, four months after the second dose.

The companies said that the new data, which involved 2,228 trial participants, will help support their applications for full approval in the United States and worldwide.

No serious safety concerns were observed in individuals with at least six months of follow-up after the second dose.

"As the global health community works to increase the number of vaccinated people around the world, these additional data provide further confidence in our vaccine's safety and effectiveness profile in adolescents," said Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla in a statement.

"This is especially important as we see rates of COVID-19 climbing in this age group in some regions, while vaccine uptake has slowed. We look forward to sharing these data with the FDA and other regulators."

The vaccine was granted "emergency use authorization" for adolescents by the US in May and the companies plan to soon seek full approval. The vaccine is currently only fully approved in people aged 16 and older.

Among the 2,228 participants, there were 30 confirmed symptomatic Covid cases without evidence of prior infection, all in the placebo group.

This corresponds to a vaccine efficacy of 100 percent. Efficacy was consistently high across gender, race, obesity levels and comorbidity status.

The main safety concern among this age group is vaccine-linked myocarditis (heart inflammation) in males.

But such cases are very rare, and the benefits of vaccination continue to strongly outweigh the risks, data has shown. Covid itself can cause myocarditis, both more often and a more severe form.

U.S. Hegemony...

FROM PAGE 1

"Mr Biden has suggested that withdrawal was necessary in order to focus on meeting the bigger challenges from Russia and China. I hope he is serious about this... In 2022, the administration needs to redeploy both resources and the attention of policymakers to deter geopolitical rivals and engage with allies," Fukuyama said.



He further referred to polarization within the American society, saying it started over conventional policy issues like taxes and abortion, but has since metastasized into a bitter fight over cultural identity.

The COVID-19 pandemic, he added, served America's divisions, with social distancing, mask-wearing and vaccinations being seen not as public-health measures but as political markers.

Meanwhile, Fukuyama stressed that the world has been reverting to a more normal state of multi-polarity, with China, Russia, India, Europe and other centers gaining power relative to America.

"Yet in truth, the end of the American era had come much earlier. The long-term sources of American weakness and decline are more domestic than international. The country will remain a great power for many years, but just how influential it will be depends on its ability to fix its internal problems, rather than its foreign policy," he said.

"The United States is not likely to regain its earlier hegemonic status, nor should it aspire to. What it can hope for is to sustain, with like-minded countries, a world order friendly to democratic values. Whether it can do this will depend on recovering a sense of national identity and purpose at home."

Actually what Fukuyama is saying is what the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei and many Iranian officials and freedom-loving personalities in the world had said earlier but the Westerners and especially the Americans have not taken it seriously but it seems they are not feeling the heat and danger of collapse and the U.S. may follow the path that the former Soviet Union went in the 1990s and collapsed.

Signs of the U.S. hegemony and grandeur collapse emerge one after the other, and it makes the world and especially anti-arrogance nations satisfied of getting rid of another world arrogant country.

The U.S., which was once known as the symbol of democracy and used to boast about liberty and democracy, on Sunday was added to an annual list of "backsliding" democracies for the first time, a downward trend that began in 2019 and has deteriorated since, an intergovernmental body said in its new report.

The Stockholm-based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) uses 50 years of democratic indicators for its flagship report on the state of democracy in the world.

"This year we coded the United States as backsliding for the first time, but our data suggest that the backsliding episode began at least in 2019," said the report, Global State of Democracy 2021, which was released on Monday.

The report pointed to the growing polarization in America, as well as voting laws that "disproportionately" affect minorities in a negative way.

Recent domestic unrests and violence and international failures in many issues are really driving the U.S. towards the collapse as this decline is taking momentum and being accelerated, and soon the world will see the full collapse of the U.S. hegemony as Fukuyama has confirmed Supreme Leader's prediction of the U.S. collapse.

Illicit Weapons...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran's UN envoy added that according to the Program of Action, "the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects sustains conflicts, exacerbates violence, contributes to the displacement of civilians, undermines respect for international humanitarian law, impedes the provision of humanitarian assistance to victims of armed conflict and fuels crime and terrorism."

Takht-Ravanchi, however, warned that in all efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, the right of each country to manufacture, export, import and retain such weapons must be fully respected.

"Additionally, the scope of such efforts by the [Security] Council must be limited to those aspects that are related to serious adverse impacts of diversion of, and illicit trade in, small arms and light weapons on the conflict concerned," he added.

The United States, the United Kingdom and some other Western governments have for years been involved in the provision of arms and weaponry to conflict zones across the world, and in particular, West Asia.

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Lyon to Play Behind Closed Doors Pending Investigation

PARIS (Dispatches) - Olympique Lyonnais will have to play their Ligue 1 games behind closed doors pending an investigation into the crowd trouble that prompted Sunday's match against Olympique de Marseille to be abandoned, the French League (LFP) said on Monday.

The game was called off almost two hours after Marseille's Dimitri Payet was hit by a bottle thrown from the Groupama Stadium's stands after five minutes.

Khakimov's Match-Fixing Ban Overturned

LONDON (Dispatches) - Russian Nikita Khakimov's five-year ban from all badminton-related activities on charges of betting and match-fixing has been overturned following a successful appeal, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) said on Monday.

Khakimov, 33, was suspended by the Badminton World Federation (BWF) in December last year after being found guilty of offences relating to "betting, wagering and irregular match results". read more

James Ejected in Lakers Road Win Over Pistons

LOS ANGELES (AFP) - LeBron James was ejected after bloodying Detroit's Isaiah Stewart with a swipe to the face in the Los Angeles Lakers 121-116 victory over the Pistons in Detroit.

The NBA superstar was thrown out for just the second time in his career after striking Stewart in the face while the pair were battling for rebounding position.

Stewart, who was cut above the right eye, tried to confront James. That led to a scrum of players from both teams coming together with several coaches and security people also joining the fray as the Piston player repeatedly tried to get back at James.

The incident occurred with 9:18 remaining in the third quarter and the Lakers trailing 79-67. The Lakers came into the contest on a three-game losing streak and a disappointing 8-9 on the season.

Anthony Davis, who scored a team-high 30 points, came to the defense of his teammate after the game in which the Lakers came from behind to win.

"Everyone in the league knows that (James) isn't a dirty guy. As soon as he did it, he looked back and told him, 'My bad. I didn't try to do it.' I don't know what (Stewart) was trying to do. Nobody on our team, 1-15, was having it," he said.

Stewart was initially whistled for a loose ball foul. Following a video review, James was then slapped with a flagrant foul two and sent to the locker room.

Stewart was handed two technical fouls and thrown out, and Lakers guard Russell Westbrook was called for a technical foul. James finished with 10 points and five assists.

Lakers coach Frank Vogel said he was relieved to see that it didn't escalate further. "Our guys did a good job of protecting



our teammate. You want peacekeepers in those situations. Forming a wall around a teammate and standing up before it turned into something uglier."

The only other time James has been ejected from a game was November 2017 against the Miami Heat.

"His eye was cracked open. He (Stewart) was upset for a reason, but I don't think LeBron is a dirty player," said Pistons coach Dwane Casey.

The Lakers five-game road trip continues Wednesday against Indiana.

Cade Cunningham, the No. 1 overall pick in the entry draft, had 13 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists to become the youngest player in Pistons franchise history with a triple-double.

Elsewhere, Paul George scored a game-high 29 points as the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Luka Doncic-less Dallas Mavericks 97-91 in Southern California.

Reggie Jackson scored 23 points for the Clippers, who won the first game of a back-to-back series between the two Western Conference teams.

Jackson made four threes and Ivica Zubac recorded his fifth double-double of the season with 16 points and 10 rebounds for the Clippers, who snapped a two-game losing skid.

Kristaps Porzingis led Dallas with 25 points and eight rebounds while Jalen Brunson added 20 points and eight assists for the Mavs, who lost their third straight.

Doncic missed his third straight game with knee and ankle problems.

Dallas shot just 20 percent overall from beyond the arc and were outscored 25-15 in the third quarter.

The Clippers parlayed precision perimeter shooting in the third to take a 71-62 lead into the fourth.



LONDON (Dispatches) - Cristiano Ronaldo paid tribute on Monday to "outstanding human being" Ole Gunnar Solskjaer after the Norwegian was sacked as Manchester United manager.

Ronaldo, who returned to Old Trafford in August, has scored nine times in 13 games for United this season but has failed to prevent the club's slide down the Premier League table after a series of embarrassing results.

Solskjaer was sacked on Sunday, less than 24 hours after United's humiliating 4-1 defeat at Watford, which followed chastening home losses to Liverpool and Manchester City.

Ronaldo, 36, was a team-mate of Solskjaer's in his first spell at the club under Alex Ferguson.

"He's been my striker when I first came to Old Trafford and he's been my coach since I came back to Man. United," Ronaldo said on Twitter.

"But most of all, Ole is an outstanding human being. I wish him the best in whatever his life has reserved for him. Good luck, my friend! You deserve it!"

Taylor Scores Five Times as Colts Blast Bills

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Jonathan Taylor rushed for 185 yards and scored a franchise-record five touchdowns as the Indianapolis Colts walloped the Buffalo Bills 41-15 in Orchard Park, N.Y.

Taylor tallied four scores on the ground and another on a pass as Indianapolis (6-5) made a mockery of the point spread that had Buffalo listed as a seven-point favorite. Taylor is the 16th player in NFL history to score at least five touchdowns in a game.

It was the second loss in three games for the Bills (6-4), who fell a half-game behind surging New England in the AFC East. Buffalo's performance was rife with mistakes, such as seven penalties and four turnovers.

Indianapolis quarterback Carson Wentz was 11 of 20 for 106 yards and a touchdown, but he merely needed to avoid mistakes and hand the ball to Taylor.

Chargers 41, Steelers 37

Justin Herbert threw for 382 yards and the game-winning touchdown as host Los Angeles (6-4) recovered from blowing a big fourth-quarter lead against Pittsburgh (5-4-1) in Inglewood, Calif.

Herbert's 53-yard touchdown pass to Mike Williams with 2:09 left erased Pittsburgh's short-lived lead, which came on Chris Boswell's 45-yard field goal at the 3:29 mark. Herbert completed 30 of 41 passes with an interception and added a team-high 90 rushing yards. Austin Ekeler accounted for 115 yards from scrimmage and scored four times.

Ben Roethlisberger, who was activated from the COVID-19 list Saturday after missing a 16-16 tie against Detroit last week, connected on 28 of 44 passes for 273 yards and three touchdowns.

Football Team 27, Panthers 21

Taylor Heinicke threw three touchdown passes to upstage former teammate Cam Newton, helping Ron Rivera and Washington top Carolina in Charlotte, N.C.

Newton was playing his first home game with the Panthers (5-6) since 2019. He was signed before last weekend's upset victory at Arizona. He threw for 189 yards on 21-for-27 passing with two touchdowns.

Cavendish Suffers Broken Ribs and Collapsed Lung in Crash



BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - British cyclist Mark Cavendish suffered two broken ribs and a collapsed lung after crashing heavily at the Six Days of Ghent, his Deceuninck Quick-Step team said Monday.

a wet patch on the track.

The 36-year-old, winner of a record-equalling 34 stages on the Tour de France, rode into the Dane's bike, sending him tumbling to the floor.

"Examinations showed that Mark has suffered two broken ribs on this left side and has a small pneumothorax (collapsed lung), both of which have been treated with medication. He has been kept in the hospital for observation," Deceuninck Quick-Step said.

"It is expected that Mark will be discharged either later today or tomorrow morning, and will then undergo a period of recuperation."

U.S.-China Players Team Up At Worlds

BEIJING (Dispatches) - U.S. and Chinese table tennis players will pair up at the world championships finals in Houston to mark the 50th anniversary of "ping-pong diplomacy", the sport's governing body said Monday.

China's Lin Gaoyuan will play with the American Lily Zhang while Wang Manyu will join forces with Kanak Jha in the mixed doubles at the tournament this week, the International Table Tennis Federation said.

The two American-Chinese pairings will "build on the China-US friendship" and open "a new chapter of 'ping-pong diplomacy' in this new era", Chinese Table Tennis Association president Liu Guoliang said in a statement.

The ITTF declared that "history will be made in Houston".

"Ping-pong diplomacy" refers to a series of friendly matches between Chinese and American teams in 1971 which eventually paved the way for formal diplomatic relations between Washington and an isolated Beijing.

The 50th anniversary comes amid tense relations between the two countries, with the world's top two economies at loggerheads over a number of issues, including the fate of China's Uyghur minority and a clampdown in Hong Kong.

But Chinese officials and state media have hailed the anniversary as a largely positive opportunity to celebrate ping-pong diplomacy's "wonderful legacy".

The world championships finals take place from November 23-29.



Southgate Renews Contract Until 2024

LONDON (AFP) - Gareth Southgate has been rewarded with a two-year contract extension after leading England to the final of Euro 2020, the Football Association announced.

Southgate, who also masterminded a run to the semi-finals at the 2018 World Cup in Russia, has transformed his team into serious contenders after years of underachievement.

Reports over recent weeks suggested the 51-year-old was set to sign a new deal, which had been due to end after the Qatar World Cup late next year.

"The FA is delighted to confirm Gareth Southgate and (assistant) Steve Holland have signed new contracts through to December 2024," the FA said in a statement.

"Southgate, who marks five years in charge at the end of this month, has overseen a period of positive progress, guiding England to a FIFA World Cup semi-final and UEFA Nations League third place before securing the best men's performance in 55 years with the UEFA Euro final this summer."

The new deal means the England boss will oversee qualification for Euro 2024, which is being held in Germany.

"I am delighted that Steve and I have been able to extend our stay in our respective roles," said the former Middlesbrough boss. "It remains an incredible privilege to lead this team."

