

Health Ministry Announced on Wednesday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 129,280 With 95 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce of North Khorasan Province Has Said That the Province has Inked Four Agreements on Cooperation With Almaty, a City In the Southeast of Kazakhstan

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IAEA Chief Could Not Agree With Iran

VIENNA (Dispatches)- The head of the UN nuclear watchdog said on Wednesday that he “could not agree” with Iranian officials in talks to resolve disputes over the monitoring of the country’s atomic programme, a day after returning from Tehran.

Rafael Grossi, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told the quarterly meeting of the board of governors that his talks in Tehran were “inconclusive”, despite what he had earlier described as “intense” negotiations.

“We could not agree yesterday, in spite of my best efforts,” Mr Grossi told reporters on Wednesday, shortly after addressing the board meeting.

Among other officials in Tehran, he met Mohammad Eslami, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran.

He had been hoping to make progress on several points of contention between the agency and Tehran.

These include the constraints put on IAEA inspections activity this year, outstanding questions over the presence of undeclared nuclear material at sites in Iran and the treatment of IAEA staff in the country. **See Page 7**

No Point Left Unguarded For Enemy’s Penetration

CHABAHAH (IRNA) - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy commander said here that the enemies are after sowing seeds of discord and penetration in our soil, but we preserve our unity, solidarity, and strength, leaving no single point for enemy’s penetration.

Rear Admiral Ali Reza Tangsiri who was speaking at the inauguration ceremony of Imam Ali (PBUH) Naval Base in Chabahar reiterated that Islam is our first anchor that keeps us in the path amid hard winds, preserving the nation and revolution’s unity ship. Both the Shi’a and the Sunni Muslims belong to this country and “we need to defend this country hand in hand of each other”.

“Islamic Iran, is the country of the entire Iranians, and we need to defend this country in which our families are mightily, in confrontation with and resistance against those who intend to disturb our country’s security,” further reiterated Rear Admiral Tangsiri.

The IRGC Navy commander said that the Shi’a Imams have said that there are two great blessings, namely health and security. **See Page 7**

Bahraini Bank Ordered To Pay Damage to Iran



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Future Bank had been established as a joint venture between Bahrain’s Ahli United Bank and Bank Melli and Bank Saderat of Iran in 2004.

Bahrain has been ordered by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague to pay over 200 million euros in damages plus costs to two Iranian banks for the unlawful expropriation of their banking venture in Manama in an act of “political retribution”.

Iran’s largest lenders Bank Melli and Bank Saderat had sued the tiny Persian Gulf country before the international arbitration court in the Netherlands for confiscating nearly \$1.3 billion worth of Iranian funds.

The funds belonged to Future Bank established as a joint venture between Bahrain’s Ahli United Bank and the two Iranian lenders in 2004 when Bahraini leaders were seeking to mend strained relations with their vastly larger neighbor to the north.

In January 2016, however, Bahrain’s central bank said it was taking steps to close down Future Bank after Manama cut diplomatic ties with Tehran, following its neighbor Saudi Arabia in severing relations with the Islamic Republic.

In July this year, Bahrain’s top court upheld a money-laundering verdict against Future Bank, the Central Bank of Iran and other Iranian banks. The ruling, issued in April 2018, included jail terms of up to 10 years for Future Bank officials and confiscation of funds.

Iranian officials rejected the allegations, asserting that Future Bank was a victim of an international political conflict, instigated by Persian Gulf neighbors and other countries seeking to isolate Iran.

“There is no evidence, nor was there even an allegation, including in the ongoing arbitration, of corruption, let alone of a ‘multibillion-dollar corruption scheme,’” a joint statement issued by Bank Melli and Bank Saderat said at the time, referring to Bahrain’s characterization of the case.

Both denied any improper conduct in the handling of financial transfers, asserting that Future Bank promptly responded to all concerns expressed by the host country, “without further complaint from Bahrain,” according to the statement.

“Nor is there, or has Bahrain ever put forward, any evidence of Future Bank having financed any money-laundering, terrorism, nuclear activities, or having allowed companies to operate as fronts for Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps,” the banks said.

The statement described the Iranian institutions as “collateral victims of an entirely political decision, taken in the context of tensions and efforts by some Arab countries, led by Saudi Arabia, to isolate Iran.”

“It is in this context that Bahrain targeted not just these banks but all Iranian interests on its territory,” the statement said.

In a written summation to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, the kingdom had asserted that “Bahrain has never faced violations of this magnitude”. **See Page 7**

Tehran Calls for Effective Assistance In Fighting Trafficking in Persons

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Iranian diplomat has denounced trafficking in persons as “one of the most notorious crimes,” calling on the international community to provide “tailor-made, accessible and effective technical assistance to countries to combat this crime in a more efficient manner.”

Iran’s Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Majid Takht-Ravanchi made the remarks in an 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 in New York.

He said the deliberations at the meeting would be “instrumental” in addressing challenges in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and finding ways to tackle them.

Takht-Ravanchi said the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crimes (UNTOC) and its protocols had made efforts to create a coherent cross-border regulatory environment in an attempt to form a collective response to this menace.

As one of the earliest signatories to the UNTOC, Takht-Ravanchi said, Iran has taken the necessary steps in line with the provisions of the Convention and the protocols thereto to combat human trafficking.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its commitment to fight TIP and considers the role of the United Nations bodies, specifically the UNODC (UN Office on Drugs and Crime), in determining and facilitating international cooperation in this regard essential,” the senior Iranian diplomat said. **See Page 7**

Leader Felicitates Basij Week

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei lauded the morale of Basij (mobilization) Forces of Iran, saying decades of experience shows that all problems in the country can be resolved through hard effort, wisdom, and reliance on Almighty God.

In a message on the anniversary of formation of Basij, Ayatollah Khamenei congratulated all Iranian people on the occasion of the Basij Week, especially the fresh forces of Basij, whom he hailed as the “popular descendants” of late founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini like their earlier generation.

The Leader also advised the Basij forces to be appreciative of their position, reminding them that hard endeavor, wisdom, correct thinking, and reliance on all-knowing and all-powerful God would yield results and solve the problems in all general issues of the country. “This is the experience of several decades of the Iranian nation.”

Basij is a paramilitary voluntary force established in 1979 on Imam Khomeini’s order.

The force consists of often young Iranians, who have volunteered, with a strong sense of fidelity to both the Islamic system and religious beliefs.

Minister Eyes Curbing Inflation, Stabilizing Economy

TEHRAN (MNA) - Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi announced on Wednesday that his ministry has set stabilizing the economy and curbing inflation as major goals for defining future plans, IRNA reported.

“Following the president’s guidelines, our economic policies in the coming months will be focused on increasing economic growth, facilitating the business environment, stabilizing the economy and curbing inflation,” Khandouzi said.

Referring to the details of a meeting of the Government’s Economic Headquarters held on Tuesday evening, he stated: “At the meeting of the government’s economic headquarters, the general outlines of the ministry’s roadmap for the economic growth, production increase, and curbing inflation was reviewed and approved.” **See Page 7**

UAE-Iran-Turkey Transit Corridor to Become Operational

TEHRAN (MNA) – An Iranian official with the road ministry said that the UAE-Iran-Turkey corridor will officially become operational with the visit of the Emirati officials to Tehran next week.

The Director-General of Transit and International Transportation Bureau at Iran’s Road Maintenance & Transportation Organization (RMTO) Javad Hedayati confirmed the launch of a new transit corridor through Iran between the UAE and Turkey, saying that a senior Emirati official who is following the Emirati talks with Turkey is scheduled to come to Iran.

About a month ago, the testing passage of two Emirati trucks from Iran to Turkey was successful, he added.

Previously, Mohammad Hossein Rezaian, an expert in the field of transit, told Mehr correspondent on the new transit route crossing Iran that the consignment entered the port of Shahid Rajaei in south Iran on the Persian Gulf from the UAE and reached Turkey through the Bazargan border crossing in northwest Iran.

The expert said that the new route shortens the former transit route by 12 days, meaning that it will take 8 days for the shipments to reach Turkey’s port through Iran from UAE’s Sharjah while the previous route had to cross the Bab al-Mandeb strait, the Red Sea and the Suez Canal and all the way to Turkey which used to take 20 days.

Iran lies in a geographical location that can link different countries in the region as well as different regions in the world to one another. Last summer, the first shipment from Finland to India crossed Iran in late June.



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President to Depart for Turkmenistan Next Week

TEHRAN (MNA) – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi is scheduled to pay an official visit to Turkmenistan to attend the sixth summit of the Caspian Littoral States and the ECO summit.

Raisi will pay an official visit to Ashgabat, the Capital of Turkmenistan. He is scheduled to attend the sixth summit of the Caspian Littoral States and the ECO summit which will be kicked off on Saturday.

President Calls for An End to Vast Salaries of Some Gov't Officials

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi has called for end to what is known in Iran as “astronomical salaries” among some government officials.

President Raisi said on Wednesday there is a limitation on salaries that must be enforced for all people working at government organizations and they must not be paid more than that.

Raisi also said people do not want to hear anymore about astronomical salaries and such unconventional payments must be ended.

In the recent past, fury has erupted in Iran over vast salaries paid to some government officials.

Raisi also said his administration succeeded in providing vaccines and pressing ahead with a nationwide vaccination campaign to roll back the Covid pandemic in Iran.

Raisi said after dealing with Covid, the main issue on the government's agenda is people's livelihood, and the ministers should explain their actions in this regard to the people.

Regarding water shortages in the provinces of Isfahan and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Raisi said the decisions that have been made in this respect should be followed up and the people should be notified of the results.

He added that the issue of drinking and agricultural water of the people is important.

Raisi also touched on the reopening of schools after Covid receded in most of Iran. The president thanked the Ministry of Education for holding in-person classes.



He said parents of students are also satisfied with the decision to hold classes on an in-person and virtual basis.

Appreciating the Acting Minister of Education for holding face-to-face school classes, the President said, “Students’ parents are also satisfied with holding face-to-face and online classes combined”.

Referring to the issue of unconventional salaries, Raisi clarified, “The salary has a limit, the limit of which should be determined for all people working in the government and state-owned companies, and no more than that amount should be paid. People do not expect to hear about the salaries of tens of millions, and astronomical salaries must end”.

In this regard, the President called on the Administrative and Recruitment Affairs Organization to formulate a system of fair payment of salaries and wages as soon as possible and before the finalization of the 1401 budget.

The President stressed, “According to the law, some agencies may be allowed to set salaries for companies or government individuals, and measures should be taken in this regard as well. Unequal and unconventional payments are not tolerated by the government and state-owned companies”.

Tehran, Hanoi to Expand Technological Cooperation

TEHRAN (IRNA - Iran and Vietnam will enhance scientific and technological cooperation. Hossein Salar-Amoli, head of the international scientific cooperation center of the Ministry of Science in a meeting with Nguyen Manh Hien, Ambassador of Vietnam to Iran, discussed expanded cooperation in academic and scientific fields.

The Iranian official stated that a number of Vietnamese universities, including the National University of Hanoi, Ton Duc Thang University, and several others, ranked in the world scientific rankings, while 40 Iranian universities have also been included. Therefore, the chancellors of the top universities are invited to attend a meeting to develop academic cooperation.

Hong Thach also for his part expressed readiness for enhanced cooperation and emphasized that we will convey and support all the issues raised in this meeting to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education, Science, and Technology.

Most recently, fifteen universities from Iran have been listed among the best institutions worldwide, by the U.S. News and World Report Best Global Universities rankings 2022.

The Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Graduate Employability Rankings 2022 list has been released, which included three Iranian universities out of a total of 550 institutes worldwide that highlighted graduate employment processes.

FM Criticizes Contradictory U.S. Behavior

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says the United States’ “contradictory behavior,” characterized by a purported desire to return to the 2015 nuclear deal and all the while expanding sanctions against Iran, is a major obstacle to the Vienna talks aimed at putting the accord back on track.

In a telephone conversation with his Swiss counterpart, Ignazio Cassis, on Tuesday, Amir-Abdollahian said Iran was “ready and serious to reach a good and immediate agreement” in the talks that would start in Vienna, Austria on November 29, “but at the same time it is distrustful of U.S. behavior.”

“On the one hand, the U.S. pretends to be interested in returning to the JCPOA, but on the other, it has imposed sanctions on Iranian individuals and companies in two stages over the past few weeks. America’s contradictory behavior is one of the main obstacles to the negotiations,” he added, referring to nuclear deal by the acronym of its official name, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

The top Iranian diplomat also emphasized that the Islamic Republic would judge the US based on its behavior.

Envoys from Iran and the P4+1 group of countries — Britain, France, Russia, and China plus Germany — are expected to hold the seventh round of discussions in Vienna on November 29.

The negotiations were paused in June, when Iran held a presidential election. Since then, the new Iranian

administration has been reviewing the details of the six rounds of talks held under the previous administration.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Amir-Abdollahian said that Tehran-Bern relations were on the right track and that a recent visit by Switzerland’s President of the National Council Andreas Aebi to Iran marked a turning point in bilateral parliamentary ties.

Referring to the efforts underway to resolve problems on the way of the activities of Swiss companies in Iran, he stressed the need to boost relations between the two countries in various sectors, including science, education, agriculture, transportation, health and banking.

The Swiss foreign minister, for his part, pointed to the importance of relations with Iran and explained the status of a trade channel between the two states.

The two chief diplomats also discussed the crisis in Afghanistan

Amir-Abdollahian said Iran continued to encourage the ruling administration in Afghanistan to form an inclusive government, expressing concern over the humanitarian situation in the South Asian country amid the winter season.

His Swiss counterpart also announced his country’s readiness to cooperate in the transfer of aid to Afghanistan through Iran.

Bern agrees with Tehran on the need to form an inclusive government in Afghanistan, he said, praising Tehran for attempting to find a diplomatic solution to the Afghan crisis as well as hosting refugees.



Iran, Thailand Can Resume Exchange of Delegations, Tourists

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – As Iran and Thailand have managed to overcome the critical situation caused by the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, they can now resume reciprocal visits by political and trade delegations and revive the tourist industry, the Iranian foreign minister said.

In a telephone conversation on Tuesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and Thailand’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Don

Pramudwinai discussed different topics, including bilateral political and economic issues and the Vienna talks.

The Iranian foreign minister congratulated the Thai National Day and highlighted the 400-year history of relations between the two countries.

Amirabdollahian emphasized Iran’s interest in expanding relations with Thailand and invited his Thai counterpart to visit Tehran.

He also stated that the two countries have been able to overcome the coronavirus crisis, noting that from now on political and trade delegations as well as tourists can resume their trips to the two countries.

The top diplomat also voiced Iran’s readiness to hold a joint economic and trade commission between the two countries.

Amirabdollahian noted that the new Iranian administration pursues a foreign policy that focuses on Asia, and in this regard, Thailand has a special place, according to the Foreign Ministry’s website.

For his part, the Thai foreign minister expressed his readiness to hold a joint economic commission and expand trade relations with Iran, including in the fields of steel, rice and fuel.

While emphasizing Bangkok’s determination to fully expand relations, the Thai top diplomat invited his Iranian counterpart to visit Thailand.



Zagreb Seeking to Expand Ties With Tehran

HAMEDAN (IRNA) - Croatian Ambassador to Iran Drago Štambuk said on Wednesday that his country was seeking to expand relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Speaking in a meeting with Hamedan Province Governor-General Alireza Qasemi Farzad, Štambuk proposed that Croatia and Hamedan Province collaborate to register the Day of Avicenna in the UNESCO’s Memory of the World Program.

He said that Croatia’s old name has been inscribed in the Bisotun inscription in Iran’s Kermanshah Province and it is an ancient Iranian name.

The ambassador also said that Iran and Croatia should deepen tourism relations so that people could visit both countries even more. Qasemi, the governor-general of Hamedan, said that the province could be a good destination for Croatian investors for its great capacities.

He also noted that the province’s commerce chamber could play a role in Croatia, adding that Hamedan has great potentials in medicine and health sectors in addition to its tourism attractions.

Iran Sent Oil to Lebanon Despite Sanctions

TEHRAN (MNA)- Stating that Iran does not send oil to any country free-of-charge, IRGC Chief Commander said that despite all sanctions, the country sent oil Lebanon.

Speaking in a meeting of Students’ Basij of universities and academic centers of the country in the holy city of Mashhad, Major General Hossein Salami IRGC Chief Commander emphasized Iran’s unparalleled power in the international arena despite oppressive and cruel sanctions imposed by foreign countries against the country.

Turning to the Basij Week, Salami said that Basij was a miraculous entity that emerged at the behest of the late founder of the Islamic Revolution Imam Khomeini (RA) who managed to do great in the early years after the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

Under the wise leadership of the Islamic Revolution, Islamic Republic of Iran thwarted all conspiracies and plots waged by the Global Arrogance against the Establishment, he added.

Addressing the Basiji students, Major General Salami called them as future-maker of the country and advised them to safeguard sublime values of the Islamic Revolution to steer the country towards prosperity.

Tehran, Dakar Discuss Expansion of Bilateral Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Islamic Republic of Iran and Republic of Senegal explored avenues for the expansion of bilateral relations in all fields.

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Dakar Mohammad Reza Dehshiri met and held talks with Foreign Minister of Senegal Aïssata Tall Sall on Tuesday to discuss bilateral ties and issues of mutual interests

In a tweet on Tuesday, the Iranian envoy to Senegal wrote, “During the meeting, we discussed various regional issues and promotion of bilateral cooperation.”

Also, “we exchanged views on the promotion of bilateral cooperation, holding of Fifth Joint Economic Commission and commemoration of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Iran and Senegal,” he added.

Culture Minister Urges Transformation of Cultural Sections



TEHRAN (IP) - Iranian minister of culture and Islamic guidance underlines the importance of transformation in cultural sections and the need to have a revolutionary outlook.

Referring to cultural activities, Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaili said on Tuesday that Iran has significant cultural capacities, so competent officials should be appointed to extend those capacities.

He also emphasized transformational plans and said: “I do support all transformational plans,” adding that promising measures were taken in cultural sectors.

“In international and national arenas I as a minister carry out nonstop efforts to revolutionize cultural sectors,” said the minister.

He announced that young and revolutionary forces support international cultural activities.

Also, the newly-appointed Head of Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, Mehdi Imanpour, said: “Transformation is the priority of Islamic culture and relations organization.”

“We will offer services to people, with ‘Cultural Diplomacy’ slogan,” he added.

He underlined that cultural diplomacy has a direct impact on the country’s economy, security, and people’s livelihood and stressed highlighting people’s role in cultural sectors.

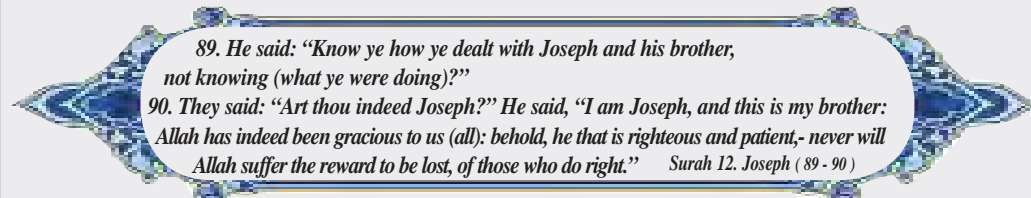
“Cultural diplomacy is a key tool in this era, so efforts must be made to introduce the country’s culture perfectly and beyond the boundaries,” he pointed out.

In a decree, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad Mehdi Esmaili appointed Mehdi Imanpour as the new Head of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization during a ceremony held on Tuesday evening.



PRAYER TIME

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| ■ Noon (Zohr) | 11:51 |
| ■ Evening (Maghreb) | 17:12 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr) | 05:23 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Sunrise | 06:51 |



Tehran, Berlin Call for Joint Investment

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran and Germany in a webinar on Tuesday explored ways for boosting their economic ties and both sides called for joint investment.

In the webinar which was held in collaboration between Iran's Embassy in Berlin and Germany's NUMOV (German Near and Middle East Association), Iran's Ambassador to Berlin Mr. Mahmoud Farazmand, the CEO of NUMOV Ms. Helene Rang, Head of Iran Trade Promotion Organization Mr. Alireza Peyman Pak and Head of International Affairs of Iran Chamber of Commerce Mr. Mohammad Reza Karbasi exchanged views on boosting trade between the two states.

In the meeting it was decided the talks between Iranian and German parties to continue in the form of specialized workgroups.

Addressing the webinar, Karbasi said that since the past, Germany has had developmental view towards Iran, stipulating that development of many infrastructures in Iran like railway, Esfahan Steel Company, rolling and power plants has been carried out in cooperation with German companies. He added that of course trade relation needs banking relations, adding that as trade without logistical facilities is unsustainable, it is also impossible without banking relation.

He emphasized creating infrastructure for sustainable trade, noting that the ground for sustainable trade between the countries is provided only by the joint investment.



He added that it will not materialize except in the framework of trade of good, and creation of required grounds for trade and investment needs understanding and dialogue between the countries.

Karbasi said it was expected Germany to have more effective steps in supporting activities of the private sectors of the two states after the U.S. exit from the JCPOA. He went on to say that although Iran and Germany's trade relation grew by 60 percent after the JCPOA, in the recent two years it has nose-dived beyond expectations.

He then pointed to the capabilities of Iranian knowledge-based companies and their high rankings in the world and said German private sector should have a long-term approach and should not look at Iran's market as only a consumer market but as a competitive and multilateral one.

Then CEO of NUMOV Ms. Rang, for her part, said this association helps German companies for developing market in the Near and Middle East countries and it has cooperated with Iran's industry ministry in the past. She added that despite challenges, the association has always had amicable relations with Iran and today the trade volume of the two states is 1.54b euros.

Tajikistan Has Toughened Up Investment Iranians



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Overseas Agriculture Organization says after the tension hit up in relation between Iran and Tajikistan, the latter expelled Iranian investors from the country and toughened up investment situation for Iranians and this bad memory still lives up with Iranians and for this reason Iranians show no interest for investment in this Central Asian country.

Speaking to ILNA and when was asked whether Iran can take advantage of cultural commonalities with Tajikistan for developing extraterrestrial cultivation, Ali Rezavanizadeh said that today Iran is facing with serious water tension and this woe has made the country face some challenges in creating food security.

He noted that to advance economic activities, one should consider several factors, adding that countries for extraterrestrial cultivation are chosen based on certain parameters by the association and with considering the defined indexes, agriculture has no economic justification in Tajikistan and for this reason this country is among the second or third priorities.

Rezvanzadeh noted that security in investment, diplomatic relation and ranking of the countries in the ease of doing business index are of the main parameters in choosing countries for extraterrestrial cultivation and having good water and land is not considered as the main criterion for choosing the country. He added that a country like Poland which enjoys having valuable water resources is considered as the second priority for the association because the economic background of Iranians in this country is not strong.

He reiterated that Iranians cannot do big agro business in Tajikistan because they can do the same job with the cost much lower in countries like Russia, Kazakhstan, Brazil and Ukraine.

He then pointed to the high cost of transportation to Tajikistan and said transportation of one ton of goods from Tajikistan to Iran costs between 80 to 100 dollars and by the way in Tajikistan you can cultivate once in a year while in Venezuela you can cultivate 3 times per year and transportation of each ton of goods from Venezuela to southern ports of Iran costs 55 dollars.

Rezvanzadeh reiterated that the first condition for starting an economic relation between the two states is to create security in the investment process and major part of it comes back to the governments' commitment and if security is not restored in investment, investor sees himself a loser and does not dare to invest.

Iran Eyes More Oil Sales in Coming Months

TEHRAN (Shana) – Oil Minister Javad Owji said: "In the coming months, more success will be achieved in the export of crude oil and gas condensate."

Speaking at the joint ceremony of Basijis of the oil industry, which was held at the Ministry of Petroleum, paying tribute to the martyrs of the oil industry, Owji said: "In the last few years, the enemy has planned to confront the oil industry with crippling sanctions, which targeted most of the oil industry, but it did not succeed. The industry is flourishing day by day and there are good successes in oil exports."

"Production, refining of oil and gas and development of fields, signing of contracts and circumvention of sanctions, identification and use of all capacities for export of oil and gas condensate and products are the responsibility of us oil industry employees," he added.

He continued: "Today, this industry is in the hands of the Basij forces. With this way of thinking, we will not fail for a moment in producing and providing energy and energy security of the country, and with the will and strength that we see in our armed forces in the coming months, exports of oil and gas condensate will also be more successful."

Iran, Germany Show High Potentials in Managing COVID-19

TEHRAN (MNA) – Benefited from high potentials and capabilities, Islamic Republic of Iran and Germany showed excellent performance in managing coronavirus, COVID-19, disease.

Deputy President of Germany's Robert Koch Institute (RKI) said that Iran and Germany have similarities in terms of population, total number of people infected with coronavirus, COVID-19, disease, so that the two countries have taken giant strides in containing COVID-19 disease.

Speaking in his meeting with the deputy Ministry of Health and Medical Education on Wed. held at the venue of the Ministry of Health, Andreas Jansen Deputy President of Germany's Robert Koch Institute (RKI) said, "In a visit to Iran along with the representatives of World Health Organization



(WHO) in March 2020, I grasped out that giant steps were taken at Iranian hospitals in different cities in the field of containing the pandemic in the best form possible and this shows that a positive move has been taken in line with terminating the coronavirus pandemic."

Turning to the production of different COVID-19 vaccines by Iran, he said that producing various COVID-19 vaccines by Iran and widespread injection of the vaccine is considered as a great success in a way that many international institutions have acknowledged success of Iran in nationwide vaccination.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and its president have emphasized the fair distribution and accessibility of COVID-19 vaccine to all people throughout the world, he added.

Transit of Goods From Azerbaijan Doubled

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The director general of the transit office of the Iranian Road Maintenance Organization says that over the past 10 months transit of Iranian goods from Republic of Azerbaijan to other countries has grown by 94 percent.

Javad Hedayati said hat 60,000 Iranian fleets entered the country from the four borders with Azerbaijan.

He declared the significant growth of trade between Iran and Russia as one of the factors behind the jump in transit of goods through Azerbaijani territory.

This comes after customs statistics last year showed that 57 percent of Iran's transit goods to Russia passed through Azerbaijan, 42 percent through the Caspian Sea, and only 1 percent of Iranian goods were exported to Russia through Armenian territory.

Hedayati said about the situation of the Giroush-Kaplan Road, currently the route is Azerbaijani territory, and Azerbaijan exercises territorial sovereignty in this area, and according to Azerbaijani laws, all vehicles entering this route must pay the right of entry.

He also said that the reason for the 94 percent growth in transit of Iranian goods through Azerbaijan to other countries is mainly due to the growth of Iran-Russia trade.

Russian customs statistics show that the country's exports to Iran more than doubled in the 9 months of 2021 compared to the same period in 2020, reaching \$2.2 billion, and imports from Iran also grew by 24 percent to \$711 million.

Joint Committee a Must for Expansion of Iran-Kenya Trade Ties

KARAJ (IRNA) - Secretary general of Alborz Chamber of Commerce, Mines and Agriculture said here on Tuesday that Alborz province has broad economic potentials and expansion of trade ties with Kenya is in need of establishment of a Joint Economic Committee.

Faraz Jebelli made the comment in a meeting with a Kenyan economic delegation in Karaj, adding: Alborz province is quite close to the Iranian capital city, Tehran, and this province has 3,500 industrial and production units, producing over 160 internationally renowned brands, and therefore, one of the main activities of the economic activists in this province is exporting the province's products to various parts of the world.

He said that only 30% of the tea consumed in Iran is produced inside the country and the rest is imported, and Kenya can therefore survey the possibility of exporting tea to Iran.

Jebelli said that in return for the Kenyan tea to Iran we are after exporting some of our country's products to preserve the trade balance positive or balanced.

The secretary general of Alborz Chamber of Commerce, Mines and Agriculture said that currently Kenya has good trade ties with Iran's neighbors, such as Pakistan and the UAE, but the volume of Kenya's trade with Iran is unfortunately not satisfactory, and there are many unused potentials that can be used to expand the bilateral trade to a desirable level.

IME Posts Monthly Trade of 8.9m Tons of Commodities

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN Within the month ending on November 21st, Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) traded in its physical market 8,961,000 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$2,357m, experiencing growths of 24% and 18% in volume and value of trades respectively, as compared to the previous month.



According to a report by the IME's international affairs and PR, the exchange sold on its metals and minerals trading floor 7,387,000 tons of commodities valued at more than \$1,420m.

Items traded on this floor included 5,176,000 tons of cement, 1,452,000 tons of steel, 521,000 tons of iron ore, 172,000 tons of sponge iron (DRI), 31,445 tons of aluminum, 30,535 of zinc, 29,100 tons of copper, 560 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 200 tons of metallurgical coke, 81 tons of precious metals concentrate and 63 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the exchange saw trade of more than 1,530,000 tons of commodities worth almost \$907m on its oil and petrochemical trading floor.

The IME's customers purchased on this floor 447,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 441,510 tons of bitumen, 324,851 tons of polymeric products, 150,081 tons of chemicals, 135,000 tons of lube cut, 15,682 tons of oil, 13,850 tons of sulfur, 546 tons of insulation and 50 tons of argon.

It's worth noting that the IME's agricultural trading floor played host to trading 1 tons of saffron in this month.

Last was the IME's side market on which the exchange traded 42,795 tons of non-exchange-listed commodities.

22.4m Tons of Steel Produced in 10 Months

TEHRAN (MNA) – World Steel Association (WSA) announced that Islamic Republic of Iran produced 22.4 million tons of crude steel in 10 months of the year 2021 and was introduced among 10th steel producer in the world.

According to the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), steelmakers in the world produced 1,607,100,000 tons of crude steel from Jan. to Oct. 2021, showing a 5.9 percent growth as compared to the same period of last year.

In the mentioned period, Islamic Republic of Iran produced 22.4 million tons of crude steel, showing a 5.7 percent slump as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

Accordingly, Iran produced 2.2 million tons of crude steel in Oct. 2021, showing a 15.3 percent decline as compared to the same period of last year.

At Least 45 People Killed In Bus Blaze in Bulgaria

SOFIA (AFP) - At least 45 people, including a dozen minors, were killed after a bus caught fire south of the Bulgarian capital early Tuesday morning, officials said.

A cause has yet to be determined but officials believe a fire broke out on board and the bus crashed into guardrails.

There were no other vehicles involved in the accident, which occurred around 2:00 am (2400 GMT) on a highway about 40 kilometres (26 miles) from Sofia, near the village of Bosnek.

"Of the victims ... 12 in total were under the age of 18," national police chief Stanimir Stanev said.



Ecuador Pardons Some Inmates To Cut Prison Overcrowding

QUITO (Dispatches) - Ecuadoran President Guillermo Lasso granted a pardon to inmates with serious illnesses and those jailed for traffic violations to alleviate overcrowding in the country's prisons after recent riots left more than 300 dead.

The pardons will benefit seriously or terminally ill prisoners and those involved in traffic offenses that did not cause injury or death, the communications ministry said in a statement, without specifying how many would be released.

The measure is part of a government plan to combat prison violence due to disputes between criminal gangs linked to drug trafficking.



UK Apology Over Persian Gulf War Human Shields Flight



LONDON (Dispatches) - The UK government on Tuesday apologized for not warning British Airways that Iraq was about to invade Kuwait before one of its flights was caught up in a hostage drama in 1990.

Passengers on BA flight 149 were taken off the Kuala Lumpur-bound plane when it landed in the Persian Gulf state on August 2 that year, hours after Saddam Hussein's troops swept in.

Some of the 367 passengers and crew spent more than four months in captivity, including as human shields at the hands of the Iraqi dictator.

The former hostages have long sought answers about what the government in London knew and when, as well as whether special forces were on the flight, putting them at risk.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss told parliament that the UK ambassador to Kuwait informed London about reports of an Iraqi incursion at about midnight on August 2, 1990. BA 149 was already in the air when the message was passed to departments including the foreign and defense ministries, Downing Street and the MI6 intelligence service.

But it was not circulated to BA, Truss said in a written answer, as she released files on the events to Britain's national archives.

"The call made (by the ambassador) has never been publicly disclosed or acknowledged until today," she added.

"These files show that the existence of the call was not revealed to parliament and the public. This failure was unacceptable.

"As the current secretary of state, I apologize to the House for this, and I express my deepest sympathy to those who were detained and mistreated."

BA 149 was late taking off, officially for "technical problems", and landed in Kuwait City at 0113 GMT. About 45 minutes later the city's airport was closed.

Truss said the files indicated that the ambassador was uncertain about the scale of the Iraqi incursion, and no procedure existed at the time to warn airlines or at-risk flights. She also reaffirmed the government's previously stated position that UK special forces were not on board and "did not attempt in any way to exploit the flight".

BA has always denied accusations of negligence, conspiracy and a cover-up.

"These records confirm British Airways was not warned about the invasion," the company said on Tuesday.

But one of the passengers, Barry Manners, said he did not accept the apology and rejected the assertion that no special forces were on the flight.

"Who on earth were they then? Members of a rugby team?" he added.

"These were serious guys, you only had to look at them... I know they were soldiers."

A book published earlier this year, "Operation Trojan Horse", claims London knowingly put passengers at risk by using the flight to deploy undercover operatives and delayed take-off to allow them to board.

Taliban to Purge People of Bad Character From Ranks

KABUL (Dispatches) - The Taliban have formed a commission to purge "people of bad character" from their ranks to protect Afghanistan's reputation, the group said on Tuesday, in the latest sign it is trying to change from an insurgency into a regular government.

The Taliban operated as insurgent fighters for two decades before toppling a Western-backed government in August. Their membership has grown over the last two years, particularly after it became apparent that they would return to power in some form.

In an audio recording, Taliban deputy chief and Afghan interior minister Sirajuddin Haqqani said: "We are learning that people of bad character had entered (Taliban) ranks and had been causing a bad name to the Islamic Emirate (Afghanistan) and serving their vested interests."

"It is our humble wish that there should be a small number of people but they should be pure and sincere so that this movement should not get damaged," he said in the audio, whose authenticity was confirmed to Reuters by Taliban officials.

Reports on social media have alleged that people identifying themselves as Taliban members have carried out a number of attacks on civilians and former members of the security forces of the ousted government since August, despite the Taliban leadership announcing a general amnesty. Taliban officials have repeatedly denied sanctioning these acts.

Haqqani, a shadowy figure who has never been pictured in public, is also the head of the Haqqani Network that carried out some of the most brutal attacks of the 20-year insurgency.

The commission - called the commission for the purification of the ranks - has been formed under the Ministry

of Defense, which is headed by Mullah Yaqoob, the son of Taliban founder Mullah Omar.

Haqqani said the commission's formation was urgently needed.

"I would like to ask our brothers to cooperate with the commission and don't protect or support any individual of bad character on the basis of personal friendship," Haqqani said.

The message was the latest indication of efforts the Taliban have been forced to make to adapt the movement from a guerrilla insurgency to a full civilian administration since August.

Taliban forces held a military parade in Kabul on Nov. 14 using captured U.S.-made armored vehicles and Russian helicopters in a display that showed their continuing transformation from an insurgent force to a regular standing army.



Iraq Kurdish Police Fire Warning Shots as Students Protest

SULAIMANIYAH (Dispatches) - Iraqi Kurdish police fired warning shots in the air and tear gas Tuesday to disperse thousands of students protesting over several years of grant cuts, an AFP correspondent said.

It was the third straight day of demonstrations outside their university in the northern city of Sulaimaniyah to demand the restoration of between \$40 and \$66 in monthly payments.

The showdown comes on top of the crisis over thousands of migrants, many of them Iraqi Kurds, who have been camped on the Belarus border with Poland desperate to escape to the European Union from poverty and instability back home.

The students' financial assistance has been suspended since 2014 when global oil prices slumped and amid budget disputes between the federal government in Baghdad and the oil-rich, autonomous Kurdish region.

Police, after firing several volleys of tear gas followed by shots in the air, chased demonstrators as they dispersed and set ablaze rubbish dumpsters in the city, the correspondent said.

"We're protesting because our grants have been cut for the past six years, we desperately need even that small sum," said one student, asking not to be named.

"There are students who can't afford to pay to travel home to the provinces, others who haven't got enough for three meals a day."

Unrests in France's Martinique, Guadeloupe

PARIS (Dispatches) - Gunshots were fired overnight at police in the French Caribbean island of Martinique, local authorities said on Tuesday, in a sign that unrest triggered by COVID-19 curbs that has rocked the nearby island of Guadeloupe could be spreading there.

No police have been injured and things have calmed down in the daytime, a Martinique police official said, but traffic was still slowed by barricades.

Gunfire has also targeted police over the past few days in Guadeloupe, where a general strike entered a second week on Monday and many stores remained shuttered after night-time looting amid protests over the COVID-19 restrictions.

The situation remains "very difficult" in Guadeloupe, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told France Inter radio earlier in the day.

"There are still scenes of extreme violence with police forces being shot at with real ammunition," he said, adding that some 200 additional police officers

deployed since Sunday had helped to quell some of the unrest.

People in Guadeloupe and Martinique have been especially incensed by a requirement, also in force in mainland France, for all healthcare workers to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Compulsory vaccination has touched a nerve in a population that is descended from slaves who worked on French sugar plantations. During the 20th century, many people on Guadeloupe were also systematically exposed to toxic pesticides used in banana plantations.

A general strike also began in Martinique on Monday to demand an end to the mandatory vaccination of health workers and for action to tackle high fuel prices.

The Caribbean has been hit this autumn by a new wave of coronavirus infections that is causing lockdowns and flight cancellations and overwhelming hospitals, just as tourism was beginning to show signs of recovery.



Kuwait Reappoints Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid as PM

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Kuwait's Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid has been reappointed prime minister, state media said on Tuesday, and tasked with forming a cabinet that would be the Persian Gulf OPEC oil producer's third this year in a domestic political standoff.

State news agency KUNA said Sheikh Sabah, prime minister since late 2019, was reappointed by an emiri order issued by Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah. The government had resigned on Nov. 8 in the standoff with the elected parliament.

Emir Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmed al-Sabah last week temporarily handed over some of his main constitutional duties to the crown prince, his designated successor, including naming the prime minister and swearing in the cabinet.

Before doing so, the emir had accepted the government's resignation as part of measures to end a months-long deadlock between the government and opposition lawmakers. He also issued an amnesty pardoning political dissidents to defuse the row.

Several opposition MPs had wanted to question Sheikh Sabah on various issues, including the handling of the coronavirus pandemic and corruption, despite a motion in March that had granted him temporary immunity.

The row had paralyzed legislative work, hindering fiscal reform efforts, including a debt law that would allow Kuwait to tap international markets.

State finances are set to improve this year thanks to higher oil prices, after the coronavirus downturn led to a budget deficit of 15.4% of GDP in the 2020/21 fiscal year.

Kuwait has given its legislature more influence than similar bodies in other Persian Gulf monarchies, including the power to pass and block laws, question ministers and submit no-confidence votes against senior government officials.



Velenjak Apt (\$2500)
200sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
pkg, & F.F

Shanon (adviser)

Shariati Villa (\$3500)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, Jacuzzi
green yard
pkg, & F.F

Parsian

Farmanieh (\$2000) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F
Zaferanieh (\$2400) 250sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F

Jordan (\$1600) 170sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, balcony, F.F

Gheitarieh (\$1300)
160sq.m, 2bdrs, F.F

Cell: +989121907875
Shanon_tari@yahoo.com
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Singapore October Core Inflation Up 1.5%

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Singapore's key price gauge rose by the fastest pace in nearly three years in October, mainly driven by higher services and food inflation.

The core inflation rate — the central bank's favored price measure - rose to 1.5% in October on a year-on-year basis, compared with 1.2% in the prior month, the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) said in a statement.

A Reuters poll of economists had forecast an increase of 1.3%.

Singapore's headline inflation rose 3.2%, highest since March 2013, beating economists' forecast of 2.8%.



U.S. to Release Oil From Reserves After OPEC+ Rebuffs Call for More Crude

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States said it would release 50 million barrels of oil from strategic reserves in a coordinated move with China, India, South Korea, Japan and Britain to cool prices after OPEC+ producers rebuffed calls for more crude.

The White House issued the statement after a source in the U.S. administration said Washington had been hashing out a plan with major Asian energy consumers to drive down prices from near three-year highs. Britain had not previously been mentioned.

U.S. President Joe Biden, facing low approval ratings amid rising inflation ahead of next year's congressional elections, has repeatedly called on the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, known as OPEC+, to pump more oil.

But the group has rebuffed the requests, as members have already been struggling to meet its existing targets for production increases and amid fears a resurgence of coronavirus cases could once again drive down demand.

The release from the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve would be in the form of a loan sale to companies, which must return the crude at a later date, and was the first time the United States had coordinated a release with some of the world's largest oil consumers, US officials said.

OPEC+ states, including U.S. allies in the Persian Gulf, meet again on December 2 to discuss policy but have shown no sign of any change in tack to heed U.S. calls.

The unprecedented effort by Washington to team up with major Asian economies to lower energy prices sends a warning to OPEC and other big producers that they need to address concerns about high crude prices, up more than 50 per cent so far this year.

An OPEC+ source, speaking before the group's December meeting, said a release from reserves would complicate the maths for OPEC+, as it monitors the market on a monthly basis.

Denmark to Facilitate Wind Power Links to Germany and Belgium

COPENHAGEN (Dispatches) - Danish grid operator Energinet signed deals on Tuesday with Belgium's Elia and Germany's 50Hertz that move Denmark closer to building two sea links connecting its offshore wind turbines to Germany and Belgium to boost the flow of green energy in the region.

A massive expansion of offshore grid infrastructure is needed to meet the rising amount of renewable energy needed to enable European countries to slash dependency on fossil fuels while ensuring that volatile renewables become a more reliable source of energy. Energinet said a cooperation agreement signed with transmission system operator Elia edged them closer to a final investment decision on an interconnector between their two countries via a yet-to-be-built artificial island in the North Sea.

With a relatively small coastline and limited access to offshore wind power in the Belgian part of the North Sea, Belgium needs to import green energy on a large scale.

Energinet also inked a separate deal with German high-voltage grid firm 50Hertz, of which Elia owns 80%, on a power link to another planned hub which will be located on the Danish Baltic island of Bornholm.

Denmark is planning to more than triple its offshore wind capacity by building two so-called energy islands - hubs for large volumes of power - linked to new wind farms in the Baltic and North seas to help meet ambitious climate change targets. With the new agreement, the three system operators will now be able to start feasibility studies and prepare business cases for the projects which would still require final investment decisions and national approvals to be realized.

Turkish Lira in Historic 15% Crash

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkey's lira nose-dived 15% on Tuesday in its second-worst day ever after President Tayyip Erdogan defended recent sharp rate cuts, and vowed to win his "economic war of independence" despite widespread criticism and pleas to reverse course.

The lira tumbled to as low as 13.45 to the dollar, plumbing record troughs for an 11th straight session, before paring some losses. It has shed 45% of its value this year, including a near 26% decline since the beginning of last week.

Erdogan has applied pressure on the central bank to pivot to an aggressive easing cycle that aims, he says, to boost exports, investment and jobs - even as inflation soars to near 20% and the currency depreciation accelerates, eating deeply into Turks' earnings.

Many economists called the rate cuts reckless while opposition politicians appealed for early elections. Turks told Reuters the dizzying currency collapse was upending their household budgets and plans for the future.

While authorities have not intervened to stem the selloff, two sources said Erdogan met with central bank Governor Sahap Kavcioglu on Tuesday but gave no further details. The bank did not comment on the lira's plunge. Former central bank deputy governor Semih Tumen, who was dismissed last month in the latest of Erdogan's rapid leadership overhaul, called for an immediate return to policies which protect the lira's value.

"This irrational experiment which has no chance of success must be abandoned immediately and we must return to quality policies which protect the Turkish lira's value and the prosperity of the Turkish people," he said on Twitter.

Tuesday's slide was the lira's worst since the height of a currency crisis in 2018 that led to a sharp recession, and brought on three years of sub-par economic growth and double-digit inflation.

Though the lira recovered half its at 12.485 to the dollar, the last 11 days has been its worst run since 1999. Over just three hours of volatile trading on Tuesday, its value bounced to 13 from 12 to the dollar.

The central bank has slashed rates by a total of 400 points since September, leaving real yields deeply negative as virtually all other central banks have begun tightening, or are preparing to do so.

The lira has been by far the worst performer globally this year due mostly to what some analysts have called a premature economic "experiment" by the president who has ruled Turkey for nearly two decades.

Erdogan's AK Party is sliding in opinion polls ahead of elections scheduled for no later than mid-2023, reflecting sharply higher costs of living.

UAE Sees No Logic in It Pumping More Oil Now



DUBAI (Dispatches) - The United Arab Emirates energy minister said he saw no logic in the Persian Gulf OPEC producer supplying more oil to global markets when all indicators pointed to a supply surplus in the first quarter of next year.

Suhail Al-Mazrouei, speaking to reporters, also described as a "state matter" moves by the United States to release crude oil from its strategic reserves in coordination with major Asian energy consumers in a bid to lower energy prices.

"We are looking at all technical data and all of them are suggesting we are having a surplus in the first quarter so there is no logic of increasing our contribution," he said, adding there should also be no supply worries in the second quarter.

The minister said the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, known as OPEC+, would meet on December 2 and base decisions on "balance of supply and demand".

OPEC+, which includes Russia, has resisted requests from Washington and other consumer nations for swifter hikes, sticking to its plan of gradually raising output by 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) each month since August.

The White House said on Tuesday that the United States would release 50 million barrels of crude from strategic reserves.

"I think the actions from countries to bring back some of their reserves is a state matter and they don't consult with us when they increase their SPR (Strategic Petroleum Reserves) or decrease it," Mazrouei said.

The minister earlier told a business event at the Expo 2020 world fair in Dubai that the UAE has started building "the first green hydrogen plant in the Middle East" with testing currently underway. He gave no further details.

The UAE has announced plans to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, and has said it would oversee 600 billion dirhams (RM684 billion) in investment in renewable energy.

Oman Seeks Persian Gulf Help to Shore Up Economy

DOHA (Dispatches) - Informed Omani sources said that the visit of Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq to Qatar was essentially an economic trip which had been preceded by several team meetings and a long-time advance preparation.

Analysts pointed out that Muscat, which is facing an acute economic crisis compounded by the fluctuation of oil prices and the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, feels an urgent need to find solutions to its crisis and sees in Qatar a possible source of help.

The analysts noted that Sultan Haitham's visit to Doha was part of a region-wide search for support, which began earlier with a trip to Saudi Arabia, last July.

They added that the sultanate is betting on Persian Gulf ties to overcome its economic crisis. Thus it was Sultan Haitham who initiated the warming of relations between his country and other Persian Gulf Cooperation Council states.

The Qatari News Agency (QNA) said that the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad and the sultan had discussed ties to develop political, economic, investment, tourism and transport fields." The Amiri Diwan in Qatar said that "views were exchanged on prospects for strengthening joint Persian Gulf action in a way that bolsters the region's security and stability."

It also said the two leaders had talked about "regional and international issues and the current developments." The Omani News Agency reported that the two leaders had a closed meeting after the larger session which included their respective delegations.

Observers noted that the two sides tried to underplay the political dimension of the talks. Both countries, especially Oman, wanted to highlight the economic character of the visit and spare it any unwanted reactions from other Persian Gulf states or from Iran.

The sultan and the emir attended the signing of six agreements covering military cooperation, avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of tax evasion on income, capital, labor and investment, as well as deals on tourism and hotels, maritime transport and ports.

The military cooperation agreement was signed on the Omani side by Shihab bin Tariq bin Taimur Al Said, deputy prime minister for defense affairs and from the Qatari side by Sheikh Khalid bin Muhammad Al-Attiyah, deputy prime minister and minister of state for defense affairs.

An investment cooperation deal was signed between the Omani Investment Authority and the Qatari Investment Authority along with two. Other agreements covering tourism and hotels along with maritime transport and ports.

Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's promising plans to develop the Omani economy and provide jobs for Omanis have collided with the pandemic's impact especially on the price of oil, the main source of revenue for the sultanate.

Obtaining Persian Gulf financing would help the sultan press on with his strategy aimed at improving the living conditions of Omanis.

During his visit to Saudi Arabia, he is said to have obtained promises of cooperation in various fields, most notably real estate development, tourism, petrochemicals, manufacturing industries, logistical partnership, information technology and finance. Saudi Arabia also discussed setting up an industrial zone in the Special Economic Zone in Duqm.

UK Firms Face Price Spikes Ahead of Christmas

LONDON (Dispatches) - UK private sector firms railed against another month of rapid input cost inflation, according to November PMI data compiled by IHS Markit and CIPS.

The latest increase in average cost burdens was the fastest since this index began in January 1998, driven by higher wages and a spike in prices paid for fuel, energy and raw materials. Around 63% of UK private sector companies reported an increase in their average cost burdens during November, while only 1% signalled a decline.

Exceptionally strong cost pressures meant that prices charged by manufacturers increased at the steepest rate since the index began 20 years ago. However, service providers indicated a slight slowdown in output charge inflation to its lowest for three months, with some citing greater resistance to higher selling prices among clients.

Customer demand continued to rise sharply in November, despite the pass through of higher costs to clients, with the overall rate of new order growth accelerating to a five-month high.

"The million-dollar question will be whether the effects of re-imposed restrictions in some European countries will act as a significant obstacle to this progress and whether supply chain tangles unravel a bit more to ease Christmas shortages from factories, making the last quarter of the year a pleasing end to 2021 for everyone," said Duncan Brock, group director at CIPS.

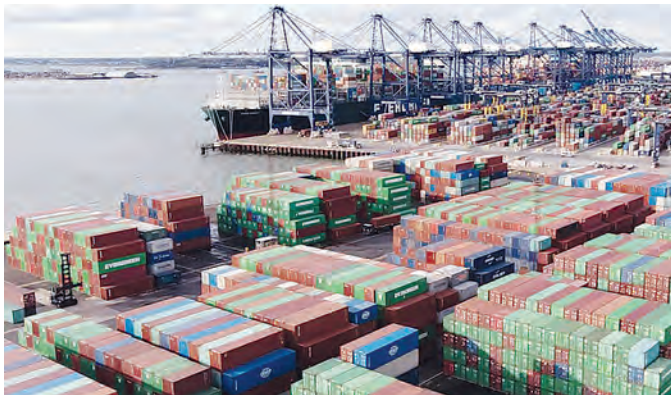
Service providers reported a faster recovery in new work than goods producers, Markit said. Subdued momentum in the manufacturing sector again reflected constraints on growth due to the global supply chain crisis.

The headline seasonally adjusted IHS Markit/CIPS Flash UK Composite Output Index registered 57.7 in November, down fractionally from 57.8 in October but comfortably above the 56.3 average seen in the third quarter of 2021.

"The relatively stable PMI reading will probably be enough to convince the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) that the economy is strong enough to withstand a rate hike in December," said Thomas Pugh, economist at RSM.

"Looking at the PMIs in more detail shows there was a surprise rise in the manufacturing PMI from 57.8 in October to 58.2 in November, driven by strong rises in output, new orders and employment. However, participants noted that severe shortages of materials and staff held back growth.

"The services PMI also fell by less-than-expected to 58.6 in November as domestic demand remained strong."



Iranian Delegation in Baghdad on Gen. Soleimani Terror Case

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iraqi sources reported that a judicial delegation from Iran has arrived in Baghdad to investigate assassination case of former IRGC Quds Force Commander Martyr Lt. Gen. Soleimani and Iraq’s PMU Commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. The purpose of the Iranian delegation’s visit to Baghdad is to follow up on the assassination case of Martyr Lt. Gen.

Soleimani and Iraq’s Second-in-Command of Popular Mobilization Unit (PMU), also known as Hashd al-Sha’abi. Upon the arrival of the Iranian delegation to the Iraqi capital Baghdad, the Chairman of Iraqi Supreme Judicial Council Faiq Zidan met and held talks with visiting Iranian delegation, Al-Ahad News reported.



Poor Diets Imperiling People and the Planet

PARIS (AFP) - Nearly half the world’s population suffer from poor nutrition linked to too much or not enough food, a global assessment said Tuesday with wide-ranging impacts on health and the planet.

The Global Nutrition Report (GNR), a yearly survey and analysis of the latest data on nutrition and related health issues, found that 48 percent of people currently eat either too little or too much -- resulting in them being overweight, obese or underweight.

At current rates, the report finds, the world will fail to meet eight out of nine nutrition targets set by the World Health Organization for 2025.

These include reducing child wasting (when children are too thin for their height) and child stunting (when they are too short for their age), and also adult obesity.

The report estimates nearly 150 million children under five years old are stunted, more than 45 million are wasted and nearly 40 million are overweight.

It also finds more than 40 percent of adults (2.2 billion people) are now overweight or obese. “Avoidable deaths due to poor diets have grown by 15 percent since 2010 and poor diets are now responsible for a quarter of all adult deaths,” Chair of the GNR’s Independent Expert Group Renata Micha told AFP.

“Our global findings show that our diets have not improved over the last ten years and are now a major threat to people’s health and to the planet.”

This year’s GNR is the first to look at global diets and how food choices are affecting people and the planet.

It finds people are failing to consume enough health-promoting foods like fruits and vegetables, particularly in lower-income countries.

Higher-income countries had the highest intake of foods with harmful health impacts like red meat, dairy and sugary drinks.

Consumption of harmful foods is on the rise, the report found, with red and processed meat already at almost five times the maximum recommendation of one serving a week.

The report notes that current global nutrition targets do not mention diet, with the exception of limiting sodium, and recommends new, more holistic targets.



“The science supports a food-based approach or diet-pattern approach in assessing the impacts on health and the environment,” Micha said.

In line with other estimates, the GNR calculated global food demand generated some 35 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in 2018.

“Animal-source foods have generally higher environmental footprints per product than plant-based foods,” the report said.

“Consequently, they were responsible for the majority of food-related greenhouse gas emissions and land use, with particularly large impacts from beef, lamb and dairy.”

The report called for urgent funding to improve nutrition across the globe, particularly as Covid-19 has pushed an estimated additional 155 million people into extreme poverty.

The GNR estimates the nutrition spending will need to increase by nearly \$4 billion annually until 2030 to meet stunting, wasting, maternal anaemia and breastfeeding targets alone.

Italy Hits Amazon, Apple With €200m Antitrust Fine

ROME (Dispatches) - Italy’s competition watchdog imposed fines totaling over €200 million (RM944 million) on Amazon and Apple today in the latest action taken against U.S. tech giants in Europe over their business practices.

The watchdog ordered Apple to pay €134.5 million and e-commerce firm Amazon €68.7 million for infringing EU laws through restrictions which penalized sellers of Apple and Beats products.

Both Amazon and Apple said they intended to appeal.

Meanwhile in Strasbourg, EU legislation to impose unprecedented restrictions on how US tech giants do business passed a first and significant hurdle.

A key committee of the European Parliament overwhelmingly approved their version of the Digital Markets Act, legislation that will slap far-reaching rules on Facebook, Google, Amazon, Apple and Microsoft.

U.S. regulators are closely watching Europe’s approach to big tech firms, after Washington pledged to intensify scrutiny of the technology industry.

The Italian watchdog said a 2018 deal between Amazon and Apple had “barred official and unofficial resellers of Apple and Beats products from using Amazon.it, allowing the sale of those products in that marketplace only to Amazon and to selected parties in a discriminatory manner”.

The aim had been to restrict the number of retailers and limit cross-border sales, it said.

The agreement was bad news for consumers, because at least 70 per cent of electronics goods bought in Italy were purchased on Amazon.

“We strongly disagree with the decision.... and we intend to appeal,” Amazon said in a statement, adding that the fine was “disproportionate and unjustified”.

It said it made no sense to suggest Amazon benefitted “by excluding sellers” because its business model “relies on their success”.

In its statement, Apple said it believed “we have done nothing wrong” and the agreement was part of efforts to ensure only genuine products were being sold through reseller partners.

Post-AUKUS, France Turns to Indonesia, Eyes Rafale Jet Sale

PARIS (Reuters) - France will try to cement deeper ties in the Indo-Pacific region when its foreign minister arrives in Indonesia on Tuesday as it counters the loss of a strategic defense deal with Australia in September.

Paris accused its allies of stabbing it in the back when Australia opted for nuclear-powered submarines to be built with U.S. and British technology instead of a multi-billion dollar French submarine program.

Canberra pressed ahead with a trilateral alliance (AUKUS) excluding France, which it said was crucial to tackle the perceived Chinese threat in the region.

France’s partnership with Australia dating back to 2016 was considered the cornerstone of its Indo-Pacific policy and since losing that deal, Paris has been on the offensive to strengthen its ties in the region with high-level meetings ranging from Japan to India and Vietnam.

“This trip is about reaffirming France’s commitment to the Indo-Pacific ... and to intensify the relationship with Indonesia,” a French diplomatic source told



reporters in a briefing ahead of Jean-Yves Le Drian’s two-day visit.

Key to developing that relationship will be closer military cooperation. Indonesia wants to boost its defence capabilities, including with the possible purchase of submarines, warplanes and warships, amid ongoing tensions with China in the disputed South China Sea.

France has been negotiating with Jakarta for several months the sale of 36 Rafale fighter jets. It signed a letter of intent in June, although officials do not expect a deal to be agreed before the end of the year due to financing issues.

“The French are doubling down on other Indo-Pacific relations, including Indonesia, in a sense to compensate for losing the Australians,” an Indo-Pacific diplomat said.

Highlighting just how angry Paris is with Canberra, a two-minute video announcing Le Drian’s trip to Indonesia outlined its Indo-Pacific strategy naming numerous regional countries with the exemption of Australia.

Iranian Exports Reduce Fuel Prices in Afghanistan

TEHRAN (PressTV) - An Afghan official says a rise in fuel imports from Iran has reduced prices in Afghanistan.

That’s according to the director of the Khorasan Razavi-Herat Joint Chamber of Commerce.

Mira Jan Soleiman Kheyli said the problem in fuel imports from Iran has been resolved to some extent and the Iranian petrochemical companies and refineries have resumed exports to Afghanistan.

Soleiman Kheyli however added that currently the National Iranian Oil Company is not exporting any fuel to Afghanistan and expressed hope the NIOC will also resume exports soon.

According to Soleiman Kheyli, the price of each ton of gasoline had reached 950 dollars but it decreased by 80-100 dollars following the resumption of Iranian exports.

The Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan share a 900 kilometer border and bilateral trade is conducted via the three crossings of Melik, Mil 78 and Dogharoun. 60% of the total monthly fuel exports to Afghanistan, which is done with 2,500 fuel tankers from the three border crossings, passes through Dogharoun. Annually, \$1.5 billion in exports and \$20 million in imports are made via the Dogharoun crossing between Iran and Afghanistan.

Bahraini Bank... FROM PAGE 1

The international tribunal, however, decided that the Iranian institutions had been the target of “political retribution” and ordered Bahrain to pay over 200 million euros in damages plus costs to the banks, London-based Global Arbitration Review, a magazine dedicated to commercial arbitration, reported.

Iran’s former central bank governor Abdolnaser Hemmati confirmed the news on Wednesday, hailing it as a victory for the country.

“A legal victory: With the many years of effort we have had, an international arbitration tribunal has condemned the Bahraini government, which had expropriated Bank Melli and Bank Saderat of their venture in Future Bank of Bahrain with a political motivation and violation of international laws, to paying more than 200 million euros in damages and arbitration costs,” he tweeted.

The accusations emerged from an intensive investigation that began after Bahraini regulators formally closed Future Bank in 2015. The closure prompted Future Bank’s two Iranian shareholders to file a complaint in The Hague accusing Bahrain of improperly shutting down the bank and demanding the return of frozen assets.

In response, Bahrain submitted hundreds of pages that tried to paint a portrait of a financial institution operating mainly with “the aim of concealment,” the documents stated.

The audit “revealed crimes and violations of Bahraini and international law of massive proportions,” Bahraini Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed al-Khalifa was quoted as saying at the time. He said criminal proceedings were underway in Bahrain and that the results of the investigation were being shared with other capitals, because they will “also be of concern to the international community.”

IAEA Chief... FROM PAGE 1

The talks came before the scheduled resumption on Monday of negotiations between Tehran and world powers aimed at reviving the 2015 deal that gave Iran sanctions relief in return for curbs on its nuclear program.

“Despite my best efforts, these extensive negotiations and deliberations to address Iran’s outstanding safeguards issues, detailed in the two reports, proved inconclusive,” Grossi told the 35-nation board of governors as its quarterly meeting opened Wednesday.

Grossi’s trip to Iran ended Tuesday with statements from both sides that stressed their commitment to cooperation but left hanging questions raised by the IAEA(International Atomic Energy Agency)over the access of nuclear inspectors and the discovery of uranium traces in three locations undeclared as nuclear sites.

No Point Left... FROM PAGE 1

He referred to the insecure conditions in some neighboring countries, stressing that if we, the Iranian nation, intend to preserve the health and security of ourselves and our families, we need to preserve this unity ship effectively.

Rear Admiral Tangsiri said that in this path the most important index is that unity that needs to be preserved in practice.

The IRGC Navy commander said that everyone must try wholeheartedly to solve the people’s problems as Almighty Allah has put this responsibility of the officials’ shoulders, but the enemy wishes the contrary.

“The enemy plans for sowing the seeds of discord between the two main branches of Islam and as a result penetrate in our country, but it is our duty not to leave any spot for the enemy’s penetration,” he reiterated.

Tehran Calls for... FROM PAGE 1

He added that Iran’s Parliament approved the UNTOC in 2018 which is now under the Expediency Council’s consideration for its final approval.

There are currently several statutory regulations in place in Iran pertaining to TIP and other necessary legal tools for investigation and prosecution within the country’s legal system, he said.

The senior official added that the Iranian administration had also approved a new draft bill amending the Countering Human Trafficking Act of 2004 and submitted it to the Parliament for adoption.

“This draft bill focuses on the definition of TIP, including all of its essential elements, as a notorious crime, while covering aggravating circumstances such as commission against minors and women,” he said.

He noted that such harmony would eventually contribute to international cooperation on the issue.

The Ministry of Interior has established the Commission on Countering Trafficking in Person, which features a set of executive and supervisory measures, to, inter alia, “develop policies, strategies and programs while monitoring any activities related to TIP.”

“On the front line, our law enforcement personnel continue to bravely fight organized criminal groups despite the unavailability of necessary means and resources resulting from unlawful US sanctions and in the absence of much needed international support to fight these groups efficiently,” Takht-Ravanchi said.

Minister Eyes... FROM PAGE 1

“[based on this roadmap] It is decided to help increase productivity and improve the business environment through two categories of measures. First, removing barriers to the production and business by chain financing of businesses, and raising corporate tax while reducing the production tax rates,” the minister explained.

The second category of government economic measures includes serious support for pioneering projects that have multiple chains and will generate large revenues and create employment, Khandouzi added.

Pointing to the ways for financing pioneering projects, the official noted that the participation of foreign partners mainly from neighboring countries, the issuance of project shares and offering them at the stock market, and finally using the capacity of large holdings and subsidiaries of the country’s banks and large state and public companies are among the ways through which the government plans to fund these projects.

Khandouzi also pointed to his ministry’s plan for curbing inflation based on monetary and credit measures and budget centered steps in collaboration with the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and the country’s Budget and Planning Organization (BPO), saying: “Budget measures and the use of monetary instruments such as controlling banks’ balance sheets on a monthly basis, controlling interbank market rates and open market operations will be among these programs.”

Preventing tax evasion, controlling government spending, selling surplus assets of government-owned entities and generating revenue by the government-owned companies were also mentioned as ways for reducing budget deficit in the current year.

LeBron Gets One-Game Suspension

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - LeBron James has been suspended for one game following his bloody clash with Detroit Pistons player Isaiah Stewart, the NBA said yesterday. Los Angeles Lakers star James was ejected for only the second time in his career after wildly lashing out at Stewart during Sunday's victory over the Pistons. Stewart was left with blood pouring from a facial injury following the flashpoint, and needed to be restrained repeatedly by team-mates and staff as he attempted to confront James.

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France Urged to Boost Stadium Security Urgently

PARIS (Dispatches) - France must urgently step up security measures at its soccer stadiums, the country's Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said on Tuesday following a meeting with Sports Minister Roxana Maracineanu after the latest outbreak of fan violence. Darmanin said French authorities would be examining areas such as imposing bans on supporters and stadiums, having more surveillance cameras around venues, and clarifying who would have the authority to cancel games in case of fan violence.

Man United Into Last 16, Chelsea Thrash Juventus

PARIS (Dispatches) - Manchester United booked their place in the Champions League last 16 as Cristiano Ronaldo scored in a 2-0 victory at Villarreal on Tuesday, while holders Chelsea also reached the knockout phase by thumping Juventus. Three-time European champions United went into their first game since sacking Ole Gunnar Solskjaer at the weekend needing a win to confirm a top-two finish in Group F. But they were under massive pressure as defeat would have left their fate out of their own hands. David de Gea made two crucial saves and United, with Michael Carrick in caretaker charge, took advantage through Ronaldo's 78th-minute lob. Jadon Sancho, so often a peripheral figure since his big-money move from Borussia Dortmund in the close-season, capped a fine individual display with his first goal for the club late on. "It's not an important result for me personally. It's an important one for the players and the club," said Carrick. Ronaldo's goal was the 799th of his career, his 140th in the Champions League and his sixth in the competition this season. The other qualification spot in the group remains up for grabs after Young Boys and Atalanta played out a thrilling 3-3 draw in Bern. Late goals from Vincent Sierro and Silvan Hefti gave the Swiss champions a 3-2 lead, but Luis Muriel struck in the 88th minute for the visitors. Atalanta face a winner-takes-all match against Villarreal in Bergamo next month. Chelsea romped into the last 16 and to the top of Group H with an impressive 4-0 thrashing of Juventus at Stamford Bridge. Thomas Tuchel's men knew that qualification would be secured if they could avoid defeat or if Zenit Saint Petersburg failed to beat Malmo. The Blues dominated the early stages and took the lead through young defender Trevoh Chalobah's third goal of the season.



Chelsea grabbed their third goal less than two minutes later, Ruben Loftus-Cheek prodding the ball to Hudson-Odoi, who smashed home from close range. There was still time for Timo Werner, making his first appearance since an injury layoff, to come off the bench and score in added time. Zenit drew 1-1 with Malmo to secure a spot in the Europa League knockouts. Barcelona were held to a goalless draw by Benfica at the Camp Nou in Xavi's second game as coach, but remain above the Portuguese side in Group E. However, the Catalan club will have to beat Bayern Munich in Germany in their final group game to be sure of making the next round. Benfica host already-eliminated Dynamo Kiev in their last match, trailing Barca by two points. Barcelona endured a nervy first half which saw Gavi waste the only clear opportunity, blazing over from close range when Memphis Depay was waiting in the middle for a tap-in. The other game in Group E saw Bayern Munich wrap up top spot with a 2-1 victory at Dynamo Kiev. Robert Lewandowski lit up a snowy evening in the Ukrainian capital by scoring a magnificent overhead kick, with Kingsley Coman also on the scoresheet for the six-time winners. In Group G, Lille made Salzburg wait to reach the last 16 as Jonathan David scored a first-half winner in a 1-0 victory in France. All four teams in the group can still go through, after Sevilla saw off Wolfsburg 2-0.

Lewandowski, Benzema Nominated for FIFA's Best Award

LAUSANNE (Dispatches) - Robert Lewandowski is in the running to retain his Best FIFA Men's Player award after he was named yesterday on an 11-man shortlist alongside Karim Benzema and Jorginho. Perennial candidates Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo feature among the nominees, with Neymar, Mohamed Salah and Kylian Mbappe also up for a prize first awarded in 2017. Erling Haaland, N'Golo Kante and Kevin De Bruyne complete the list of potential winners. Four Barcelona players are included on the women's best player shortlist — Alexia Putellas, Jennifer Hermoso, Aitana Bonmati and Caroline Graham Hansen. Chelsea, beaten by Barcelona in last season's Women's Champions League final, also have four representatives with Sam Kerr, Ji So-yun, Magdalena Eriksson and Pernille Harder. Lucy Bronze, who took home last year's award, was nominated with fellow England international Ellen White. Canada's Olympic gold medallist Christine Sinclair is in contention too, as is Stina Blackstenius of Sweden. Thomas Tuchel is a frontrunner for best men's coach after leading Chelsea to the Champions League title. He faces competition from Roberto Mancini, the mastermind of Italy's Euro 2020 triumph.

Abramovich in Love With the Game

LONDON (Dispatches) - Thomas Tuchel has praised Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich for being "in love" with football ahead of the title-holders Champions League match against Juventus. Abramovich, a Russian billionaire, was in London to host Israeli president Isaac Herzog at Stamford Bridge on Sunday and may stay on to see Chelsea at home against Italian giants Juventus. "Is he a special owner? I think, first and most importantly, he's a football fan, a huge football fan. "He is in love with the game, he's in love with the details, he wants to know everything about what's going on here in Cobham (Chelsea's training ground). "And we keep him posted, because he has such a genuine interest and love for the game. "This is the most important and this makes things very special." Abramovich's £140 million (RM784.9 million) Chelsea takeover in 2003 triggered a seismic shift in power in the Premier League. He brought Jose Mourinho to Stamford Bridge in 2004, with the Portuguese boss winning the Premier League title in his first season in charge as the Blues ended a 50-year wait to be crowned champions of England. Since then Chelsea have won four more Premier League titles, the Champions League and Europa League twice plus eight domestic cups. Tuchel added: "He wants to be competitive and he wants to have the right attitude on the pitch."

China Says Peng Shuai Case Is Maliciously Hyped Up

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China said the controversy surrounding Peng Shuai was being "maliciously" hyped up, after the Chinese tennis star made sexual assault claims against one of the nation's most powerful politicians. Peng, a Wimbledon and French Open doubles champion, was not seen for more than two weeks after she made the accusations against former vice-premier Zhang Gaoli. The 35-year-old Peng reappeared in public for the first time at the weekend when she was seen attending a Beijing tennis tournament.

Chelsea's defenders were consistently a menace from set-pieces, and Thiago Silva saw a header saved by Wojciech Szczesny early in the second period. It was a defender who doubled Chelsea's lead in the 56th minute. England right-back Reece James hammered a fine volley into the bottom corner to net for the fifth time already this term.



Barty Caps Year by Getting Engaged

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Ashleigh Barty capped her third straight season as world number one Tuesday by announcing she is engaged to long-term boyfriend Garry Kissick.

The Australian revealed the happy news in an Instagram post, sharing a photo of the smiling couple embracing with an engagement ring on her finger. "Future husband," wrote Barty, 25, who accompanied the post with a love heart and ring emoji. Kissick, 30, is a former golf pro and the pair met on a course in Barty's home state of Queensland in 2016.

He is ever-present courtside when she plays and often posts supportive messages on social media. The news sparked a frenzy of congratulations from fellow tennis stars, with Simona Halep posting 10 love heart emojis. Reigning Wimbledon champion Barty pulled out of the season-ending WTA Finals to remain at home and focus on preparing for the Australian summer. She has not played since a shock third-round loss at the U.S. Open in September, but still finished as world number one after a season in which she won five titles. Barty joined Steffi Graf, Martina Navratilova, Serena Williams and Chris Evert as the only women to finish as the top-ranked player for three consecutive years.

Al-Hilal Win AFC Champions League

RIYADH (Dispatches) - A breathtaking history-making Nasser Al-Dawsari goal after just 16 seconds of the AFC Champions League final set Al-Hilal on their way to a deserved 2-0 win over Pohang Steelers and a record fourth continental title at Riyadh's King Fahd International Stadium on Tuesday. The 22 year-old's early breakthrough was record-breaking in another sense as it was the fastest that the Champions League final has ever seen. It was also a stunning strike and worthy of winning any championship anywhere in the world. It was added to in the second half by Moussa Marega and Pohang, who were second-best for much of the game, never really looked likely to come back from that. The East Asians, the tournament is divided into two geographical zones until the final, were up against it from the start. The roars from the 50,000 plus Saudi Arabian fans that had greeted kick-off had not even died down by the time the left-back gave the Blues the lead. Al-Dawsari, who made his national team debut earlier this year, picked up a loose ball just inside the Korean half, moved forward and unleashed a fierce shot from around 30 metres that flew into the top corner. Goalkeeper Lee Jun may have been caught by surprise at the timing, the power and the pace of the shot but had it come in the last minute and not the first, there was still little that he could have done. It was unstoppable. The sea of blue around the arena erupted and Pohang were stunned as their opposite numbers celebrated with almost as much disbelief as delight.



Alcaraz Set to Shine in Spain's Davis Cup Defense

LONDON (Dispatches) - Holders Spain finally get the chance to try and retain their Davis Cup crown when the competition resumes in yet another new format across three European cities this week with all eyes on teenager Carlos Alcaraz in the absence of Rafa Nadal. Two years ago in the inaugural edition of the revamped team event, a Nadal-inspired Spain claimed the title after an exhausting week in Madrid's Caja Magica. The pandemic scuppered last year's 18-nation Davis Cup Finals and since then the International Tennis Federation (ITF) and partners Kosmos Tennis have moved to make the event more manageable, with Turin and Innsbruck added as co-hosts. Starting today, the 18 finalists will compete in six groups of three with eight qualifying for the knockout rounds and the final taking place in Madrid on December 5. The specter of Covid-19 has returned, however, and the two groups being staged in Innsbruck will have no fans cheering them on after Austria's reintroduction of a lockdown. Impossibly late finishes to ties (comprising of two singles and a doubles) and smallish crowds for some matches tarnished what was an encouraging debut for the revamped Davis Cup Finals in Madrid in 2019, which is why it has been expanded to 10 days across three nations this time. But Spain will feel right at home with Group A, which also includes a powerful Russian team and Ecuador, in Madrid.

