

**Health Ministry Announced on Wednesday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 130,446 With 90 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

# IRAN NEWS

**Iran's Army-Navy Commander-in-Chief Rear Admiral Shahram Irani Said in A Ceremony on Wednesday That Three New Vessels Will Join The Naval Forces in the North and South Waters of the Country**

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## DOMESTIC

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## DOMESTIC

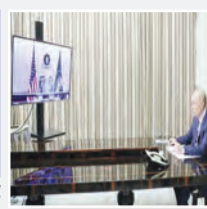
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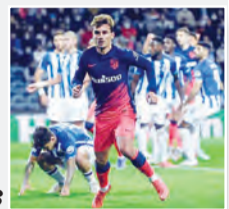
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## Doubling Down On Sanctions Not to Create Leverage for U.S.

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Ministry spokesman has lambasted fresh U.S. sanctions against a number of the Iranian officials and entities over rights allegations, saying the intensification of anti-Iran measures will fail to create leverage and also runs counter to the anticipated seriousness and goodwill at a time that Iran and the remaining signatories to the 2015 nuclear deal are in the midst of a new round of talks on the removal of American sanctions.

Saeed Khatibzadeh made the remarks in a post on his Twitter account late on Tuesday, shortly after the U.S. Treasury and State Department announced sanctions against a dozen Iranian government officials and organizations over accusations of human rights abuses.

"Even amid Vienna talks, U.S. cannot stop imposing sanctions against Iran," Khatibzadeh wrote in his tweet, referring to the seventh round of high-level talks between Iran and the other parties to the nuclear agreement in the Austrian capital of Vienna.

"Washington fails to understand that 'maximum failure' & a diplomatic breakthrough are mutually exclusive. Doubling down on sanctions won't create leverage — and is anything but seriousness & goodwill," he added.

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## Europe a Haven for Economic Criminals

TEHRAN (IP) - The Deputy for International Affairs of Iran's Judiciary Kazem Gharibabadi says the European countries are hosting the most notorious economic criminals of the world.

Speaking in a meeting held on the occasion of International Anti-Corruption Day in Tehran, Kazem Gharibabadi said that the UN "Convention against Corruption" is one of the few ones in the fight against crimes that Iran has minor problems with.

"European countries are failing in the fulfillment of their international obligations, and when it comes to fighting corruption, they accuse other countries, while hosting the biggest economic criminals," he noted.

As the first comprehensive international treaty specifically addressing the issue of corruption, the Convention against Corruption was ratified by the United Nations General Assembly on October 31, 2003, and signed by the Islamic Republic of Iran in the same year.

International Anti-Corruption Day has been observed annually, on December 9, since the passage of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption on October 31, 2003, to raise public awareness for anti-corruption.

## Tehran Warns Against Acts of Piracy Targeting Its Oil at Sea



TEHRAN (PressTV) - An Iranian envoy to the United Nations has issued a stern warning against acts of piracy targeting tankers carrying Iran's oil cargos at sea, urging the international community to condemn such illegal measures that endanger freedom of navigation.

Zahra Ershadi, deputy permanent representative of Iran to the UN, made the remarks on Wednesday in an address to the UN General Assembly's meeting on oceans and the law of the sea.

She complained that the coronavirus pandemic and the US imposition of sanctions under the so-called maximum pressure campaign had disrupted freedom of movement for Iranian vessels and affected the provision of the nation's basic needs such as food, medicine and medical equipment.

"In addition to the previous acts that have been outlawed, stolen Iranian oil and its drivers at sea have been a new development since last year," she said. "We strongly warn about the continuation of this dangerous policy that exacerbates an already highly intense situation due to such arrogant unilateral policies."

The Iranian diplomat called on the international community to "condemn these unlawful acts that threaten free trade at sea as well as freedom of seas."

Late in October, American forces confiscated a tanker that was carrying a cargo of Iranian oil in the strategic Sea of Oman, transferring its consignment of crude to another vessel.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy then staged a maritime operation against the second vessel, landing its helicopters on its deck and navigating the ship towards Iranian waters.

American destroyers and helicopters were dispatched to the scene, but Iranian speed boats and vessels made them flee the area.

Elsewhere in her remarks, Ershadi said that combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing should be on the agenda of all countries, recommending protecting endangered coastal ecosystems in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.

She further warned that the irresponsible construction of artificial islands in the Persian Gulf would unequivocally damage the habitats of rare marine species.

The heavy presence of military fleets from extra-territorial countries has exacerbated not only safety and security, but also maritime pollution, she added.

The Iranian diplomat also warned that escalating tensions among littoral Persian Gulf states would further destabilize the region and severely endanger development and prosperity.

"We urge all relevant states to cooperate in order to protect the environment of this shared body of water and refrain from unilateral acts that might endanger its marine environment," she said.

Iran, Ershadi added, "reiterates its commitment to rule-based maritime order for securing maritime rights and interests for all as well as ensuring that maritime activities are undertaken smoothly, including based on the international law of the sea."

## Iran, P4+1 to Resume Sanctions Removal Talks Today

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran and the five other parties to the 2015 nuclear deal are set to start a new round of negotiations today (Thursday) in the Austrian capital of Vienna, aimed at securing a removal of the sanctions imposed by the U.S. on Iran after its withdrawal from the accord and reviving the embattled international document.

Iran's chief negotiator to the Vienna talks Ali Bagheri-Kani, who was in Moscow for talks with Russian officials, on Tuesday announced the finalized date and said Tehran's two proposed drafts put forward during the seventh round of talks with the other signatories to the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), can seriously advance the negotiation process.

He added that he "saw it necessary to hold consultations with Russian officials so that we will continue the negotiations on Thursday in a progressive and constructive atmosphere."

Bagheri-Kani, who serves as Iran's deputy foreign minister for political affairs, explained that the two proposed drafts were nothing new and were in compliance with the texts that had earlier been agreed upon by both sides during the previous six rounds of the talks, but with some amendments and additions meant to make up for the shortcomings.

The senior Iranian diplomat said the country had held similar consultations with Chinese officials as well since the beginning of the seventh round of the Vienna talks.

The JCPOA was abandoned by former U.S. President Donald Trump in May 2018. Trump then targeted Iran's economy with what he called the "maximum pressure" campaign, which failed to compel Iran to negotiate a "new deal."

## Iran Calls U.S. Sanctions Against ICC, Violation of Int'l law

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's representative to the twentieth session of the Assembly of States Parties (ASP) to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) expressed regret over the US illegal and unilateral sanctions against the ICC and its officials.

The twentieth session of the Assembly of States Parties (ASP) to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) opened today, 6 December 2021, at the World Forum Convention Center in The Hague, The Netherlands. Due to the current COVID-19 restrictions, meetings will be held partly remotely.

From 6 to 11 December 2021, States Parties to the Rome Statute, the Court's founding treaty, observer States, invited States, international and regional organizations, and representatives from civil society will discuss key challenges facing the Statute. States Parties will also make important decisions and adopt resolutions on key issues pertaining to the functioning of the Court and the Trust Fund for Victims, including in relation to their respective budgets, and on cooperation. They will also elect two Deputy Prosecutors, members of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims, and members of the Advisory Committee on nominations of judges.

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## UAE to Build 300 MW Power Projects in Iran

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Under a MoU signed between Managing Director of Khuzestan Regional Electric Co. Mahmoud Dasht-Bozorg and AJ Holding CEO Allan Jespersen, the Dubai-based company has undertaken to build gas-fired thermal, solar and wind power plants in the hydrocarbon-rich province.

"The memorandum states that the maximum capacity of the power plants to be built at any point should not exceed 25 MW," Bargh News, a news outlet dedicated to Iran's electric power industry, reported.

It requires the UAE company to execute the project in the "shortest possible time", where some of the plants should join the grid before the summer, it added.

According to Bargh News, Khuzestan Regional Electric Co. has already signed an agreement with a private Iranian company to establish 150 MW of capacity in the province.

On Wednesday, the news outlet cited Managing Director of Sistan and Baluchestan Regional Electric Co. as saying that Iran's largest solar plant is being built in the southeastern province.

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## Illegal U.S. Sanctions Threatening World Maritime Security

TEHRAN (MNA) - Chief Executive of Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) said that illegal U.S. sanctions imposed by the United States, as one of members of International Maritime Organization (IMO), on Iran are jeopardizing maritime security.

Ali-Akbar Safaei made the remarks on Wednesday at the 32nd meeting of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), which was held virtually.

"We are witnessing the continuation of restrictive measures by the United States as one of the member states of International Maritime Organization (IMO) against Iranian maritime transport industry which threatens safety and security of maritime and is contrary to the rules and regulations of maritime treaties," he said.

The foundation of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) is based on the cooperation of its member states with the aim of maintaining and promoting maritime safety and security, preserving the marine environment and increasing shipping efficiency in the international arena, he emphasized.

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## Majlis Speaker to Depart for Turkey to Attend PUIC Conference

TEHRAN (MNA) – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf was to depart last night for Turkey to attend the 2-day session of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC).

Qalibaf is scheduled to participate at the 16th Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC) conference which is slated to be held on December 9 - 10, 2021 with a focus on “Palestine, migration, and Afghanistan”.

According to the Spokesman of the Iranian Parliament’s Presiding Board Nezameddin Mousavi, Qalibaf will also hold bilateral meetings with parliament speakers of some Islamic countries who attend the conference.

## President Orders Identification of Foreign Exchange Market Disruptors

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi ordered the organizations in charge to find elements disrupting and destabilizing the country’s foreign exchange market.**

In comments at a Tuesday meeting of the Administration’s Economic Coordination Headquarters, Raisi said it has become clear that there are interference and conspiracies from profiteers with the purpose of undermining the stability of the foreign currency market.

“The organizations in charge should oversee and control the market, accurately identify the elements that interfere in and destabilize the currency market, and seriously exercise their responsibilities in this regard,” he stressed.

It is necessary for the Iranian organizations to work in coordination to regulate and manage the currency market, the president added.

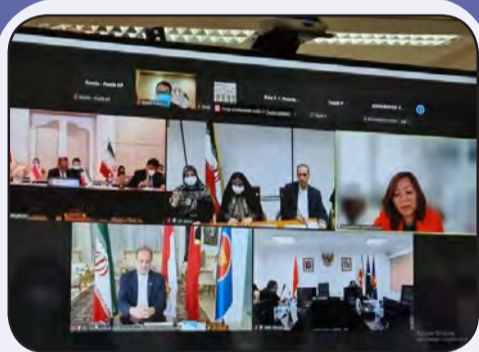
In this meeting, by dividing the work and duties of different agencies, it was decided



that stability and normal conditions return to the foreign exchange market for management in the foreign exchange market by obtaining the necessary permits from the responsible institutions and based on facts.

The Iranian rial has fallen to its lowest ever rates against the U.S. dollar on the unofficial market in recent days after the seventh round of the Vienna talks on the revival of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) ended without any definite result.

## 7th Round of Human Rights Talks Between Iran, Indonesia Held



TEHRAN (MNA) – The seventh round of human rights talks between Iran and Indonesia was held virtually on Tuesday.

The Iranian delegation was chaired by Sharifi Sadr, Director-General of Women and Human Rights affairs of the Foreign Ministry, and the Indonesian delegation was headed by the Director-General of Human Rights Affairs of Indonesia’s Foreign Ministry.

The purpose of these talks was to get acquainted with the human rights situation in the two countries, to create a better understanding of the existing realities and to exchange experiences between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Indonesia in the field of human rights.

The two sides discussed issues and developments regarding human rights in Iran and Indonesia, cooperation in areas of interest within the framework of human rights mechanisms of the United Nations and other international forums, cooperation on the promotion and protection of women’s rights, the rights of the disabled and human rights measures adopted during the Covid pandemic.

The Iranian side appreciated Indonesia’s position to vote against the resolution on the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran and called for the expansion of assistance and cooperation between the two countries in international organizations.

At the end of the talks, the two sides agreed to continue their annual cooperation and hold the next round of their negotiations on human rights cooperation between the two countries in 2022 in Jakarta.

## Syria to Continue Path of Resistance Against Enemies

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the path of resistance against enemies will be continued in Syria, stressing that the resistance front will achieve a final victory.

“The path of resistance and confrontation with enemies in Syria continues and unity of the Resistance Front’s member states in recent years has made it possible to take effective, successful and unprecedented measures against continued domination of foreigners in this very sensitive region coveted by the United States and Britain in the past,” Ali Akbar Velayati said in a meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad in Tehran.

He added that the formation of the resistance front has resulted in “very useful” outcomes and brought hope to the Muslim world that aggressive powers would be defeated through resistance.

The senior Iranian official stated that the Syrian president has managed to carry out unique measures in recent years -- with the support of Iran, Russia and the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement and most importantly resistance of the brave Syrian people -- in the face of the cowardly invasion of the Arab country, led by the United States, the Israeli regime and some reactionary countries in the region.

“The resistance front will undoubtedly achieve a final victory, God willing,” Velayati pointed out.

He further pointed to “strategic” relations between Tehran and Damascus and called on both sides to concentrate their efforts on the expansion of all-out ties.

Elsewhere in the meeting, Velayati said Yemen’s resistance has defeated the occupying powers and would soon force them to retreat, adding, “We will see an independent and powerful country and a strong supporter of Islamic values and the interests of the suffering nation of the country.”

He also expressed confidence that the Lebanese people would overcome the problems caused by the United States and its mercenaries in the region and would continue their resistance against enemies to defend the country’s independence and territorial integrity.

This kind of battle, which is the result of unity among the resistance front’s countries, can be regarded as a model for the whole world, especially Muslim nations, with its positive effects in recent years, the Leader’s advisor said.

The Syrian foreign minister, for his part, commended Iran’s support for the Arab country’s people and government and said the two states’ president would meet in the future given strategic mutual relations.

Mekdad said constant acts of aggression by the Zionist regime and its military presence in Syria as well as U.S. unlawful sanctions against Damascus are in violation of Syria’s territorial integrity and the root cause of insecurity and economic pressure in the country.

However, he emphasized, the Syrian people have thwarted all enemies’ plots by its full resistance.

He also said the U.S. must withdraw from the region and Syria in particular.

## Police Dismantle Biggest Drug Trafficking Network in SE

TEHRAN (IFP) - The largest drug trafficking network in the southeast of Iran was dismantled by the Iranian Police force, commander-in-chief of Sistan and Baluchistan province police Brigadier General Ahmad Taheri says.

Taheri stated that the police forces managed to arrest the chieftain of the largest drug-trafficking network in the southeast of Iran and the other members.

The commander-in-chief of Sistan and Baluchistan province’s police noted that in an operation, the police forces surrounded the members of the cartel but the criminals ignored the warnings and started to fire at the police trying to escape, but the police succeeded to apprehend them.

He added that the special forces of the province’s anti-narcotics police identified the exact location of the

drug traffickers in the desert area of “Kalchad” in the “Samsur” plain.

He also stated that the police forces took the drug traffickers by surprise in an ambush.

General Taheri also said that the Police commandos stopped the drug traffickers who were trying to escape in four vehicles.

The Sistan and Balochistan police commander added that a major drug trafficker in the southeast of the country has been arrested along with four gunmen under his leadership.

He also noted that in the operation, the police commander seized 7 AK-47 rifles with 619 rounds of ammunition, 2,491 kilograms of opium, 103 kilograms of morphine, 96 kilograms of crystal and 14 kilograms of heroin from the drug traffickers.

## Red Crescent Voices Readiness to Expand Cooperation With IFRC

TEHRAN (IP) - Deputy of Education, Research and Technology of Red Crescent announced readiness to expand cooperation with the Red Cross Federation.

According to the Red Crescent Society, “Mehrab Sharifi Sedeh” met with “Martin Fisher,” Operations Manager of International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in Iran on Tuesday and stressed the need to increase public awareness to promote resilience in disasters.

Iran’s Deputy Minister of Education, Research and Technology added: “The issue of climate change, especially drought, can cause severe problems for national populations, and the best thing to do is to raise the awareness of communities to increase resilience because only resilient communities can resist these problems.”

Martin Fisher also praised the Red Crescent’s various training activities on multiple hazards and called for more cooperation in research projects on drought and its consequences.

It was also decided to hold more meetings to draw up operational plans to prevent hazards, given the scope of activities in various fields.

## Iran, Azerbaijan, Georgia Confer On Establishing New Transit Route

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran, Azerbaijan, and Georgia have reached an agreement for establishing a transit route connecting the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea, an official with Iran’s Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization (RMTO) announced.

“Following a trip to hold two meetings [on road transportation] with Azerbaijan and Georgia, we proposed an initiative to the two countries to create a new transit corridor for regional convergence,” Director-General of RMTP Office of International Transit and Transportation Javad Hedayati told ISNA on Tuesday.

“Of course, this plan was already proposed eight years ago, but due to the fact that many countries were involved in this agreement, it has not been implemented yet and the parties have not reached a consensus,” Hedayati added.

He went on to say that the establishment of this new route could connect the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea, adding: “Georgia and Iran are the two main parties to the agreement, as Iran is connected to the free waters through the Persian Gulf, and Georgia has two important trading ports east of the Black Sea; On the other hand, Georgia and Azerbaijan have made great efforts to improve and develop their transportation infrastructure, so we tried to increase cooperation with both these countries.”

Based on the agreement, first, within the next four months some pilot cargoes will be sent from Iran to deliver Iranian goods to Azerbaijan through the Astara border and also to Bulgaria or other Eastern European countries via Georgian ports on the Black Sea.

“We are trying to carry out the pilot phase of this project before the end of the [current Iranian calendar] year (March 20, 2022) so that obstacles and issues could be identified and finally in a final tripartite meeting between the three countries a mechanism will be created to reduce shipping costs and time,” the official explained.

## Belgrade Voices Interest in Broadening Cooperation With Tehran

BELGRADE (IRNA) - Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić here on Tuesday voiced his country’s interest in broadening the sphere of cooperation with Tehran in all possible fields.

In a meeting with Iran’s Ambassador to Belgrade Rashid Hassanpour, he appreciated Iran’s logical stands in respecting the territorial integrity of different countries, including the Republic of Serbia.

Hassanpour also conveyed the Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi’s warm regards to his Serbian counterpart and delivered his invitation to President Vučić for an official visit of Tehran.

Iran and Serbia have both recently experienced important and fate-determining developments which can create a bright perspective for the two countries’ relations and cooperation, added the Iranian envoy.

He further reiterated Iran’s continuous support for the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of different countries, and denounced interference of certain foreign countries internal affairs of other countries.

He added that observation of such norms guarantees the prevalence of the international peace and stability.

The two sides in the meeting expressed satisfaction over the achieved progress in economic cooperation between Iran and Serbia and exchanged viewpoints on new proposals for broader cooperation, keeping in mind the potentials and capacities in both countries, including in energy and agricultural fields.

The prevailing political and economic trends in the world, too, were discussed in the meeting.

President Vučić and the Iranian Ambassador agreed on the need for continuous talks and consultation between the two countries based on precise programming aimed at boosting bilateral cooperation.

## 700 Bank Accounts Blocked Over Illegal Forex Trade

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The intelligence ministry has identified and blocked more than 700 bank accounts that it believes have been used to launder massive proceeds obtained from illegal trading of foreign currencies.

The ministry said in a Tuesday statement that its anti-smuggling department had coordinated the freezing of the accounts with the Central Bank of Iran (CBI). “The turnover of some of these accounts had amounted to 200 trillion rials (over \$645 million) in the past nine months,” said the statement.

It added that a list of account holders had been submitted to the Iranian judiciary for prosecution.

The statement comes following a fresh surge in the price of foreign currencies in Iran which government authorities believe is purely due to speculative trading.

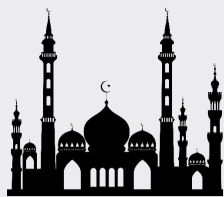
CBI officials have insisted the rise in prices in recent days have had nothing to do with the country’s actual state of forex reserves.

Traders in the market say prices started to go up last week after a renewed round of talks between Iran and world powers to revive a 2015 nuclear deal broke off in Austria’s capital Vienna.

The rial regained parts of the losses suffered over the weekend as it closed 310,000 against the US dollar on Tuesday, according to currency monitoring websites and reports by local news outlets.

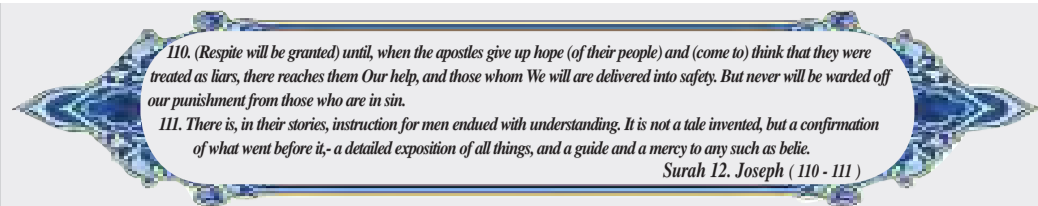
The national currency has yet to hit record lows seen in October last year when Iran’s economy was feeling the double economic pressure of the US sanctions and the spread of the coronavirus. The intelligence ministry said it will continue to constantly monitor suspicious bank accounts held by people involved in forex trade

Its statement said that more bank account related to illicit forex trade will be blocked in the upcoming days.



## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:56
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:11
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:33
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:03



110. (Respite will be granted) until, when the apostles give up hope (of their people) and (come to) think that they were treated as liars, there reaches them Our help, and those whom We will be delivered into safety. But never will be warded off our punishment from those who are in sin.

111. There is, in their stories, instruction for men endued with understanding. It is not a tale invented, but a confirmation of what went before it,- a detailed exposition of all things, and a guide and a mercy to any such as belie.

Surah 12. Joseph (110 - 111)

## British Companies Eager To Cooperate With Iranians

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIX DESK**

**TEHRAN – British Ambassador to Tehran Simon Shercliff in meeting with Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce Masoud Khansari announced readiness of the British companies for economic cooperation with their Iranian counterparts.**

Shercliff five months ago arrived in Tehran to begin its work as the British Ambassador and in its first meeting with the head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce reviewed opportunities for cooperation especially between the private sectors of the two countries and in the meeting both sides emphasized removing the hurdles in way of banking exchanges as the basic infrastructure for developing economic ties.

In the meeting, Khansari referred to the historic relations of Tehran and London and said after the signing of the JPOA, some contracts worth of approximately \$10b were signed between the two countries but after the U.S. exit from the JCPOA and reimposition of the U.S. sanctions by President Donald Trump, they were halted.

He went on to say that the level of economic relations between Tehran and London can improve especially in the post-Brexit era, adding that due to the exit of the UK from EU, Iran and UK can trade in their national currencies but the most important issue which has turned into a major hurdle in way of developing bilateral economic relation is the banking issue and this problem has made both countries have indirect trade exchanges. He added that they should work to resolve this problem.

Khansari reiterated that Tehran accounts for almost 50% of national economic decisions and activities and announced readiness of the chamber for introducing reputable and creditable Iranian companies in different fields for cooperation with the British companies, adding that of course they should first resolve banking issues through trust building.

He then pointed to good trend of COVID vaccination of the population in Iran which makes easy dispatch of trade delegations between the two states, noting that by the way both countries can facilitate the connection between their economic activists by using virtual space.

Then Shercliff, for his part, said there are abundance of opportunities and motivations for economic cooperation with Iran and confirmed Khansari's remarks that in the post-Brexit era, the possibility for improving trade ties between Tehran and London is more than ever.

He went on to say that the first step for increasing trade exchanges is to find a solution for banking transactions and said one of the problems in way of financial transfers is that most British banks are international and sanctions have created obstacles in way of their cooperation with Iran. He reiterated but despite all of these



problems, British companies are interested in cooperating with Iranian companies in the fields of food industries, agro, hygiene and health and this interest has increased especially in the recent year.

Then Director of Trade and Investment of British Embassy Mr. Michael Bradley, for his part, referred to this point that the British Government has continued its support from British companies for trade with Iran since 2018 when the U.S. left the JCPOA. He noted that during this period, the trade events have been held for continuing this connection and support of trade with Iran. He went on to say that the pandemic led to the slump in the British trade with Iran and other countries, adding that despite all problems, the annual trade between Iran and UK is between 200 to 300 million dollars per year and food products, medicines and agro products are the major items which are traded between the two countries. He reiterated of course with adding the indirect trade via the third party countries like the UAE and Turkey, the trade volume of Iran and UK is definitely surpasses the mentioned figure.

Bradley then revealed the interests of the British companies for cooperation with Iranian companies, adding that of course this eagerness is seen mostly among the small and medium-sized companies whose interests do not face threats of the U.S. punishment. He then pointed to a webinar which was held a couple of months ago for making British economic activists familiar with Iranian companies and their activities, and emphasized that the economic relations of the two countries can return to the 2016 level considering the existing potentials.

Then Iran's Foreign Ministry official Mohammad Taheri who was present in this meeting said that before the reimposition of sanctions, there was a constructive relation between Tehran and London and their trade volume was around \$566m in 2017 and the economic cooperation of the two countries was predicted to reach \$10b.

He added that eight projects were to be carried out with cooperation of the British in Iran but the return of sanctions made the British halt cooperation and they left the projects.

## Iran, Kyrgyzstan Sign MoU to Form Joint Commercial Committee

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN – In a webinar which was held with presence of heads of chambers of commerce and ambassadors of Iran and Kyrgyzstan and economic activists of the two countries, the chambers of commerce of Iran and Kyrgyzstan signed a MoU to form a joint commercial committee for expansion of bilateral economic activities.

In the webinar, Head of International Affairs of Iran Chamber of Commerce Mr. Mohammad Reza Karbasi pointed to the importance of signing this MoU and said that although membership in the ECO, EAEU and SCO can be an advantage for developing economic cooperation between Iran and Kyrgyzstan in different fields, there are broad bilateral capacities for cooperation in different fields of trade, services and technical and engineering services and the interest of Iranian economic activists for cooperation with Kyrgyzstan is on the rise.

Then Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce Gholam-Hossein Shafei expressed his satisfaction that after years of waiting the opportunity was provided for signing the MoU for forming the joint commercial committees between the chambers of commerce of the two countries in the form of forum of Economic Day of Kyrgyzstan.

He added that presence of ambassadors of the two countries in this meeting indicates the support of statesmen from the private sectors and tireless efforts of senior officials of the two countries for removal of the existing hurdles and setting the basis of relations based on strong and trustable principles.

Shafei said existence of potential and active grounds for trade, industrial and investment cooperation have created the reasons for closeness and cooperation of the



two countries more than ever. He added that formation of the joint commercial committee and holding such forums can have constructive and positive effects like introducing trade opportunities and improving the level of trade and economic ties between the two states.

He deplored that major parts of potentials of the two countries for cooperation

have not yet been activated, adding that the trade volume of Iran and Kyrgyzstan was only \$18m in 2020 and the figure accounts only for 0.03% of Kyrgyzstan's total foreign trade and it signals failure in using the existing potentials.

Shafei announced readiness of Iran Chamber of Commerce for boosting and offering practical support for trade exchanges with Kyrgyzstan in different fields like transportation, tourism, health tourism, food industries, agriculture, petchems, mines, auto-making, environment, new technologies, technical and engineering services and construction.

He went on to say that restoring banking relations, increasing the number of direct flights and direct and active talks for removing obstacles for transportation are of the major factors which can facilitate bilateral trade relation between Iran and Kyrgyzstan.

Then Karbasi, for his part, said that there are good capacities for cooperation and the two countries can boost their bilateral trade to over one billion dollars in two or three years period but it needs support of the Kyrgyz statesmen from Iranian economic activists and engineering companies and establishment of this committee can help both countries to boost their bilateral trade to the \$1b mark.

## Projects Under Way to Boost Quality of Gasoil

TEHRAN (Shana) -- The deputy minister of petroleum for refining and distribution affairs said a number of projects had been defined in order to boost the quality of gasoil in the country.

Jalil Salari said: "Fortunately, good commitments have been made in the automotive sector, and we hope to see positive developments in this sector with the support of the Oil Ministry for the automotive sector."

He added: "Providing fuel for the transport fleet in terms of quality and quantity is one of the duties of the Ministry of Petroleum, and in this regard, many projects worth \$14 billion have been implemented, resulting in the distribution of large volumes of fuel with Euro standards."

## Iran Ready to Connect Electricity Grid to Azerbaijan, Russia



**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN - Energy minister said that studies have been carried out on the cooperation between Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia in electricity and announced Iran's readiness to start collaboration on connecting the electricity grid to the Republic of Azerbaijan and Russia.

Ali-Akbar Mehrabian, in the meeting with the Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ali Alizadeh, announced Iran's readiness to expand relations in the water and energy sector, noting that the two countries can increase economic exchanges.

He noted that there is a possibility for enhancing economic exchanges between Tehran and Baku like the issue of Aras River and the two countries need to pursue the activities in the form of the joint cooperation.

Mehrabian noted that the joint technical commission of Iran and Baku to be formed and to introduce Iran's representative to the commission, underling that the commission should review issues and permanent joint cooperation between Iran and Azerbaijan.

Underlining Azerbaijan's determination to develop relations with Iran, the Azerbaijani Ambassador said: "We want all the backlogs in the energy sector to be compensated."

He went on to say that in line with bilateral cooperation in the field of energy, Azerbaijan will complete the projects of Khoda Afarin and Qiz Qalehsi dams and a joint technical commission by the two countries has convened.

He underlined that Azerbaijan is keen to compensate in all delayed projects.

## Last Gas Compressor of Phases 22-24 Commissioned



TEHRAN (Shana) – The operator of the development project of phases 22 to 24 of South Pars Gas Field said the last gas turbo-compressor of the phases' refinery has been successfully commissioned.

According to Pars Oil and Gas Company, Ali Asghar Sadeghi stated: "In order to obtain the necessary preparation for the stable supply of fuel in winter, the last turbo-compressor of the refinery of phases 22 to 24 was put into operation."

He said that the gas transmission unit of the refinery of phases 22 to 24 includes 6 turbo-compressors for sending methane to the national trunkline.

The operator of phases 22 to 24 of South Pars announced that gas production capacity of the project would be 56 million cubic meters per day, and said: "With the entry of gas into the refining and gas processing lines, in addition to producing hydrocarbon products such as gas condensate, liquefied gas, ethane and sulfur, a daily capacity of 50 million cubic meters of sweet gas will be sent through the 42-inch pipeline to the national gas transmission network."

South Pars phases 22-24 development plan is aimed at producing 56 million cubic meters of rich gas per day, 75,000 barrels of gas condensate per day, 1.5 million tons of liquid liquefied petroleum gas (propane and butane) and one million tons of ethane to feed petrochemical plants and a daily production of 400 tons of sulfur.

## Private Sector to Boost Iran-Syria Trade Relations

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran-Syria trade relations should focus on the private sector, according to the Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development in a meeting with the visiting Syrian foreign minister on Tuesday.

Rostam Ghasemi Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development made the remarks in a meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad in Tehran on Tuesday during which he underscored the important role of the private sectors of Iran and Syria in boosting bilateral trade and economic relations.

During the meeting, Ghasemi pointed to the friendly and amicable relations between Iran and Syria and stated that the two countries have established very good cooperation in various fields but the two countries must take giant strides in order to boom and trade cooperation as Iran and Syria have high potentials and capacities in this respect.

The Iranian roads minister pointed to the key and constructive role of the private sector and said that the private sectors of the two countries can boost trade relations between Iran and Syria optimally.

Syrian foreign minister, for his part, thanked Iran's help to the Syrian government and people in the fight against terrorism and stated that those countries that stood firmly by the Syrian people will also stand by Syria in its rebuilding.

Faisal Mekdad went on to say that several Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed between the two countries which have to be implemented as soon as possible, adding that Syria will welcome the conclusion of strategic and comprehensive contracts with Iran in order to expand relations in all fields.

Pointing to the sanctions imposed by Americans against the two countries, Mekdad said, "Such cases will not undermine the will of the two countries to continue cooperation."

He also stressed that the level of the economic relations between the two countries should enhance to the level of the political relations.

In the end, he emphasized the need for holding Iran-Syria Economic Cooperation Commission.

## Kenyan “Rogue” Policeman Kills Six in Rampage

NAIROBI (Dispatches) - A Kenyan police officer shot dead six people in a rampage in a neighborhood in the capital Nairobi on Tuesday and then shot and killed himself, police said.

The officer first shot and killed his wife at their home before setting off with his service-issued AK-47 rifle to shoot dead another four people, the Directorate of Criminal Investigations said on Twitter.

It described the shooter as a “rogue officer”.

Francis Wahome, the officer in charge of Nairobi’s Dagoretti area, said another two people had been wounded in the incident. He declined to comment on what prompted the shooting.



## Motorcycle Bomb Kills Four in Iraq

BASRA (Dispatches) - At least four civilians were killed and four more wounded on Tuesday in a motorcycle bombing near a hospital in southern Iraq’s Basra city, security forces said.

Referring to “the explosion of a motorcycle”, they said in a statement that “four citizens were killed and four others injured while two vehicles near the motorcycle caught fire”.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the explosion.

The blast hit at a crossroads in central Basra, near a hospital and a popular market, an AFP photographer reported. He saw a car charred and left largely a shell, its doors gone. Shrapnel pierced a minibus whose windows were smeared with blood.



## Biden, Putin Talk for 2 Hours On Ukraine, Other Topics



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin held two hours of virtual talks on Ukraine and other disputes on Tuesday amid Western fears that Moscow is poised to invade its southern neighbor.

Russian TV footage showed Biden and Putin greeting each other in a friendly manner at the start of what was expected to be a tense exchange. Biden told Putin he hoped their next meeting would be in person. The White House issued a statement saying the talks had started, but did not display any visuals from the secure ‘Situation Room’ where Biden was located.

The two leaders talked for two hours and one minute, according to the White House.

The Kremlin has said it hopes the two leaders can hold an in-person summit to discuss what it has described as the lamentable state of U.S.-Russia relations, which have sunk to their lowest since the end of the Cold War.

U.S. officials said before the video conference that Biden would tell Putin that Russia and its banks could be hit with the toughest economic sanctions yet if it attacks Ukraine.

They said the sanctions, which one source said could target Russia’s biggest banks and Moscow’s ability to convert roubles into dollars and other currencies, were designed to dissuade Putin from using tens of thousands of troops massed near the Ukrainian border to attack its southern neighbor.

The Kremlin, which said before Tuesday’s meeting it did not expect any breakthroughs, has denied harbouring any intention to attack Ukraine and has said its troop posture is defensive.

But Moscow has voiced rising vexation over Western military aid to Ukraine, a fellow former Soviet republic that has tilted towards the West since a popular revolt toppled a pro-Russian president in 2014, and what it calls creeping NATO expansion.

Moscow has likewise questioned Ukrainian intentions and said it wants guarantees that Kyiv will not use force to try to retake territory lost in 2014 to Russia-backed separatists, a scenario Ukraine has ruled out.

“We’re looking for good, predictable relations with the United States. Russia has never intended to attack anyone, but we have our concerns and we have our red lines,” said Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov.

Leaders from Britain, the United States, France, Germany and Italy will hold a call at 1800 GMT following the Biden-Putin talks, the White House and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s office said.

The same allies spoke on Monday and “agreed to stay in close touch on a coordinated and comprehensive approach in response to Russia’s military build-up on Ukraine’s borders,” the White House said.

Calling for everyone to keep “a cool head”, Peskov said it was vital that Putin and Biden speak given what he called the extraordinary escalation of tensions in Europe.

## France Arrests Suspected Member of Khashoggi Murder Squad

PARIS (Dispatches) - French police Tuesday arrested at Paris’s main airport a suspected member of the team that murdered Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018 outside the kingdom’s consulate in Istanbul, sources said.

Khalid Alotaibi, 33, was detained by border police on the basis of an arrest warrant issued by Turkey just before taking a flight to Riyadh from Charles de Gaulle airport, judicial and airport sources said. He is due to appear before prosecutors on Wednesday. A Turkish court in 2020 began to try in absentia 20 suspects over the murder of Khashoggi, including two former aides to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Turkish prosecutors then indicted six more Saudi suspects over the killing later that year, but no Saudi official has ever faced justice in person in Turkey over the killing.

In September 2020, a Saudi court overturned five death sentences issued after a closed-door trial in Saudi Arabia, sentencing them to 20 years in prison instead. Khashoggi -- a prominent Saudi who lived in self-exile in the United States



### Saudi Pleads With U.S. for Missile Defense Resupply

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia has appealed to the United States and its allies in Europe and the Gulf for resupplies of ammunition it uses to defend the kingdom against drone and missile attacks, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday (paywall), citing U.S. and Saudi officials.

Riyadh has been using its Patriot surface-to-air missile system over the past several months to thwart weekly ballistic missile and drone attacks launched by Houthi rebels based in Yemen, the officials told the WSJ. But the kingdom’s stock of Patriot missiles to intercept aerial attacks has run dangerously low.

The call for resupplies comes after the U.S. has scaled back a large portion of its military presence in the Middle East that shored up the kingdom’s security as the administration of President Joe Biden pivots to counter China’s growing prowess on the global stage.

Though the U.S. is expected to approve the Saudi request for more Patriot interceptors, Saudi officials told the Journal they are concerned that insufficient stocks could result in a successful missile or drone attack, costing lives in the kingdom or harming the Saudi economy by damaging its critical oil infrastructure.

In 2019, a swarm of missiles and drones successfully evaded Saudi’s air defenses and temporarily knocked out half of the kingdom’s oil production.

That attack was claimed by Houthi fighters, but the U.S. and Saudi Arabia have said Iran, which is aligned with the Houthis, was directly behind the offensive.

U.S. and Saudi officials told the Journal that the kingdom was attacked by drones more than 50 times during October and November and suffered more than 20 ballistic missiles attacks across the same period.

Tim Lenderking, the U.S. special envoy for Yemen, said last week that Houthi rebels have conducted about 375 cross-border attacks into Saudi Arabia this year.

Saudi Arabia spearheaded a military offensive against Yemen launched in 2015 in support of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi shortly after the Houthis took control of the capital of Sanaa. Across nearly seven years of fighting, both sides in the conflict have been accused of committing human rights abuses and atrocities. Fighting recently centered around the northern city of Marib, the last government stronghold in Yemen’s Houthi-controlled north.

## Scholz Says Any Threat to Ukraine Unacceptable

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany’s Chancellor-in-waiting Olaf Scholz expressed concern on Tuesday about Russian troop movements on the Ukrainian border and said any attempts to cross the frontier would be unacceptable.

“It is very, very important that no one rolls through the history books to draw new borders,” Scholz said at a news conference after signing a three-party coalition agreement.

U.S. President Joe Biden is to tell President Vladimir Putin later that Russia faces tough economic sanctions if it invades Ukraine, U.S. officials have said, as thousands of Russian troops mass near the Ukrainian border.

“It must be quite, quite clear that it would be an unacceptable situation if there were a threat to Ukraine,” Scholz said, stressing that borders could not be violated.

Scholz, a Social Democrat, is due to take office on Wednesday after being elected by the Bundestag lower house of parliament.

He will head an alliance also including the Greens and the liberal Free Democrats (FDP) that brings to an end 16 years of conservative-led government under Angela Merkel, who did not stand for a fifth term in a September election.

Incoming Vice-Chancellor Robert Habeck, who is co-leader of the Greens, said the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which is to transport gas from Russia to Europe, bypassing Ukraine, had not yet received approval and political discussions had to continue.

The Greens have traditionally taken a tougher line with Russia, as well as with China.

Asked about China, Scholz said he would consult closely with European partners. He skirted questions on whether Germany would join a diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

“(We) must know our differences and nevertheless get on with each other”, said Scholz, appearing to stick closely to Merkel’s favored approach of seeking dialogue.

He praised Biden for strengthening a community of democratic countries, saying his priority would be to work with states sharing the same values and to strengthen the European Union. His first trip abroad will be to Paris.

The Greens’ Habeck also said that results of investment in renewable energy would take two or three years to be seen. The coalition deal, entitled Dare More Progress, aims to accelerate a green transition and modernize Europe’s biggest economy as well as introducing some progressive social reforms, such as making dual citizenship easier.



## Finnish PM Caught Clubbing After Covid Exposure

HELSINKI (Dispatches)

- Finland’s prime minister came under sustained criticism on Tuesday after it was revealed she stayed out dancing until the early hours on the weekend despite knowing she had been exposed to Covid-19.

Sanna Marin, 36, apologized on Monday after a gossip magazine published photos of her attending a Helsinki nightclub on Saturday night until almost four in the morning, hours after her Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto tested positive for coronavirus.

“My husband and I... had been out to eat, been shopping in town, seen friends and also spent time [enjoying] the evening and nightlife,” the Social Democrat leader wrote on Facebook.

She added that she was told by an official that the coronavirus guidelines did not require her to isolate, despite having been in contact with an infected person.

“I should have used better judgment and double-checked the guidance given to me. I am very sorry for not understanding that I needed to do that,” Marin wrote.

A poll commissioned by TV channel MTV3 found that two-thirds of respondents thought Marin’s night out was a “serious mistake”.

Opposition parties also slammed Marin for potentially breaking official Covid guidelines and for missing a later text message warning her to isolate.

Finance Minister Annika Saarikko from the Centre Party, the ruling coalition partner, stopped short of criticising Marin directly.

However Saarikko told newspaper Helsingin Sanomat that she was “glad I was at home” when she received the text message to isolate, adding that she had cancelled her plans for the next day.

Finland has sustained some of Europe’s lowest incidences of the virus throughout the pandemic, recording more than 196,000 cases and 1,384 deaths in the country of 5.5 million. However infections are now at an all-time high, with 308 new cases per 100,000 population in the last fortnight. The country has also recorded eight cases of the new Omicron variant.

On Monday, magazine Seiska reported that Marin was seen in the Butchers nightclub in Helsinki, dancing with friends until nearly four.





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10bdrs, yard  
enough pkgs  
renovated  
Semi Furn

**Parsian**

**Velenjak (\$1400)**  
130sq.m, 2bdrs  
S/p, S, J, gym  
balcony, & F.F

**Sa'adat abad (\$1600)**  
2bdrs, 150sq.m, & yard

**Jordan (\$2000)**  
250sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, F.F

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S/p, S, J, yard  
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## Afghan Currency Slides on Bank Collapse Fears

KABUL (Dispatches) - Afghanistan's currency hit 100 to the U.S. dollar Tuesday, losing five percent of its value in one day in a panic triggered by fears that one of the country's biggest banks could collapse, traders said.

Afghanistan has been hit by an enormous shortage of dollars since the Taliban marched into Kabul and seized power on August 15, as international donors suspended billions in aid provided annually to the previous regime.

Since the Taliban takeover, the U.S. has frozen around 10 billion dollars in reserves that Afghanistan's central bank had parked in the U.S. Federal Reserve.



## U.S. Trade Deficit Shrinks as Exports Surge to Record High

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. trade deficit narrowed sharply in October as exports soared to a record high, potentially setting up trade to contribute to economic growth this quarter for the first time in more than a year.

The Commerce Department said on Tuesday that the trade gap plunged 17.6% to \$67.1 billion. That was the biggest percentage decline since April 2015. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast a \$66.8 billion deficit.

"The trade deficit is narrowing big time and pouring even more fuel into the economy's tank which guarantees stronger growth as 2021 comes to an end," said Christopher Rupkey, chief economist at FWDBONDS in New York.

Exports accelerated 8.1% to an all-time high of \$223.6 billion. The surge was led by goods exports, which soared 11.1% to \$158.7 billion, also a record high. Exports of industrial supplies and materials increased \$6.4 billion, with shipments of crude oil advancing \$1.2 billion.

Capital goods exports increased \$3.1 billion, boosted by other industrial machines as well as civilian aircraft. Food exports rose by \$2.1 billion, with soybeans increasing \$1.8 billion.

Exports of consumer goods jumped \$1.6 billion, lifted by increases in shipments of gem diamonds as well as motor vehicles, parts and engines. The nation exported more services, which rose \$1.0 billion to \$64.9 billion. That reflected a rise in overseas travel, other business services and charges for the use of intellectual property.

The surge in exports eclipsed a 0.9% increase in imports to \$290.7 billion, also a record high. Goods imports climbed 0.7% to an all-time high of \$242.7 billion. The rise was led by motor vehicles, parts and engines, which increased \$1.5 billion. There were also gains in imports of consumer goods, including cell phones and other household goods. Imports of industrial supplies and materials fell as did imports of capital goods, pulled down by declines in semiconductors and civilian aircraft.

Adjusted for inflation, the goods deficit decreased \$13.5 billion to \$97.6 billion in October. That was the smallest so-called real goods deficit since last December. If the real goods trade deficit continues to shrink, trade could contribute to gross domestic product this quarter. The trade gap has been a drag on GDP growth for five straight quarters.

"We expect stronger export growth and moderation in import volumes to keep the deficit stable next year after reaching multiple record highs in 2021," said Mahir Rasheed, an economist at Oxford Economics in New York. "However, the Omicron variant is a key downside risk that threatens to distort trade flows by slowing the global recovery in early 2022."

The economy is regaining speed after being restrained in the third quarter by shortages and a flare-up of COVID-19 infections, driven by the Delta variant. Shortages because of snarled supply chains caused by the coronavirus are fanning price pressures.

There are signs inflation could remain well above the Federal Reserve's 2% target for a while, also as companies competing for workers raise wages.

## Saudi Arabia, Oman Sign Deals Worth \$30b

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia signed deals with Oman valued at \$30 billion (RM126 billion), state media said, as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman began a tour of Persian Gulf Arab countries, including former rival Qatar.

Saudi and Omani companies "signed 13 memoranda of understanding worth \$30 billion", the official Saudi Press Agency reported.

The MoUs between the two countries, which seek to diversify their economies away from oil, range from cooperation in the energy and tourism sectors to finance and technology.

Prince Mohammed, Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, arrived in Muscat last night, the first stop in a regional tour ahead a Persian Gulf Arab summit in mid-December.

According to SPA, he will also visit the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar.

Prince Mohammed's trip to Doha will mark the first visit since Saudi Arabia and Qatar severed ties four years ago. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain cut all links with Qatar in June 2017, alleging it backed radical Islamist groups and was too close to Riyadh's rival Tehran — allegations Doha denied.

They restored full relations with Qatar in January after a landmark summit.

The prince's tour comes amid a flurry of diplomacy to resolve regional disputes, especially with Iran and Turkey. There have been signs of a thaw between Saudi Arabia and Iran in recent weeks, with Tehran and Riyadh holding several rounds of talks since April aimed at improving ties.

Meanwhile, Turkey has sought to rebuild relations with former rivals in the Persian Gulf, including the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Simmering tensions between Ankara and Riyadh escalated after the 2018 killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the kingdom's Istanbul consulate.

## IMF Sees China's Growth Slowing Notably

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - China has an important part to play in the global economy as it recovers from Covid-19, but its growth is slowing, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said.

The head of the Washington-based crisis lender held a virtual meeting with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and discussed topics

ranging from inflation to the recovery from the pandemic, according to a statement released by the IMF.

"China achieved a truly remarkable recovery, but its growth momentum has been slowing notably. As China is a vital engine for global growth, taking strong actions to support high-quality growth will help not only China, but the world," Georgieva said.

In October, the IMF lowered its forecasts for China's growth due to an accelerating pullback in public spending, predicting an eight percent expansion this year and 5.6 per cent growth in 2022.

While the 2021 figure is Beijing's strongest rate of growth since 2011, analysts warn China is facing a painful fallout from real estate weakness and shocks from surging coal prices and shortages.

Georgieva added that Beijing had made "important contributions" to expanding vaccine access so the world can achieve the IMF's goal of inoculating 40 per cent of the population of each country against Covid-19 by the end of this year and 70 per cent by the middle of next.

With China embroiled in an ongoing spat with the United States, Georgieva said countries need "to cooperate to reduce trade tensions and strengthen the multilateral trading system, which is a key engine for growth and jobs."

The IMF is pushing the G20 group of the world's richest countries, including China, to extend and improve their debt relief initiative, warning last week that many countries face a dire crisis without the help.

The group's Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) expires at the end of the year, and Georgieva said she "welcome continued engagement with China on" the G20's Common Framework that continues some of the relief.

## China's Export Growth Lost Steam In November

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Export growth in China lost some steam in November as holiday demand from abroad faded, official data showed Tuesday, but demand for overseas fuel pushed up imports to spike above expectations.

Strong exports have helped to boost growth in the world's second-largest economy since mid-2020, with China containing domestic outbreaks through tough lockdowns and mass testing — after the coronavirus was first detected in the central city of Wuhan.

Despite recent power outages caused by emissions-reduction targets, the surging price of coal, and supply shortages, factories kept the goods flowing and the power crisis has been winding down.

But experts have warned that the export boom is likely to fade as the world gradually returns to normalcy.

In November, exports rose 22 per cent on-year, better than analysts expected but below the 27.1 per cent growth clocked in October, according to the latest customs data.

A recent report by ING said Chinese exports likely slowed "given that most orders for western holiday demand have been fulfilled".

Imports, however, rose an unexpected 31.7 per cent — well above the 21.5 per cent increase tipped by a Bloomberg consensus poll.

"The surprisingly high number comes from contributions of coal, natural gas and crude oil imports... it's basically to meet the domestic demand for energy," said Zhao Peng Xing, senior China strategist at ANZ Research.

Given that China still has limited energy capacity and will need time to build it up, energy-related imports will continue in the coming months, Xing told AFP.

With most other countries opting for a strategy of living with Covid-19 and reopening economies, demand for protective gear and work-from-home products could shift to services, Nomura chief China economist Lu Ting earlier said.

On Tuesday, official data showed that China's total trade surplus was \$71.7 billion (RM303.4 billion) in November, down from \$84.5 billion the month before.

## World Bank Funding Helped Deliver 100m Covid-19 Vaccine Doses



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The World Bank said its funding had helped deliver 100 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines around the world and it would reach the 150-million mark by the end of the month, if doses arrive as expected.

World Bank President David Malpass said the multilateral development bank had contracted for nearly 300 million doses, with some \$7.5 billion (RM31.7 billion) in vaccine financing operations for 69 countries to be committed by the end of December.

Speaking at a conference hosted by the US Agency for International Development, Malpass underscored the need for rich countries to fulfill their generous dose donation pledges as quickly as possible, and unveiled a new database to track which countries needed financial and operational support.

Delivery swaps, like the one recently executed between the African Union, the United States and Moderna, were also helpful to meet near-term needs.

"Readiness and deployment are critical. Ample funding is available and we're working with partners ... to address the current crisis and prepare for future ones," Malpass said, adding that enhanced data and transparency were critical to ensure that resources flowed where they were most needed.

Malpass said the new World Bank Vaccine Deployment Tracker would help resolve specific bottlenecks to scale up vaccine deployment. It is based on joint work between the World Bank and the Covax Country Readiness and Delivery Team, which includes the World Health Organization, UNICEF and Gavi.

## Saudi Aramco, BlackRock Sign \$15.5b Gas Pipeline Deal

RIYADH (AFP) - Saudi Aramco said it has signed a \$15.5 billion lease and leaseback agreement for its gas pipeline network with a consortium led by BlackRock Real Assets and Hassana Investment Company in its second major infrastructure deal this year.

The deal signed on Monday underscores how Aramco -- the kingdom's cash cow -- is seeking to monetize its once-untouchable assets to generate revenue for the Saudi government as it accelerates efforts to diversify the oil-reliant economy.

In June, Aramco sold a 49 percent stake in its oil pipeline business to a consortium led by US-based EIG Global Energy Partners for \$12.4 billion.

Under the new deal, a newly formed subsidiary, Aramco Gas Pipelines Company, will lease usage rights in Aramco's gas pipeline network and lease them back to Aramco for a 20-year period, the Saudi oil firm said in a statement.

In return, Aramco Gas Pipelines Company will receive a tariff payable by Aramco for the gas products that flow through the network, backed by minimum commitments on throughput.

Aramco will hold a 51 percent stake in Aramco Gas Pipeline Company and sell a 49 percent stake to investors led by BlackRock and Hassana, a Saudi state-backed investment management firm.

"With gas expected to play a key role in the global transition to a more sustainable energy future, our partners will benefit from a deal tied to a world-class gas infrastructure asset," Aramco president and CEO Amin Nasser said in a statement.

"BlackRock is pleased to work with Saudi Aramco and Hassana on this landmark transaction for Saudi Arabia's infrastructure," BlackRock chairman and CEO Larry Fink said. "Aramco and Saudi Arabia are taking meaningful, forward-looking steps to transition the Saudi economy toward renewables, clean hydrogen and a net zero future."

Aramco, the world's biggest oil producer, has pledged to achieve net zero carbon emissions in its operations by 2050. Saudi Arabia, one of the world's biggest polluters as well as the top oil exporter, has also pledged to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2060.

"Saudi Arabia is restructuring Aramco by exiting sectors and focusing on and investing in others, such as hydrogen production," Cairo-based independent analyst Mahmoud Negm told AFP.

"The shift is happening in a non-abrupt manner, with Aramco maintaining 51 percent stake and clear agreements that no restrictions can be placed on it."

According to Ibrahim al-Ghitani, from the Abu Dhabi-based Future for Advanced Research and Studies, the kingdom is restructuring to generate liquidity and attract foreign investments.



## RIPI Ranks 1st in World In Nano-Inventions

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's Petroleum Research Institute ranks first in the world in nanotechnology inventions.

According to the Science and Education Group of the Special Staff for Nanotechnology Development, Iran's Research Institute of Petroleum Industry (RIPI) is the only institute and company from Iran among the top 25 companies in the world in the field of oil and gas related to

nanotechnology and it is also ranked first in the world in terms of the share of Nano inventions in the total number of patents.

According to the "Stat Nano" report, the Iranian Petroleum Research Institute ranks first in the world with 41.94% of the share of Nano inventions in all registered inventions. Stat Nano has studied the statistics of several large companies active in the field of oil and gas in the world.



## Global Oil CEOs Stress Need for Fossil Fuels Despite Push for Cleaner Energy

HOUSTON (Dispatches) - A global energy conference devoted to future technologies and low-carbon strategies kicked off in Houston on Monday with top executives from energy companies affirming the need for more oil for decades to come.

The World Petroleum Conference's four days of discussion started with chief executives from global giants Exxon Mobil Corp, Saudi Aramco and Halliburton Co all promoting the need to deliver oil and gas globally even as the world transitions to cleaner fuels.

World fossil fuel demand has rebounded sharply in 2021, with natural gas already at pre-pandemic levels and oil nearing levels reached in 2019. As demand has soared, economies in Europe and Asia have had to face power and heating supply shortages, forcing them to scramble for fuel or limit demand, and prices have surged. At the same time, numerous large oil-producing countries have not been able to keep up with output targets.

"The world is facing an even more chaotic energy transition," said Saudi Aramco CEO Amin Nasser. "They assume that the right transition strategy is in place. It's not. Energy security, economic development and affordability are clearly not receiving enough attention. Until they are, and we clear the gaps in the transition strategy, the chaos will only intensify."

Large global majors, especially those based in Europe, are limiting exploration and production in an attempt to shift to renewable power development and as governments promote efforts to cut carbon emissions to deal with rising worldwide temperatures.

Anders Opedal, CEO of Norway's Equinor, said energy companies have a responsibility to bring down emissions and provide energy. "We will need oil and gas for many years to come but with reduced emissions," he said.

Exxon disclosed on Monday plans to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions from operated assets in the U.S. Permian basin by 2030, as part of a plan to reduce upstream greenhouse gas emissions intensity by 40% to 50% by 2030, compared with 2016 levels.

"The fact remains, under most credible scenarios, including net zero pathways, oil and natural gas will continue to play a significant role in meeting society's need," Exxon CEO Darren Woods said at the conference.

U.S. officials took the opportunity to talk about President Joe Biden's clean energy agenda while insisting on the need to address high fuel prices for consumers as well. The Biden administration has had a strained relationship with the fossil fuel industry in its first year in office.



Oil majors need to "step on to the plate" and be part of the climate solution, said David Turk, deputy U.S. Secretary of Energy. "First movers will have significant advantages."

He also said Washington will not "stand in the way" of companies willing to increase domestic oil production as the industry tries to fully recover.

"We need to make sure everyone has affordable, reliable and resilient energy," he said. BP is investing \$1 billion worldwide to reduce emissions at refineries, David Lawler, head of BP America and CEO of BPX unit said at the conference.

The conference was sapped of some of its star power at the outset due to coronavirus-related travel restrictions that forced OPEC Secretary General Mohammed Barkindo and energy ministers from top oil producing nations like Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan and Qatar, to bow out, along with the CEOs of BP, Sonatrach and Qatar Energy.

Their absence resulted from "travel restrictions and concerns" about the Omicron COVID-19 variant, organizers said. Replacements were being selected, a spokesperson said, which included BP's U.S. chief in lieu of its CEO.

## WHO Europe Says Covid Vaccine Mandates Should Be Last Resort



COPENHAGEN (AFP) - The World Health Organization (WHO) in Europe on Tuesday cautioned against making Covid vaccines mandatory, while urging better protection of children among whom cases are high.

Europe is battling a fierce surge in the pandemic, with the WHO registering 120,000 Covid-related deaths on the continent since November 23 when it warned of up to 500,000 more deaths by March 2022.

Regional director Hans Kluge said compulsory vaccines should be "an absolute last resort and only applicable when all other feasible options to improve vaccination uptake have been exhausted".

Noting that mandates have increased vaccine uptake in some cases, Kluge said these were "context specific", and added that the effect mandates may have on "public confidence and public trust" must also be considered.

The regional health bloc also noted that the number of cases had increased "across all age groups, with the highest rates currently observed in the five to 14 years age group."

"It is not unusual today to see two to three times higher incidence among young children than in the average population," Kluge told a press conference.

"The health risks extend beyond the children themselves," Kluge added, noting that children risk passing the infection to parents and grandparents in the home.

Improved ventilation and the use of masks should be a standard at all primary schools as part of a safe learning environment, while avoiding school closures and remote learning, the regional director said.

"Vaccinating children should be discussed and considered nationally," Kluge added.

The WHO's European region comprises 53 countries and territories, and includes several in Central Asia.

The organization also expressed concern about rising cases of the recently discovered Omicron variant of the virus, but stressed that the fight should still be focused on the currently dominant Delta variant.

"The problem now is Delta and however we succeed against Delta today is a win over Omicron tomorrow, before it eventually surges," Kluge said.

Meanwhile in Norway, where 29 cases of the Omicron variant have been confirmed, health authorities warned that the new variant would likely add to the stress on health services to a "significant degree".

## U.S. Labor Shortage May Take Years to Resolve

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Janet Yellen, U.S. secretary of the Treasury, has warned that some labor chain shortages could take a couple of years to resolve, while saying there was no evidence of a wage-price spiral.

Speaking to Martin Wolf, chief economics commentator at the Financial Times, she said there was no clear information to support worries that both a tight labor market and soaring prices will create a spiral effect that could spike inflation.

"I don't see any evidence that that is happening," she said at the Global Boardroom event on Tuesday. "But it would be appropriate for the Fed to take actions to make sure that doesn't happen."

Yellen also added that she was not concerned about the unprecedented levels of fiscal support injected into the U.S. economy as it battles against the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

"I'm frankly not worried about a downturn in the US economy as fiscal stimulus ebbs. I do think there's going to be plenty of demand to support growth."

She added: "We had a real jolt of spending and fiscal stimulus in the year 2021 due to the American rescue plan and its predecessors, and that's not going to be repeated."

"So we're going to see in the years ahead fiscal drag rather than a repeat of that stimulus."



However, inflation was still "the concern of the day" despite the labor situation being very unusual, she said. "A high quit rate signals a tight labor market; low labor supply is a mystery".

The FT's fourth edition of the Global Boardroom takes place virtually from 7 to 9 December, featuring live-streamed discussions and interviews on topics such

as climate change, economics and geopolitics, the future of work, the future of finance, ESG, technology and more.

It comes just weeks after Yellen said controlling COVID-19 was the key to taming inflation.

"It's important to realize that the cause of this inflation is the pandemic. If we want to get inflation down, I think continuing to make progress against the pandemic is the most important thing we can do," she said at the time.

The U.S. consumer price index climbed 6.2% in October, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the fastest increase since November 1990.

Biden's overall approval rating fell to 41%, compared with 50% in June and 44% in September, in the latest Washington Post-ABC News poll.

This suggested that about half of American citizens overall, as well as political independents, blame Biden for soaring inflation.

## Omicron Variant Ups Economic Uncertainty for S. Korea

SEOUL (Dispatches) - The South Korean economy is on a modest recovery track, but it faces growing downside risks due to the spread of the new omicron COVID-19 variant, a state-run think tank said.

The country's service industry improved on the back of the vaccine rollout, but the recovery of the manufacturing sector was limited amid global supply chain bottlenecks, the Korea Development Institute (KDI) said in a monthly economic assessment report. "Due to the spread of the omicron variant in recent weeks, downside risks are running high as countries take stricter preventive measures and financial markets grow unstable," KDI said in the report.

Private spending improved as the country began implementing its "living with COVID-19" scheme with relaxed virus restrictions on Nov. 1 in a bid to gradually return to normal life.

Retail sales, a gauge of private spending, rose for the second straight month in October as economic activity increased amid the vaccine rollout, according to government data.

But a spike in virus cases and the emergence of the omicron variant prompted health authorities this week to toughen restrictions on private gatherings and tighten other quarantine measures.

## Illegal U.S. Sanctions...

FROM PAGE 1

Despite favorable role of the Iranian government in IMO's maritime technical-specialized issues and effective implementation of maritime treaties as a responsible government, it is a matter of regret to say that "we are witnessing a series of unfair and restrictive actions by one of the IMO member states i.e. U.S. government against Iran maritime transport industry, he criticized.

He strongly condemned these actions that threaten the safety and security of the maritime, which is contrary to the maritime treaties, principles of international law and Articles 1 and 2 of IMO Convention and called on member states to pay attention to the negative effects and consequences of this issue and responsiveness of the mentioned government to the international maritime community in line with refraining from these measures.

## Doubling Down...

FROM PAGE 1

The new sanctions on Tuesday targeted eight Iranian individuals and four organizations that the US administration claimed without providing any evidence to be involved in the repression of protesters and political activists.

Former U.S. president Donald Trump unilaterally left the 2015 nuclear deal — officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — in May 2018 and re-imposed the anti-Iran sanctions that the deal had lifted. He also placed additional sanctions on Iran under other pretexts not related to the nuclear case as part of his "maximum pressure" campaign.

Following a year of strategic patience, Iran decided to let go of some of the restrictions on its nuclear energy program, resorting to its legal rights under the JCPOA, which grants a party the right to suspend its contractual commitments in case of a non-performance by the other side.

The United States has imposed fresh sanctions on a number of Iranian officials and entities accusing them of committing human rights abuses

## Iran Calls...

FROM PAGE 1

Speaking at the meeting, Seyyed Mehdi Hosseini Esfdivajani stressed that the US government intends to undermine the independence of international actors with these measures.

"The U.S. government's bullying against the International Criminal Court and its officials was a tactic used by the United States to buy enough time to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan to prevent the perpetrators of war crimes from being brought to justice," he added.

He went on to say, "The destructive and harmful effects of international law violations resulting from unilateral sanctions on international crimes are within the jurisdiction of the ICC, and the court must be vigilant against such coercive actions and take appropriate precautions."

The Iranian diplomat continued that the court should comprehensively and fully consider all the results of the investigation into the crimes committed in Afghanistan by all parties involved, including U.S. forces.

He emphasized the need to launch an investigation into the situation in Palestine and said that the performance of the ICC Office of the Attorney General in relation to the situation in Afghanistan and Palestine would be a good benchmark for assessing the independence and impartiality of the court in carrying out its mission.

## UAE...

FROM PAGE 1

The 25 MW plant will be built on a 50-hectare plot of land with \$20 million of investment in Dalgan which has more than 300 days of sunshine in a year, he said.

Its construction will begin within the next month and become operational after six months, he added.

"Currently, the largest renewable power plant in Iran has a production capacity of 10 MW, and Dalgan power plant with a production capacity of 25 MW will become the largest solar power plant in the country."

Iran has about 900 MW of installed renewable capacity, of which 310 MW is wind and 390 MW solar.

Before former U.S. president Donald Trump reimposed sanctions on Iran in May 2018, the Islamic Republic expected its installed renewable capacity to grow at least sevenfold over the next five years.

However, European companies such as Norway's Saga Energy, British firm Quercus, Dutch energy firm Global Renewables Investments (GRI) cancelled their plans to build renewable capacities worth several billions dollars in Iran. Norway's Saga Energy scrapped a \$2.9 billion deal to install 2,380 megawatts (MW) in renewable capacity in the oil-producing country.

British firm Quercus had signed a deal to help build the world's sixth-largest solar farm in central Iran, investing over half a billion euros.

Dutch energy firm Global Renewables Investments (GRI) planned to build up solar and wind farms that could produce up to 1,700 MW of electricity.

Iran's ambition is to install 5,000 MW of renewables by 2022, according to officials. The country is a signatory of the 2015 Paris climate agreement committing 195 nations to limit their carbon emissions.

It accounted for 57 percent of the Middle East's total in 2019 and 63 percent in 2018, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

## Kovacic Tests Positive For Covid-19

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea midfielder Mateo Kovacic has tested positive for coronavirus just a day after returning to training, manager Thomas Tuchel announced.

The 27-year-old had been out of action since late October and Tuchel had hoped to ease him back into action this week.

N'Golo Kante remains sidelined with a knee issue, while Jorginho has been forced to play through the pain of a back problem and will now miss tomorrow's Champions League trip to Zenit Saint Petersburg, leaving Tuchel short of defensive midfielders.

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## Man United to Face Villa In FA Cup Third Round

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard will take his Aston Villa side to Old Trafford for a FA Cup third round tie against Manchester United as Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester City drew lower league opposition.

Villa beat United away 1-0 earlier this season under former boss Dean Smith prior to his sacking which paved the way for Gerrard to return to the Premier League.

National League side Chesterfield will travel to European champions Chelsea.

## Atletico Qualify as Liverpool Complete Perfect Group Stage

LONDON (Dispatches) - Atletico Madrid won a bad-tempered game in Porto on Tuesday to qualify for the last 16 of the Champions League as Liverpool and Ajax both completed the group stage with 100 percent records.

Diego Simeone's Atletico, who lost to Real Madrid in the 2014 and 2016 finals, needed to beat Porto in Portugal to advance to the knockout phase and they duly triumphed 3-1 in a game which featured three red cards.

Antoine Griezmann put the Spanish champions ahead in the 56th minute at the Estadio do Dragao but they then had Yannick Carrasco sent off for wrestling Otavio to the ground.

With tempers flaring, Porto were also reduced to 10 men as Wendell was sent off for elbowing Atletico's Matheus Cunha in the neck, before their substitute goalkeeper Agustin Marchesin also saw red.

With Porto pushing forward in search of the draw they needed to qualify, Atletico got their second goal on the break in the last minute through Angel Correa before Rodrigo De Paul scored their third in injury time. Sergio Oliveira's penalty was a mere consolation for Porto.

Atletico finish second in Group B, a huge 11 points behind group winners Liverpool, who made it six wins out of six in Europe this season by beating AC Milan 2-1 at San Siro despite fielding a virtual reserve side.

Milan had to win to stand a chance of going through and they went ahead midway through the first half through Fikayo Tomori.

Mohamed Salah did start for the visitors and he equalised in the 36th minute before Divock Origi -- who scored a stoppage-time winner in the Premier League at the weekend -- made it 2-1 10 minutes into the second half, heading in after Sadio Mane's shot was saved.

Milan finish bottom of the group in their first Champions League campaign since 2013-14, with Porto parachuting into the Europa League.

Elsewhere, Real Madrid secured top spot in Group D with a 2-0 defeat of Inter Milan at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Both sides had already qualified for the last 16 and Real just needed a draw to top the group.

They went ahead through an early Toni Kroos strike, and Inter had Nicolo Barella sent off just after the hour mark before substitute Marco Asensio sealed Real's victory with a stupendous strike.

Moldovan debutants Sheriff Tiraspol had already secured third place before Boban Nikolov's injury-time goal earned them a 1-1 draw at bottom side Shakhtar Donetsk,



for whom Fernando had opened the scoring.

Ajax made it six wins out of six in Group C by defeating Sporting Lisbon 4-2 in Amsterdam in a game played behind closed doors due to coronavirus restrictions in the Netherlands.

Sebastien Haller put Ajax ahead with an early penalty for his 10th goal in the group stage, while Brazilian duo Antony and David Neres added further goals and Steven Berghuis was also on target.

Nuno Santos and Bruno Tabata netted for Sporting, who had already secured second place to qualify ahead of Borussia Dortmund.

The Germans crushed 10-man Besiktas 5-0 with Donyell Malen getting the opener and Marco Reus scoring a brace before Erling Haaland came off the bench to score two headers in the second half.

Earlier Manchester City, having already clinched first place in Group A, lost 2-1 at RB Leipzig, with Dominik Szoboszlai and Andre Silva on target for the Germans in their first game since sacking coach Jesse Marsch.

Riyad Mahrez pulled one back for City, who had Kyle Walker sent off late on as Leipzig took third place.

Paris Saint-Germain, who finish second in the group, crushed Club Brugge 4-1 with Kylian Mbappe and Lionel Messi both scoring twice.

Mbappe's goals both came inside the first seven minutes and he then set up Messi's first goal, with the Argentinian adding a penalty as he moved on to five Champions League goals in five appearances this season.

## No Changing Course for PSG Despite Criticism

PARIS (Dispatches) - Mauricio Pochettino says he has the support of the Paris Saint-Germain players and he will not change course despite criticism of the style of play of the Qatar-backed French club.

The 49-year-old Argentinian was in attacking mode at his press conference on the eve of PSG's final Champions League group game with Club Brugge.

The former Tottenham Hotspur boss defended his record since he took over earlier this year, after Thomas Tuchel was fired, saying PSG are 11 points clear in Ligue 1 and through to the knockout stage of the Champions League.

"Thank you very much, I am well, calm and feel I have the support of my players," he said.

Pochettino has come under fire for his side lacking the élan his Spurs team did, this despite having superstars Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and Lionel Messi at his disposal.

Mbappe has scored his fair share of goals but Neymar -- who is injured -- and Messi have rarely been near their best.

Sergio Ramos, their high-profile defensive signing in the close season, has proven the biggest disappointment, the former Real Madrid star playing just once due to injury.

Although clear in the title race, they have drawn their last two in Ligue 1 and were fortunate to share the points in the 1-1 draw against Lens on Saturday.

"I understand that people criticize the team, we respect all points of view," said Pochettino.

"Could we play better? Yes.

"Can we improve certain aspects? Yes.

"But the spotlight shone on PSG and noise around the club will not help us advance."

Pochettino, who has been linked with the job at Manchester United where Ralf Rangnick has been installed as interim manager, said PSG have a strategy.



The 18-year-old claimed costly decisions by referee Felix Zwayer in Saturday's 3-2 loss in a top-of-the-table league clash, were to be expected given the ref was implicated in the worst match-fixing scandal in German football history.

In a statement, Borussia Dortmund said the club "and the player have accepted the verdict, Jude Bellingham is thus eligible to play in the Bundesliga game on Saturday at VfL Bochum."

## Bellingham Fined 40,000 Euros for Match-Fixing Comment

BERLIN (AFP) - Borussia Dortmund midfielder Jude Bellingham was fined 40,000 euros (\$45,000), but escaped a ban after making explosive comments about the referee following last weekend's Bundesliga home defeat to Bayern Munich.

The German Football Association (DFB) said they have fined Bellingham for "unsportsmanlike conduct".

The 18-year-old claimed costly decisions by referee Felix Zwayer in Saturday's 3-2 loss in a top-of-the-table league clash, were to be expected given the ref was implicated in the worst match-fixing scandal in German football history.

In a statement, Borussia Dortmund said the club "and the player have accepted the verdict, Jude Bellingham is thus eligible to play in the Bundesliga game on Saturday at VfL Bochum."

The England midfielder was fuming when Zwayer awarded Bayern a penalty on Saturday for a Mats Hummels handball, which resulted in the winning goal.

Moments earlier, Zwayer had waved on play and refused Dortmund a penalty after Bayern defender Lucas Hernandez appeared to foul Marco Reus in the area.

"You can look at a lot of the decisions in the game. If you give a referee who has match-fixed before the biggest game in Germany, what do you expect?" Bellingham told Norwegian channel Viaplay.

He was referring to Zwayer's alleged role as a 23-year-old linesman in a 2005 scandal involving referee Robert Hoyzer.

The latter confessed to taking Croatian mafia money in return for affecting the outcome of German Cup and lower division matches including awarding penalties for fictitious offences.

Hoyzer was jailed and Zwayer suspended for six months for keeping silent though he knew what the referee was doing and for accepting 300 euros (\$340).

## China Vows Retaliation For U.S. Olympic Diplomatic Boycott

BEIJING (Dispatches) - The United States has betrayed Olympic principles and will have to "pay a price" for its diplomatic boycott of the Winter Games in Beijing, China said on Tuesday, as key Western allies hesitated in deciding whether to follow the U.S. lead.

The White House said on Monday U.S. government officials would boycott the Winter Olympics because of China's human rights "atrocities", although U.S. athletes were free to travel there to compete.

The U.S. boycott, encouraged for months by some members of Congress and rights groups, comes despite an effort to stabilise ties between the world's two largest economies, with a video meeting last month between U.S. President Joe Biden and China's Xi Jinping.

China opposes the boycott and would take "resolute countermeasures", foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing in Beijing, host city of the 2008 Summer Olympics, on Tuesday.

"The United States will pay a price for its mistaken acts," he said, without giving details. "Let's all wait and see."

It was not immediately clear if other nations would join the United States, although U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken had said allies were consulted on a "shared approach".



## Djokovic on Serbia Team for ATP Cup In Australia

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - World number one Novak Djokovic was named in the Serbia team Tuesday for the ATP Cup in Sydney in January, after speculation about whether he would travel to Australia because of vaccination rules.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion had cast doubt on whether he would defend his Australian Open title next month, refusing to reveal whether he was inoculated against coronavirus.

However, he was listed as part of the five-man Serbia team when the draw was made in Sydney for an event that will precede the opening Grand Slam of the year.

Rafael Nadal was missing, with the Spanish fellow 20-time Grand Slam winner last month suggesting he would play an exhibition in Abu Dhabi this month, then another tournament before arriving in Melbourne for the Australian Open.

The only other absent top 20 player for the 16-team ATP Cup was injured Swiss great Roger Federer. "The playing group enjoy representing their countries and to see 18 of the world's top 20 players commit to the event is testament to that," said tournament director Tom Larner.

An ATP statement accompanying the draw noted that top seed Serbia was "headlined by world number Novak Djokovic", who won three of the season's four Grand Slams.

The 34-year-old ended his rollercoaster season with a Davis Cup defeat last week and then promised to make a decision on his Australian Open participation "very soon".



LONDON (Dispatches) - World number one Ash Barty was named WTA Player of the Year for the second time and U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu took the Newcomer of the Year title, the governing body of the women's game said.

Australian Barty, who won the title in 2019, won a tour-leading five titles this year including the second Grand Slam trophy of her career at Wimbledon where she beat Czech Karolina Pliskova in the final.

She also defended her title at Miami and triumphed in Melbourne, Stuttgart and Cincinnati to secure her third year-end number one ranking in a row.

Raducanu, 19, entered the US Open as a qualifier ranked 150th in the world and ended it as Britain's first female Grand Slam champion for 44 years.

Czech Barbora Krejickova took the WTA prize for the Most Improved Player of the Year following a stellar season in which she won the French Open singles crown.

She also excelled in doubles with playing partner Katerina Siniakova, with the pair earning the Doubles Team of the Year award which they also won in 2018.

Carla Suarez Navarro was named the Comeback Player of the Year award.

The 33-year-old announced in September, 2020 that she was being treated for early stage Hodgkin lymphoma and underwent months of chemotherapy and radiotherapy before returning at the French Open in June.

