

A Majlis Member Says that the Iranian Negotiating Team in the Vienna Talks With Sufficient Authority Is Right to call West's Political Behavior This Year as the Reason Behind Iran's Distrust of Them

IRAN NEWS

Nour News, a Media Outlet Affiliated with Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Has Said Iran Has Started Positive Cooperation With the International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA

VOL. XXVII, No. 7383 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SATURDAY DECEMBER 11, 2021 - AZAR 20, 1400

2 DOMESTIC

President Calls for Intensifying Combat Against Drug Trafficking



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

Iran's Trade With China on the Decline



> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

Macron Says Focus of EU Presidency To Be Migration, Sovereignty



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

Barcelona Crash out of Champions League as Benfica Reach Last 16



> SEE PAGE 8

Iran to Slap U.S. Individuals, Entities With Sanctions

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran is set to announce sanctions on a number of American individuals and entities involved in flagrant violations of human rights, days after Washington targeted the Islamic Republic with new bans over baseless claims of rights abuses.

Kazem Gharibabadi, the Iranian Judiciary chief's deputy and secretary general of the country's High Council for Human Rights, said Thursday that the blacklist of US individuals and entities was scheduled to be released soon.

The top human rights official said the latest decision by the US to target Iranians with sanctions was "a continuation of the failed maximum pressure policy against the Iranian nation and the use of sanctions as a tool for political gains."

He said the U.S. cannot claim to be an advocate of freedom and human rights in Iran while jeopardizing the lives of ordinary Iranians by blocking their access to medicine and medical equipment. "This is not acceptable at all and is more like a bitter joke," Gharibabadi stated.

He added that the U.S. must be held accountable for committing violence against peaceful protesters and police killings of innocent people. **See Page 7**

Adani Ports Reverses Decision to Stop Handling Cargo From Iran

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) has withdrawn its decision to stop handling export-import (EXIM) containerised cargo originating from Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan at its ports that took effect from November 15.

The move followed representations from terminal operators, customs broker associations, vessel operators and importers to review the advisory issued on October 11, APSEZ said.

"Upon careful scrutiny, the discussions and the assurances from the concerned stakeholders regarding adherence to due compliances and with a view to ensure seamless trade, the advisory is hereby withdrawn with immediate effect," APSEZ said in a trade advisory issued on December 8.

India's biggest private port operator has come under pressure from government authorities to scrap the advisory that was issued in the wake of a huge heroin haul at Mundra port in Gujarat in September.

On November 10, the Customs Department asked APSEZ to "re-examine" its decision to stop handling export-import (EXIM) containerized cargo originating from Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan at its ports. **See Page 7**

Iranians Are in Vienna to Reach a Good Agreement



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's foreign minister has underlined Iran's resolve to reach a "good agreement" through the ongoing talks in Vienna, which aim to remove U.S. sanctions, saying the Western sides to the Iran nuclear agreement have talked the talk in recent years but it is high time they walk the walk as well to secure a serious, good deal.

"We are all in Vienna to negotiate to reach a good agreement," Hossein Amir-Abdollahian wrote in a post on his Instagram page on Thursday night, hours after a new round of talks kicked off in the Austrian capital between Iran and the five remaining parties to the nuclear deal.

"The Western parties need to know that in the last eight years, enough words and empty promises have been uttered, but today, it is time to act," Amir-Abdollahian noted.

Since April, Vienna has been hosting negotiations on a revival of the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which would require the U.S. to remove its anti-Iran sanctions three years after Washington walked out of the JCPOA and slapped the bans on Iran to kill the deal.

Rejecting those concerns, Amir-Abdollahian said Iran's nuclear program is completely peaceful, but added that there is a direct link between the removal of US sanctions and Iran's decision to assuage the concerns.

"Although we doubt whether the Western side is ready to remove the sanctions or it only seeks to unilaterally ease its own concerns, we will certainly see quick progress in the talks if the Western side attends the negotiations with goodwill, initiatives, and constructive ideas," the chief Iranian diplomat added.

Meanwhile Iran's top negotiator in Vienna talks on the removal of sanctions imposed on the country says the Islamic Republic is serious about taking part in the negotiations in the Austrian capital, but insists on the positions it declared during previous meetings.

Ali Bagheri Kani made the remarks following the end of a meeting of Iran's nuclear deal's joint commission meeting in the Austrian capital on Thursday, which marked the resumption of the talks six days after they were paused.

"Iran underlined that it seriously continues the talks based on its previous position," the Iranian lead negotiator told reporters on Thursday, adding, "Iran is serious about reaching an agreement if the ground is paved The fact that all sides want the talks to continue shows that all parties want to narrow the gaps."

After the Thursday meeting, Bagheri Kani said the participants, including Iran, presented their views on the process of upcoming meetings.

Iran's top negotiator underlined the country's resolve to bring the talks into fruition, saying, "The Islamic Republic of Iran does not see any obstacle to reaching an agreement if the necessary ground is provided."

Asked whether the other parties responded to Iran's proposals, which were put forth last week under two draft texts, the lead Iranian negotiator said the issue needs to be pursued through the meetings of the working groups, Iran's official IRNA news agency reported.

The two draft texts address, separately, the removal of US sanctions and Iran's nuclear actions. Iran says it is preparing a third draft text on the verification of the sanctions removal.

Bagheri Kani also slammed as unconstructive and detrimental Washington's announcement of new sanctions against Iran while the Vienna talks are underway.

Iran's negotiator added that several delegates of the P4+1 member states had also objected to the US move in imposing new sanctions on Iran, urging Washington to refrain from such moves, which can ruin the atmosphere of the talks.

He noted that removal of sanctions will lead to a major breakthrough in the talks.

U.S. Sanctions on Iran Have No Bearing on India's Chabahar Port Project

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - The U.S. sanctions on Iran have not affected India's Chabahar port project, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told Lok Sabha on Friday.

Replying to a question from BSP member Ritesh Pandey, the minister also clarified that US sanctions are "not relevant" to India's Chabahar port project in Iran "at all". During the Question Hour, Pandey sought to know from the government if US sanctions on Iran had any bearing on India's project at the Chabahar port, and claimed that the Iranian government is "publicly saying that our Chabahar port project has been miserably delayed" due to sanctions imposed by the U.S..

The BSP member also claimed he is "aware" that China is trying to work on the project by taking advantage of U.S. sanctions on Iran as it did "with the rail link", and asked the government if it is working on a "solution".

"I would like to inform the member that (his) assertion is completely inaccurate. This agreement was signed in 2016. We took possession of the terminal in 2018. We have already supplied six cranes. The terminal is fully functional," Minister Jaishankar said. "The U.S. sanctions are not relevant to this project at all," he said in his reply. **See Page 7**

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Stop Blame Game

The West and its allies used to start blame game when there is some important international political issue to happen or any important talks are to start and this has happened through decades and they usually resort to blame game to put under the pressure the countries for giving concession like in 2015 when the Islamic Republic of Iran was to start its nuclear talks with big countries known as the P5+1. Now the same story has begun while the Vienna talks are underway, the U.S. and its allies have started blame game in order to depict Iran as the main culprit if the talks fail.

As diplomats from Iran and the other parties to the 2015 nuclear agreement resumed negotiations in Vienna, the United States and its European allies tried to depict Iran's stance on the issue as the major obstacle to reviving the nuclear deal while they themselves have refused to show good will by removing their illegal sanctions.

According to an article published by Nour News website, Washington has not only failed to take any steps to show goodwill at the Vienna talks, but has also continued to use threats and sanctions in the middle of the negotiations to convey a confrontational message to Iran, a sharp contrast to its professed willingness to reach an agreement through a diplomatic process in the Austrian capital.

Before the beginning of the new round, Iran's chief negotiator, Ali Bagheri Kani, met separately with the European Union's deputy foreign policy chief Enrique Mora, who coordinates the talks, and with the Russian and Chinese delegations that have on several occasions supported Iran's insistence on the necessity of removing all US sanctions.

On Wednesday, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian had a phone conversation with EU foreign policy chief Joseph Borrell, during which the top Iranian diplomat reiterated Tehran's seriousness in achieving a "good agreement" and said a rapid progress in the talks depends on the West's "goodwill" and "constructive initiatives."

The re-clarification of Iran's stance comes while the Western countries have resorted to their old habit of using threats, psychological warfare and also blame game to advance their agenda, trying to paint a grim picture of the negotiations and passing the blame on the Iranian side while pushing the talks toward a dead-end. **See Page 7**

Iran Committed to Fighting Terrorism

NEW YORK (IRNA) - Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations Majid Takht Ravanchi reiterated Iran's commitment to its international obligations to effectively prevent and combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

He made the remark in a statement here on Thursday on "maintenance of international peace and security: security in the context of terrorism and climate change" before the United Nations Security Council.

He said in his statement that "today, the international community faces pressing challenges related to terrorism and climate change."

The United Nations, through its numerous resolutions, has repeatedly reaffirmed that terrorism is one of the most serious threats to international peace and security and that the primary responsibility to combat this threat rests with the Member States. The Islamic Republic of Iran remains committed to its international obligations and continues its efforts to effectively prevent and combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Combating terrorism must be carried out in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international law, and ensuring full respect for the principles of independence and sovereign equality of States and non-interference in their domestic affairs.

The negative effects of climate change and their consequences on well-being of nations are undeniable. They become severe when other underlying factors in conflict-ridden countries come into play. **See Page 7**

Sokhan Gostar Institute

IRAN NEWS

PRIVATE ENGLISH NEWSPAPER IN IRAN



Advertisement Department
021-44253335-39

www.irannewsdaily.com
info@irannewsdaily.com

@irannewsdaily @irannewsdaily

President Raisi May Visit Russia Early Next Year

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Russian president said Wed. that his invitation to the Iranian president might have been accepted and that President Raisi will visit Moscow early next year.

According to Sputnik news agency, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced on Wednesday that the Iranian president may visit Russia at the beginning of next year.

“The president of Iran may visit Russia in early 2022,” Putin was quoted as saying by Sputnik during a news conference at the end of talks with the Greek Prime Minister.

President Calls for Intensifying Combat Against Drug Trafficking

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi called drug addiction the most important social harm and the source of various crimes and harms and said, “Identification and intensification of dealing with micro and macro drug distribution networks should be on the agenda and comprehensive action should be taken in the field of counter-narcotics”.

Speaking on Thursday evening in a meeting of the Anti-Narcotics Headquarters, while commemorating the martyrs and veterans in this field and appreciating the border guards, Raisi said, “3,800 martyrs and 12,000 wounded veterans shows the determination of the Islamic Republic of Iran to fight drug traffickers”.

The President called narcotics one of the most important regional and global threats and stressed the need for international cooperation and the activation of anti-narcotics diplomacy. We should ask international organizations and countries around the world how much they have carried out their duties? Because the issue of counter-narcotics is a global issue and countries need to review their policies in this area”.

Raisi added, “When we eliminate narcotics, the United Nations sends a reward to Iran, while it is really not enough to just send a reward; because if Iran does not stop the transit of drugs, this issue will be a threat and a crisis for Europe”.

Regarding narcotics cultivation in Afghanistan, the President said, “In the two decades of NATO and US presence in this country, narcotics production in



Afghanistan has increased and the production of traditional narcotics has become an industry that is a threat to the world”.

Ayatollah Raisi called the issue of narcotics the most important social damage in the country and said, “It is necessary to take targeted, planned measures and use all capacities and mobilize facilities to fight narcotics”.

The President called the fight against narcotics a specialized task and stressed that intelligence, judicial and disciplinary measures should be intensified to combat drug trafficking so that we can see a reduction in drug trafficking and consumption.

Raisi also stressed that the entry of dirty money from the production, purchase and sale of drugs in the monetary and financial network of the country should be prevented, adding, “Hitting the economic foundations of drug trafficking networks is a duty and suspicious transactions and the money laundering from drug sales must be fought with”.

He said, “Identifying and dealing with micro and macro drug distribution networks is one of the priorities of this fight, and the collection of drug addicts must be on the agenda and the result will be pursued”. The President urged all governor generals and governors to pay serious attention to the fight against drugs and stated, “Cultural movement is important for the fight against drugs and the awareness and sensitivity of young people and families in this field should be increased to prevent drugs”.

Billions of Dollars in Frozen Iranian Assets Unlocked

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy has said 3.5 billion dollars in frozen Iranian assets was recently unlocked.

Mehdi Safari noted that Iran has held positive talks with countries where Iranian assets are frozen.

Safari added that the talks produced good results. He also said he met with European officials during a trip to the continent and one country is going to soon release a huge amount of Iranian funds.

Safari did not specify the country though. Safari accompanied the Iranian negotiating team last week during the Vienna talks where he met several European officials including Austria’s deputy foreign minister.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Safari spoke of expansion of ties with Tajikistan, saying exports to the country has increased three-fold from 60 to 180 million dollars. He also said exports to Uzbekistan increased from 120 to 500 million dollars.

The new Iranian administration has said its foreign policy prioritizes neighboring countries. To this end, the administration of President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi has made numerous efforts since taking office to expand ties with neighbors including the Central Asian countries.

Iran, Malaysia Confer on Sending Humanitarian Aid to Afghanistan

TEHRAN (IP) - The special adviser to the Malaysian foreign minister on Afghanistan and the ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Malaysia discussed providing assistance to the Afghan people on Thursday.

Ahmad Azam Abdul Rahman, Malaysian Foreign Minister’s Special Advisor on Afghanistan met with Ali Asghar Mohammadi, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Malaysia, to discuss developments in Afghanistan and Iran-Malaysia activities to help the Afghan people.

The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Malaysia also expressed his readiness to direct the assistance of the Malaysian government and non-governmental organizations to Kabul, explaining Iran’s positions and efforts in sending humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

The Malaysian Foreign Minister’s Special Adviser on Afghanistan also stressed the need to send immediate assistance to the Afghan people and expressed hope that Islamic countries would help Afghanistan in this critical situation.

Referring to the important and effective position of Tehran in the developments in the region, Ahmad Azam Abdul Rahman considered the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran as one of the main routes to help Afghanistan undeniable and described Iran’s readiness to send humanitarian aid to Afghanistan very valuable and vital.

Sports, Cultural Activities of ECO Member Countries “Expanding”

TEHRAN (IP) - Officials of the ministry of sports of Iran and the ECO Cultural Institute, in their second specialized meeting, emphasized the revival of sports and cultural activities of ECO member countries as soon as possible.

In this meeting, Sarvar Bakhti, head of ECO Cultural Institute, and Shahram Azimi, Head of International Relations Office of Iran’s Ministry of Sports and Youth, presented a report on the follow-up of previous meetings.

Sarvar Bakhti, who had attended the recent ECO Summit in Turkmenistan, said that the members welcomed his speech on “sports diplomacy among ECO member states.” “He stressed that the relevant institutions should help revive sports diplomacy among ECO member countries.

Shahram Azimi, head of the International Relations Office of the Ministry of Sports and Youth of Iran, said: The draft memorandum of cooperation between the Ministry of Sports and Youth and the ECO Cultural Institute is ready for final review.

Tehran, Ankara Call for Finalizing Cooperation Document



TEHRAN (IRNA) – Majlis speakers of Iran and Turkey, in a meeting in Istanbul on Thursday, underlined the need for finalizing a comprehensive cooperation document between Tehran and Ankara.

The two parliament speakers met on the sidelines of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC). Iranian Majlis Speaker Baqer Qalibaf noted that both Iran and Turkey have to make use of such regional and international conferences to further help solve the problems of Islamic countries.

Referring to joint interests between Iran and Turkey, he said that due to the effective role of the two countries in regional developments, foreign powers disagree with the promotion of cooperation between Tehran and Ankara. Qalibaf also noted that the root cause of U.S. enmity with Iran and its recent pressure on Turkey is that Washington have learnt about the power and influence of the two countries in the region.

The Turkish parliament speaker Mustafa Sentop, for his part, called for formation of a committee for defending the rights of Muslim people who are present in some countries but are in the minority.

On the promotion of bilateral relations, he said that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is due to pay a visit to Tehran in the near future. Sentop also said that Turkey is opposed to the U.S. unilateral sanctions on Iran and hopes the nuclear negotiations in Vienna will yield fruit.

Meanwhile in a meeting with a group of Iranian business people residing in Turkey, Qalibaf called for the creation of financial and logistical hubs in Iran to facilitate and promote trade ties with foreign countries, especially neighbors. He said overcoming the obstacles to the trade and economic activities requires the creation of a financial and a logistical hub.

“Although the U.S. has imposed sanctions (on Iran), the sanctions are weak in comparison to the existing developments and capacities, and are not effective enough to prevent us from settling our trade problems by creating financial and logistical hubs,” he added.

The Parliament speaker emphasized that creation of the two hubs will help Iran promote trade and economic cooperation with neighboring countries, such as Turkey.

He also noted that formulation of plans for the bilateral trade should not be confined to the short term. “We must have a long-term approach to this issue, for example for 25 years, so that even if the sanctions are lifted, we will continue with efforts to enhance the bilateral trade.”

“This is the same path we are following in relations with China and Russia in order to promote the trade and economic ties,” he added.

No Need for Foreigners’ Interference in Region

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi says the region does not need foreigners’ meddling because its problems should be resolved through intraregional interaction.

“We insist that the region’s problems should be resolved among the regional countries themselves and through active participation of the countries [of the region],” Raisi said during a telephone conversation with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

“[Therefore] there is no need for foreigners’ interference,” the Iranian statesman added.

Addressing the issue of the bilateral ties, the president then announced that the countries were to hold a joint meeting in Tehran in the near future, and that their cooperation was to enter a “new stage.”

Raisi also underlined the importance of the states’ bilateral cooperation in the area of fighting terrorism, saying, “The chief way of fighting terrorism consists in [according] respect to [various] countries’ sovereignty.”

Erdogan, for his part, laid emphasis on the importance of the countries’ economic and security cooperation.

“Currently, the idea of joint cooperation has come to the fore among the regional countries,” he said, citing the recent shuttling visits among the regional officials as cases in point.

Progress in Vienna Depends on West’s Goodwill, Constructive Views

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian foreign minister has reiterated Tehran’s seriousness in achieving a good agreement with the P4+1 group of countries during the ongoing talks in the Austrian capital of Vienna, saying a rapid progress in the diplomatic process depends on the West’s goodwill and constructive initiatives.

In a phone call with European Union foreign Policy chief Joseph Borrell, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said the representatives of the five remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), had so far held “useful” interactions.

He expressed hope that the West would participate in the new round of the talks, which is set to begin in Vienna later on Thursday, with goodwill and constructive initiatives “so that we will witness a rapid advancement of the talks.”

The top Iranian diplomat criticized the West’s continued passivity during the Vienna talks, saying, “So far, we have not received any constructive and forward-looking proposal from the opposite side, and this contradicts its declaration of serious presence in the negotiations.”

“In the last eight years, enough has been said and no promise has been fulfilled, but it is time for action today and we are making efforts to reach a serious and good agreement,” the Iranian foreign minister said.

He added, “Iran’s nuclear program is completely peaceful but resolving the nuclear concern is directly related to the complete removal of the [U.S.] sanctions [against Iran].”

The top Iranian diplomat expressed doubt if the West was truly ready to remove sanctions or it was merely seeking to unilaterally address its own concerns.

The Iranian chief negotiator to the Vienna talks Ali Bagheri Kani arrived in Vienna on Thursday at the head of a delegation. He is scheduled to hold talks with EU deputy foreign policy chief Enrique Mora and head of the Russian and Chinese teams ahead of the JCPOA Joint Commission session.

Amir-Abdollahian further pointed to Iran’s “close cooperation” with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and said a delegation from the Atomic

Energy Organization of Iran was set to hold talks with the IAEA in Vienna.

He also slammed three European parties to the JCPOA — Britain, France and Germany — for adopting negative political positions for media consumption on the Vienna talks, warning that such an unconstructive campaign would further complicate the situation and slow down the process to achieve an agreement.

The top Iranian diplomat, however, hailed the “realistic and constructive” stance and views of Russia and China in this regard.

“We are all in Vienna to negotiate and achieve a good agreement,” Amir-Abdollahian pointed out.

He commended constructive efforts by Borrell and Mora to that effect and said the Iranian negotiating team, led by Bagheri Kani, would “stay in Vienna as long as necessary to reach an agreement and consult with the P4+1.”

Borrell hopes collective efforts, interaction will lead to agreement. The EU foreign policy chief, for his part, outlined what he viewed as the challenges that could harm the Vienna talks and expressed hope that the participating delegations would achieve an agreement through collective efforts and interaction.

Iran Determined to Develop Mining Cooperation in Western Africa

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian miners and investors see Mali as a good opportunity in western Africa region to expand cooperation particularly in extracting and manufacturing gold and bauxite.

Director of the Iranian Mining Engineering Organization (IMEO) Taqi Nabaei said that the IMEO and Mali Chamber of Mines (CMM) signed a contract last week in order to form commissions and prepare for future cooperation.

According to the Iranian official, IMEO and CMM prioritize cooperation on the export of technical and engineering services, preparing investment, training and research packages as well as an exchange of trainers and trainees.

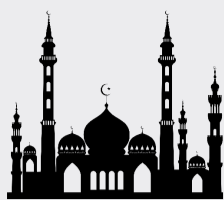
Nabaei went on to say that Iranian investors, who are willing to invest in Mali in more than 25 million dollars, will be exempted from any tax for 30 years.

He expressed hope for forming consortiums in Iran to be ready to work in bauxite mines in Mali.

Pointing to their plans to manufacture Aluminium oxide and iron ore concentrate in the African country, he said that Iran is going to construct railway infrastructure in Mali to make the projects beneficial for both sides.

Transfer of localized know-how of electricity generation is another project of the Islamic Republic in Mali to improve material processing in the African nation, he noted, adding that experts will discuss the aforementioned issues.

Iranian and Malian sides have agreed upon holding seminars, webinars and exhibitions as well as exchanging their knowledge and experiences in the mining sector. Mali is a landlocked country in West Africa, extending southwest from the southern Sahara Desert through the Sahel to Sudan’s savanna zone.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:57
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:11
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:35
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:04

1. Closer and closer to mankind comes their Reckoning: yet they heed not and they turn away.
2. Never comes (aught) to them of a renewed Message from their Lord, but they listen to it as in jest,-

Surah 21. The Prophets (1-2)

Iran's Trade With China on the Decline

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce Majid Reza Hariri says Iran's trade with China is declining every year and Iran is not currently China's first trade partner in the Middle East and it has dropped out of its top five partners in the region.

Speaking to ILNA and talking on the current condition of trade between Iran and China, Hariri said until 7 or 8 years ago Iran was China's first trade partner in the Middle East and the West Asia, but unfortunately every year the its trade volume with China is declining and Iran is no longer even among China's top five trade partners in the region.

On the impacts of sanctions on the trade relation between Iran and China, he said China is still Iran's first trade partner either in import or export and Iran's foreign trade including with China has been under influence of the sanctions and removal of the sanctions is a new horizon for the country to work with more partners and countries in the world and even in China.

He added that Iran has two options on the sanctions: one is to continue talks seriously to remove sanctions or not to tie the domestic affairs to the removal of sanctions. He added 50% chance of removing sanctions is in Iran's hands and the other half depends on the other side, the West, therefore removal of the sanctions is not fully in hands of Iran. Hariri reiterated that Iranians should get valid guarantee for removal of the sanctions because they have a bitter experience from the past and the West may reimpose sanctions.

He said when the country is in sanctions, it has a few options even in talks with the Chinese, by the way since major Chinese companies are active in the international scene, they are not easily ready to work with Iranians. He admitted Iran and China have faced problems in advancing their joint projects which were to be financed.

Hariri reiterated that China is not apart from the world and it is currently the second



economy in the world and its trade exchanges with the world is several times more than with Iran and for this reason sanctions definitely cause restrictions for China's trade with Iran. He then pointed to the amount of China's trade with the world, saying that China's share from the international trade is over \$4,500b per year and therefore big Chinese companies are not ready to harm their international trade just for trade with Iran. He reiterated it does not mean that any big and reputable Chinese company is not ready to work with Iran and if it wants to work it has to pretend that it is reluctant in order to escape any scrutiny and possible sanctions.

Hariri said that since Iran's oil sales to China have slowed down due to the sanctions, China buys oil from other countries in the Persian Gulf and therefore its trade with those countries is rising and for this reason the Persian Gulf states have become China's top trade partners in the region and Iran is not among the top five China's trade partners in the region.

He noted that the fate of the JCPOA and Vienna talks can determine the fate of trade and economic cooperation of Iran in the region and countries will come out of the current indecisiveness. Hariri also said Iran should prepare itself for any outcome of the talks and prepare its plans for any scenario. He said the country should design a mechanism in order to convert the earned forex from exports into the available forex for imports. He admitted when the number of export destinations is restricted, the avenues for imports are also restricted and therefore the country should find a link for exchange of forex between importers and exporters.

MAPNA Strikes Deal to Build 6 Medium Scale Power Plants



TEHRAN – In a ceremony on Wednesday, the CEO of MAPNA Group Mr. Abbas Aliabadi and the CEO of Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH) Mr. Tarzatab finalized and signed the deal for building six medium scale power plants.

According to reports, MAPNA Group is to build six medium scale gas power plants which includes six gas units each with nominal capacity of 41.6 megawatts plus building some systems and accessories. These units are to be built based on the contracts as two units are to be built in the power plant of Zahedan in Sistan and Baluchistan, one unit in each Morvarid Power Plant of Kish Island, Banglan Power Plant of Jask in Hormozgan Province, Doroud Power Plant in Lorestan Province, Shoush in Khuzestan Province and in Khatam Power Plant of Yazd Province. The project is to be completed in a 24-month period since its beginning and each unit will have 12 month guarantees after temporary delivery.

These units have many advantages like period of time for building, installation and its launch. MGT40 unit manufactured by the MAPNA Group is a fully home-made product which is an irreplaceable rival for overcoming the power shortage or compensating the fall in the voltage in the grid.

Addressing the ceremony, Aliabadi said today Iran is manufacturer of rotating equipment in all small, large and medium scale power plants and the country can manufacture such advanced equipment and it can provide from A to Z of the products by its own experts.

He noted that boosting productivity in direction of production and positive balance of production regarding the demands is the main goal and efforts of the officials in the electricity sector of the company, and emphasized its materialization.

Aliabadi added that diversification in production via building small and medium scale power plants will improve the level of sustainable electricity supply in any geographical area and due to its closeness to the consumption area it will lead to reduction in waste of energy and to rise in productivity.

Then the CEO of TPPH Mr. Tarzatab, for his part, briefed the participants in the ceremony of the process of talks with MAPNA Group and said the company is determined to expand building of such units in the country due to the rise in consumption and to reduce energy waste.

Turkey, Iran Hold Talks on Expansion of Border Cooperation



URMIA (IRNA) - Turkish and Iranian officials have held a joint seminar to enhance border cooperation and reduce problems in water management.

Head of the Border Rivers Department of Iran's Ministry of Energy Houshang Gholami and Chairman of Planning and Water Allocation Department of Turkey's Water Management Office Erhan Demir participated in the meeting.

The Iranian official said on the sidelines of the seminar said on Thursday that the Islamic Republic has proposed its demands on water management and problems of the border rivers, which led to flooding and damages in Iran.

He pointed to a plan by the Turkish side to resolve the problems, adding that the two sides have agreed upon implementing the plan in order to reduce or even prevent from repeating such incidents.

The damages mostly hit Maku towards Cheshmeh Sorayya and Boralan areas, he said, adding that the Turkish government-assisted Iran to minimize the damages.

The two delegations from Ankara and Tehran already inspected border areas to get a clear clue of the situation.

Tehran, Baku Press for Expanded Oil Ties

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iranian Oil Ministry and Azerbaijan's SOCAR energy company have discussed avenues for increased cooperation in oil and gas projects, especially in the Caspian Sea region, amid improving ties between the two neighboring countries.

SOCAR president Rovnag Abdullayev paid a visit on Wednesday to Iran's Oil Ministry headquarters in Tehran where he met Oil Minister Javad Owji, according to a report by the ministry's news service Shana.

Owji and Abdullayev discussed how Iran and Azerbaijan can boost their energy ties and improve cooperation in the Caspian Sea where major oil and gas reserves are located, said the report.

The visit comes just 10 days after Iran signed an agreement to swap natural gas received from neighboring Turkmenistan, located east of the Caspian Sea, with its own gas for delivery to Azerbaijan to the western side of the sea.



The landmark deal has been viewed as a major success for an Iranian administration that came to office in August on promises that it would seek better economic and trade ties with Iran's neighbors.

It also came after a brief period of tension between Iran and Azerbaijan in September due to border and transportation issues in areas liberated in a 2020 war between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The Shana report said that Owji and Abdullayev dedicated a major part of their Wednesday meeting to discussing the trilateral gas swap deal which is expected to go into effect in late December.

Under the deal, Iran is entitled to supply part of the gas received from Turkmenistan, which will be around 1.5-2 billion cubic meters per year, to five of its northern provinces while the equivalent of the rest will be supplied to pipelines in Astara region on the border with Azerbaijan .

Tehran Eyes Doubling Exports to Regional Countries Within Four Years

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Affairs Mehdi Safari said on Thursday that Iran has plans to double exports to regional countries within the four-year term of President Ebrahim Raisi, while noting that the goal is even within the reach by the next two years and a half.

Safari who was providing a report of the 100-day economic record of the new government, said that Iran's exports to Uzbekistan have grown from \$120 million to \$500 million over the past two months.

He also said that the country's exports to Tajikistan have increased from \$60 million to \$180 million over the two-month period.

Safari noted that the Foreign Ministry's Economic Diplomacy Department has done its best to activate corridors with neighboring countries.

Noting that expanding relations with Central Asian countries is one of the top agendas of the Iranian Foreign Ministry, he said that Iran has made efforts to join the Central Asian corridors to Iranian Ports of Bandar Abbas and Chabahar.

Iran Iron-Related Products Exports Hit \$4.5b in 8 Months

TEHRAN (MNA) – IRICA spokesman Rouhollah Latifi said exports of various iron-related products hit \$4.5 billion accounting for 14% of total exports of Iran in the first 8 months of the Iranian calendar year 1400 (March 21 to 21 Nov., 2021).

Seyed Rouhollah Latifi Spokesman for Iranian customs administration (IRICA) said on Wednesday, manufacturing and exports of iron and iron-related products during the first 8 months of the Iranian calendar year 1400 (Mar. 21 to Nov. 21, 2021) witnessed growth, adding that more than \$4.5 billion worth of products were exported that accounted for 14.5% of the total exports valued at \$31 billion.

Latifi added that exports of Iron-related products during the first 8 months of the Iranian year 1400 until the end of Aban month (Nov. 21), have witnessed an increase of more than \$800 million in comparison to the same period last year; so that 3 Iron-related products have ranked among the top 10 products that were exported by Iran.

He noted that 1,612,000 tons of semi-finished iron products valued at \$1,148 billion, 1,762,000 tons of iron or steel ingots valued at \$1.072 billion and 1,262,000 tons of various Iron rods valued at \$850 million were exported

in that period.

Semi-finished products of iron accounted for 2% and 3.7% in weight and value of the total exports of the country, respectively. Exports of these products increased by 67% in weight and 221% in value compared to the same period last year.

Various types of iron and steel ingots accounted for 2.1% in weight and 3.4% of the total exports value of Iran with a growth of 44% and 149% in weight and value respectively.

He further said that 1.5% of the volume and 2.7% of the value of the total exports of the country are constituted by iron and steel rods, which has increased by 62% in weight and 168% value compared to the same period of year 1399(March 21 to 21 Nov, 2020).

According to the latest figures released by IRICA, the total foreign trade of the country until Nov. 21 beginning from March 21, 2021 stood at 110.3 million tons of goods valued at \$63.1 billion of which exports accounted for 83.7 million tons valued at \$31.1 and imports were 26.5 million tons valued at \$32 billion.

IDRO Chief, Governor of West Azarbaijan Call for Accelerating Industrial Projects



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Deputy Industry, Mine and Trade Minister and Head of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO) Mr. Mohsen Salhinia in meeting with Governor of West Azarbaijan Mr. Mohammad Sadeq Motamedian emphasized acceleration in implementing the industrial projects in the province.

Referring to the empowerment approach of IDRO, Salehinia said that the organization welcomes participation of non-state sector in the industrial projects and is ready for transfer of its accumulated experience and knowledge in the processes of participation with the private sector for empowering along with legal, facilitative, and developmental supports.

Then Motamednia, for his part, asked IDRO to engage in investment and participation in the industrial projects in West Azarbaijan Province.

Then in the meeting both sides reviewed other issues like creating job opportunities in the region through feasible study for development and launch of the Zamyad vehicle production line as well as the launch of Sarv-Urmiah Economic Zone.

Myanmar Chides U.N. For Bias, Meddling

YANGON (Dispatches) - Myanmar's military government accused senior United Nations officials on Thursday of interference and making judgments based on "distorted news", days after a storm of international criticism over the jailing of deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

U.N. human rights chief Michelle Bachelet was among several officials who denounced the conviction on Monday of Suu Kyi, Myanmar's elected leader who was ousted in a Feb. 1 coup. "It is not appropriate to make one-sided judgment against the decision of the court which falls within the domestic jurisdiction of a sovereign country. Such acts constitute interference in the judiciary process and internal affairs of Myanmar," the junta's foreign ministry said in a statement.



India Defense Chief's Body Arrives in Delhi

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - The body of Indian defence chief General Bipin Rawat arrived in New Delhi on Thursday, one day after he and 12 others were killed in a helicopter crash near a military academy.

Rawat, 63, was travelling with his wife and other senior officers when their aircraft crashed in a forest in southern Tamil Nadu state, killing all but one soldier on board.

His body arrived in the capital for Friday's funeral after a solemn ceremony near the accident site at an army base, where an honor guard laid wreaths by the coffins of the victims. "The last rites of the Chief of Defense Staff will be performed with full military honors," defense minister Rajnath Singh told parliament.



Macron Says Focus of EU Presidency To Be Migration, Sovereignty

Une Europe plus souveraine



PARIS (Dispatches) - Reinforcing Europe's sovereignty - from ensuring its security and protecting its businesses to better controlling migration - will be a key aim of France's European Union presidency, the country's leader Emmanuel Macron said on Thursday.

France takes on the rotating six-month presidency of the EU at a time of crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic aftermath, tensions with Russia, and heightened business rivalries with China and the United States.

"We must move from a Europe of cooperation within our borders to a Europe that is powerful in the world, fully sovereign, free in its choices and master of its destiny," President Macron told a news conference at which he presented France's January-to-June EU program.

A major priority, he said, would be immigration, at a time when Belarus stands accused of engineering a refugee crisis by flying migrants in the Middle East and pushing them to attempt to illegally cross its borders into EU states Poland and Lithuania.

Among France's proposals will be setting up an emergency reaction force to assist EU states facing crises at their borders, Macron said.

He also wants the bloc to have regular political meetings on migration - like euro zone states already do on economic matters.

The bloc has been deeply divided for years in its response to immigration and how to police the common external borders of its Schengen area, and it remains to be seen how much France can achieve during its presidency of the EU Council of Ministers - which mostly encompasses the agenda for meetings.

But Macron faces a presidential election in April, and conservative and far-right parties are likely to make migration, on which he is viewed by some as a soft touch, a campaign issue.

Key also to ensuring the EU's sovereignty is to progress on defense issues, Macron said.

Since his election in 2017, Macron has been pushing for the EU to stand independent in terms of security, and no longer rely solely on U.S. military protection inherited from World War Two.

He said he also hoped to ensure that the bloc's businesses do not suffer from its policies on fighting climate change.

A major aspect there will be pushing for an EU carbon border tax on a series of imports, something already put forward by the EU's executive Commission to protect European industries from competitors abroad whose manufacturers can produce at lower cost because they are not charged for their carbon output.

Turning to the economic impact of COVID-19, Macron said he would organise an EU growth summit in March. Boosting the bloc's growth model would require adjusting budget rules to make them more simplified and transparent, he said.

WHO Warns Against Vaccine Hoarding

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The World Health Organization warned wealthy countries on Thursday against hoarding COVID-19 vaccines for booster shots as they try to fight off the new Omicron variant, threatening supplies to poorer countries where inoculation rates are low.

Many Western nations have been rolling out boosters, targeting the elderly and people with underlying health issues, but worries about the fast-spreading Omicron have prompted some to expand their programs.

The WHO recommended boosters instead for those with health issues, or those who have received an inactivated shot.

The jury is still out on how effective current vaccines are against Omicron. They have so far proved hugely successful in slowing the spread of the coronavirus and the severity of illness, and low rates of inoculation pose the risk of more dangerous and more vaccine-resistant variants emerging.

"As we head into whatever the Omicron situation is going to be, there is risk that the global supply is again going to revert to high-income countries hoarding vaccine," the WHO's vaccine director, Kate O'Brien, told a briefing.

"...It's not going to work. It's not going to work from an epidemiologic perspective and it's not going to work from a transmission perspective unless we actually have vaccine going to all countries." Mike Ryan, WHO emergencies director, said Omicron appeared to be "fitter and faster" but it was not invincible.

"We don't fully understand the implications clinically or the implications for our vaccines. ... What we do in the coming days and weeks, both in terms of virus suppression, vaccination and equity will make a huge difference to the evolution of this pandemic in 2022," he said.

Omicron was first detected in southern Africa and Hong Kong and Africa accounts for 46% of reported cases globally, Richard Mihigo, coordinator of the WHO's Immunization and Vaccine Development Program for Africa, told an online briefing.

Prince Mohammed has sought to position himself as a champion of modernization and reform, even as his international reputation took a hit from Khashoggi's murder.

Prince Mohammed's tour had been overshadowed by France's arrest of a man suspected of involvement in the 2018 killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. But it turned out to be a case of mistaken identity.

There have been signs this year of a thaw between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which have held several rounds of talks since April.

The prince has already visited Oman and the United Arab Emirates and left Qatar Thursday for Bahrain from where he was to head to Kuwait on Friday. The six Persian Gulf Arab states will hold a summit in Riyadh next week.

Saudi Arabia is leading a military coalition against Huthis in Yemen, in a seven-year war that has created one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, according to the United Nations.

During talks with Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the two sides exchanged views on "everything that would protect stability and security in the region", the Qatar News Agency said.

The emir "stressed that this important visit will deepen the strong and historical ties, especially in light of the circumstances the region is going through," the report added. The two men also visited Qatar's Lusail Stadium, which will be the venue for the final of next year's football World Cup.

The prince has already visited Oman and the United Arab Emirates and left Qatar Thursday for Bahrain from where he was to head to Kuwait on Friday. The six Persian Gulf Arab states will hold a summit in Riyadh next week.

Saudi Arabia is leading a military coalition against Huthis in Yemen, in a seven-year war that has created one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, according to the United Nations.

There have been signs this year of a thaw between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which have held several rounds of talks since April.

The prince has already visited Oman and the United Arab Emirates and left Qatar Thursday for Bahrain from where he was to head to Kuwait on Friday. The six Persian Gulf Arab states will hold a summit in Riyadh next week.

Saudi Arabia is leading a military coalition against Huthis in Yemen, in a seven-year war that has created one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, according to the United Nations.

There have been signs this year of a thaw between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which have held several rounds of talks since April.

The prince has already visited Oman and the United Arab Emirates and left Qatar Thursday for Bahrain from where he was to head to Kuwait on Friday. The six Persian Gulf Arab states will hold a summit in Riyadh next week.

Saudi Arabia is leading a military coalition against Huthis in Yemen, in a seven-year war that has created one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, according to the United Nations.

There have been signs this year of a thaw between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which have held several rounds of talks since April.

The prince has already visited Oman and the United Arab Emirates and left Qatar Thursday for Bahrain from where he was to head to Kuwait on Friday. The six Persian Gulf Arab states will hold a summit in Riyadh next week.

Saudi Arabia is leading a military coalition against Huthis in Yemen, in a seven-year war that has created one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, according to the United Nations.

There have been signs this year of a thaw between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which have held several rounds of talks since April.

The prince has already visited Oman and the United Arab Emirates and left Qatar Thursday for Bahrain from where he was to head to Kuwait on Friday. The six Persian Gulf Arab states will hold a summit in Riyadh next week.

Saudi Arabia is leading a military coalition against Huthis in Yemen, in a seven-year war that has created one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, according to the United Nations.

There have been signs this year of a thaw between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which have held several rounds of talks since April.

The prince has already visited Oman and the United Arab Emirates and left Qatar Thursday for Bahrain from where he was to head to Kuwait on Friday. The six Persian Gulf Arab states will hold a summit in Riyadh next week.

U.S.-Led Anti-IS Coalition Ends Iraq Combat Mission

BAGHDAD (AFP) - The U.S.-led coalition against the Islamic State group has finished its combat mission in Iraq and will shift to a training and advisory role, Iraq's national security adviser said Thursday.

The change of the mission for around 2,500 American troops stationed in the war-battered country by the end of the year was first announced by U.S. President Joe Biden in July when he hosted Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi.

The Iraqi government has been under pressure from powerful pro-Iranian political groups with armed wings that have vehemently demanded all US troops leave the country. "We are officially announcing the end of the coalition forces' combat mission," national security adviser Qassem al-Aaraji wrote on Twitter.

"The relationship with the international coalition continues in the areas of training, advising and capacity building" of Iraqi forces, he added.

Aaraji was speaking after a meeting between the coalition and the Joint Operations commanders of the Iraqi security forces. In effect, the about 2,500 US and 1,000 other coalition troops deployed in Iraq will remain there. They have been acting as advisers and trainers since mid-2020.

IS established a so-called caliphate across swathes of Syria and Iraq from 2014.

It was defeated in Iraq in 2017 after offensives by

Iraqi forces with the support of the coalition that has included more than 80 countries, among them Britain, France and several Arab nations.

Even though Iraq declared victory against the IS jihadists in December 2017, the group's remnants still carry out attacks against security forces and civilians and in recent weeks killed several Kurdish fighters in northern Iraq.

The Hashed al-Shaabi, a former coalition of Iraqi paramilitary groups now integrated into the regular forces, an influential political player, is particularly virulent about the departure of American troops.

On social media networks, groups close to pro-Iranian factions have been issuing threats and reminding Washington of a December 31 deadline they have set for a full US withdrawal.

Dozens of rocket and drone attacks have targeted American troops and interests in Iraq in recent months. Never claimed, these attacks are systematically blamed by the United States on pro-Iranian factions.

Washington does not plan to abandon Iraq to the influence of its arch enemy Tehran, with whom it is engaged in a standoff over the Iranian nuclear program.

Analyst Nicholas Heras of the Newlines Institute in Washington said the United States "continues to have the same military role in Iraq as before, with the major change being the messaging of that role".



Indian Farmers Call Off Year-Long Protest After Gov't Assurances

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Indian farmers called off a year-long protest on Thursday after the government conceded a clutch of demands, including assurances to consider guaranteed prices for all produce, instead of just rice and wheat, union leaders said.

The move comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi said last month he would roll back three farm laws, seeking to end the longest-running farmers' protest that galvanized millions of growers who remained resolute in opposing the legislation.

Despite the government's climbdown, thousands of farmers had continued to camp out on major highways leading to New Delhi to press for other demands such as the guaranteed prices, as well as for legal action against protesters to be dropped.

"We have received a letter from the government which has conceded to our requests," said Balbir Singh Rajewal, a senior farm union leader.

Farmers' leaders would meet on Jan. 15 to review progress on the government's assurances, Rajewal told a news conference.

"We will resume our protests if the government moves away from the assurances," said Gurnam Singh Charuni, another farmers' leader.

The government will set up a panel of growers and government officials to find ways of ensuring Minimum Support Prices (MSP), as the guaranteed rates are called, for all farm produce, according to the letter seen by Reuters.

The government now buys mainly rice and wheat at such guaranteed prices, benefiting barely 6% of India's millions of farmers.

Farmers' outstanding demands included retracting legal cases filed against the protesting growers and compensation for the families of those who died during the protest.

State administrations have agreed to the demands, according to the government letter addressed to farm union leaders.

Farmers had also asked the government to withdraw a draft of a proposed electricity bill, which they feared would lead to state governments withdrawing their right to free or subsidized power, used mainly for irrigation.

The government will discuss the draft with farmers.



Niavaran Apt (\$2800)
250sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
fireplace
pkg, & F.F

Farmanieh Villa (\$7000)
2000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
Sauna, J, pkg
green yard
balcony, & F.F

Elahieh Apt (\$2400)
230sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, F.F

Apt (\$2000)
Mahmoodieh
160sq.m, 2bdrs
S/p, S, J, pkg, & F.F

Darrous Villa (\$2500)
700sq.m, 5bdrs, S/p, & yard

Jordan Apt (\$1400)
130sq.m, 2bdrs, F.F

Zaferanieh bldg (\$8000)
5storey, 15bdrs, & pkgs

Gheitarieh (\$1800)
170sq.m, 3bdrs, & F.F

Cell: +989121907875
Shanon_tari@yahoo.com
Tel : 88510081
Fax : 88506474

Vali-e-Asr office
300sq.m (\$40 per sq.m)

ADVERTISING

IRAN NEWS

44253401

Don't Waste Your Time

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www.DeltaHOME.ir

The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

HOME
Real Estate

Member of **DELTA** Real Estate Group
(021) 88888865

IRAN NEWS

ADVERTISING

TEL: 44253448-50
FAX: 44253234
ADIRANNEWS@GMAIL.COM

PUBLISHER OF NEWSPAPERS

Apple Inches Closer to \$3 Trillion Market Cap

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Apple Inc is within striking distance of a \$3 trillion market capitalization, a milestone that would make it as big as the world's fifth largest economy after Germany, just over a year after breaching the \$2 trillion mark.

Shares of Apple were up 1.6% at \$174. They need to trade at \$182.85 to hit the mark and cap a strong rally that has been powered by investors betting on its brand and viewing it as a comparative safe haven. The stock has jumped about 30% this year on top of an 80% surge in 2020. In comparison, the S&P 500 has risen 25% for the period.



OPEC Official Hits at Misguided Efforts to Pare Oil and Gas

HOUSTON (Dispatches) - Attempts to cut investment in oil and gas to combat climate change are "misguided," OPEC Secretary General Mohammad Barkindo told an energy conference on Wednesday, arguing that producers have a critical role to play during the transition to cleaner fuels.

Speaking at the World Petroleum Congress in Houston via webcast, Barkindo took up the themes of several earlier speakers at the conference, arguing a lack of investment in fossil fuels could lead to energy shortages, market imbalances and higher prices.

"If the necessary investments are not met, it could have knock on implications and leave long-term scars, particularly for security of supply - affecting not only producers but consumers too," said Barkindo.

Speakers at the four-day conference this week have offered their own dire counterpoint to last month's COP26 climate change conference. Where environmentalists at COP26 warned of a climate catastrophe, oil and gas executives forecast uncertain energy security and supply without their products.

Barkindo, who had canceled an in-person appearance, championed an active role for oil and gas companies and stressed the need for fossil fuel to deliver energy security and supply.

"Climate change and energy poverty are two sides of the same coin. We need to ensure energy is affordable for all; we need to transition to a more inclusive, fair and equitable world in which every person has access to energy," he said.

"Any talk of the oil and gas industries being consigned to the past and halting new investments in oil and gas is misguided," said Barkindo. "The oil and gas industries can be part of the solution to tackling climate change."

Earlier in the conference on Wednesday, Occidental Petroleum Corp (OXY.N) Chief Executive Vicki Hollub bemoaned what she said was the exclusion of oil officials from key parts of the UN climate conference in Glasgow.

"Zero oil companies were included" in official dialogues at COP26. "We didn't get a seat at the table there, but we do need a seat at the table going forward," Hollub said.

Addressing climate activists' calls for a halt to new oil and gas projects around the world, Barkindo cautioned listeners: "we have to really think about what the energy transition means."

OPEC's estimates of future energy needs put the share of oil and gas in the energy mix at 52% by 2045, with renewables making up the remaining 48%, he said.

U.S. Worker Shortage Worsening Inflation, Lowering Growth

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The continuous labor shortage is weighing down potential economic growth, a new report from ING (ING) found.

"Labor supply simply isn't returning quickly enough and for companies desperate to hire this is a huge problem," the report noted. "The implication is that it constrains growth and pay is bid higher, with those cost increases likely passed onto consumers."

The report examined last month's job report and placed some of its numbers in a larger context. Payrolls rose by 210,000, well under the 550,000 consensus estimates. According to the report, "U.S. employment is still [\$3.9 million] below pre-COVID levels."

The key reason for the constrained economic picture, the report goes on to say, is that demand far outstrips supply in the labor market.

"In our view, the key problem for the economy, as indicated by today's payrolls number, is that demand for workers continues to outstrip supply by a wide margin," ING explained. "There are more than 10 million job vacancies in the U.S., with the National Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB) yesterday reporting that a net +48% of small businesses have job openings they can't fill. There is absolutely no problem with demand. The issue is the lack of workers to hire with the labor participation rate remaining woefully low at 61.8%."

The report, compiled by ING Chief International Economist James Knightley, identified the emerging Omicron coronavirus variant and inflation as two top economic concerns for investors for the near future.

"With inflation set to push close to 7% next week we have to be looking for a \$30 billion monthly reduction in QE asset purchases from January and the realistic prospect of three rate hikes in 2022 - Omicron permitting," the report said.

Among the reports findings were the revelation that almost 40% of working-age people are not engaged in the labor market "in any meaningful way," despite employers' pressing need for workers.



Economic Sentiment in Germany Deteriorates After Brief Recovery

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Economic sentiment in Germany in December worsened after a brief recovery as the ZEW indicator dropped to 29.9 points, according to the monthly expert survey published by the Leibniz Center for European Economic Research (ZEW).

"The German economy is suffering noticeably from the latest developments in the COVID-19 pandemic," ZEW President Achim Wambach said, adding that "persisting supply bottlenecks are weighing on production and retail trade."

The current economic situation in Germany continued to deteriorate as the corresponding indicator plummeted 19.9 points to minus 7.4 points, according to the ZEW. This is the first time since June that the situation assessment indicator has turned negative. The outlook for economic development in Germany in the next six months has also worsened considerably, according to ZEW.

"The decline in economic expectations shows that hopes for much stronger growth in the next six months are fading," Wambach said. In particular, earnings expectations of export-oriented and consumer-related industries in Germany were "assessed more negatively."

The expectations of the 174 financial market experts surveyed regarding economic developments in the eurozone ticked up slightly in December and reached 26.8 points. The situation indicator, on the other hand, fell by 13.9 points to minus 2.3 points. Inflation expectations for the eurozone "continued to decline very sharply," the ZEW noted. The inflation indicator fell to minus 33.3 points, 19.0 points below the previous month's level. More than half of the experts expect the inflation rate to fall over the next six months.

India's Central Bank Leaves Policy Rates on Hold

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - The Central Bank of India has maintained status-quo for the ninth time in a row by keeping its policy rates unchanged and retaining its accommodative stance at the conclusion of its three-day monetary policy meeting (MPC) that ended on Wednesday.

The accommodative stance resolution was passed by the six-member panel with five members favoring the resolution and one member expressing reservations.

In his address after the MPC meet, Governor of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Shaktikanta Das said the tightening of global financial conditions poses risks to global economic activity and to India's prospects as well.

Against this backdrop, the MPC decided that the ongoing domestic recovery needs sustained policy support to make it more broad-based.

"Considering it appropriate to wait for growth signals to become solidly entrenched while remaining watchful on inflation dynamics, the MPC decided to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at 4 percent and to continue with an accommodative stance as long as necessary to revive and sustain growth on a durable basis," the governor said.

Surges of infections across geographies, emergence of the Omicron variant, the persistence of supply chain disruptions and elevated energy and commodity prices continue to weigh on global economic activity, Das said.

"Global merchandise trade is slowing after a sharp rebound from the pandemic due to the disruptions in port services and turnaround time, elevated freight rates and the global shortage of semiconductor chips, which could dampen future manufacturing output and trade," the governor said.

While the projection for real GDP (gross domestic product) growth is maintained at 9.5 percent for 2021-22 (April-March), RBI has revised its October-December 2021 GDP growth to 6.6 percent from earlier 6.8 percent, and cut January-March 2022 GDP to 6 percent from 6.1 percent.

Japan Downgrades Q3 GDP On Deeper Hit to Consumer Spending



TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's economy shrank slightly faster than initially reported in the third quarter, as a sharp rise in local Covid-19 cases hit private consumption and a global chip supply shortage hurt corporate sentiment.

The deeper contraction is a setback for policymakers hoping easing supply shortages and loosened pandemic curbs would support a recovery in the world's third-largest economy this quarter.

Japan's economy declined an annualized 3.6 per cent in July-September, revised Cabinet Office data showed Wednesday, worse than the preliminary reading of a 3.0 per cent contraction.

The data, which was worse than economists' median forecast for a 3.1 per cent drop, equals a real quarter-on-quarter contraction of 0.9 per cent from the prior quarter, versus a preliminary 0.8 per cent drop.

"This confirms that economic conditions were stagnating in the July-September quarter," said Atsushi Takeda, chief economist at Itochu Economic Research Institute.

Growth turned negative due to the resurgence of the coronavirus."

The faster decline was mainly due to a larger fall in private consumption, which makes up more than half of gross domestic product, and shrank 1.3 per cent from the previous three months, worse than the initial estimate of a 1.1 per cent drop.

Consumption fell as bad weather kept shoppers at home and a global chip shortage hit sales of cars and electronics due to production snags, a government official said.

"A large contraction in durable goods (spending) indicated that car production cuts had a huge impact," said Wakaba Kobayashi, an economist at Daiwa Institute of Research. Durable goods spending posted its biggest drop since 1994 when comparable data first became available, the official said, slumping 16.3 per cent quarter-on-quarter and pulling down household consumption by 0.7 percentage points.

The data showed public investment dropped 2.0 per cent versus the initial estimate of a 1.5 per cent decline, while capital spending saw a smaller fall, shrinking 2.3 per cent from the prior quarter, compared with a 3.8 per cent preliminary drop.

شناسه آگهی: ۱۲۳۶۴۷۱

TENDER NO.: 01-31-9680030

National Iranian South Oilfields Company (NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

Items	Material Description	Quantity
35	PARTS FOR "MAN TURBO" SCREM GAS COMPRESSOR TYPE CP 80 TAG NO C503 A/B SER. NO. 270259 & 270261 JOB NO. 82121 REF. MAN TURBO	165 NOs

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.nisoc.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded.

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 7,099 EURO or 1,886,900,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: www.nisoc.ir-material-procurement-management-tab

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P. NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI, IRAN
PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D. SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL
NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex,
Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran
Tel. No.: 061 34 12 35 89 Fax No.: 061 34 45 74 37

Public Relations
www.shana.ir
www.nisoc.ir
<http://iets.mporg.ir>
www.setadiran.ir

15th Edition of Cinema Verite Opens in Tehran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Inauguration ceremony of the 15th edition of Iran International Documentary Film Festival "Cinema Verite" was held on Friday in Tehran.

Mohammad Hamidi-Moqadam, director of the festival, addressing the international cinematic event, saying that the joy of watching a movie on the silver screen has been forgotten for over a year due to the spread of the Coronavirus.

"Last year, we held the festival in online format, and this year, we are holding the festival in accordance with the protocols and with a limited number of guests and audience," he said.



Pfizer, BioNTech Vaccine Neutralizes Omicron With Three Shots

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - BioNTech and Pfizer said a three-shot course of their COVID-19 vaccine was able to neutralize the new Omicron variant in a laboratory test and they could deliver an upgraded vaccine in March 2022 if needed.

The German and U.S. companies said two doses of their vaccine resulted in significantly lower neutralising antibodies but a third dose boosted those antibodies by a factor of 25.

"The first line of defence, with two doses of vaccination, might be compromised and three doses of vaccination are required to restore protection," BioNTech Chief Medical Officer Ozlem Tureci said at a press conference. The companies suggested that two doses may still protect against severe disease.

BioNTech and Pfizer are the first manufacturers of a COVID vaccine to issue an official update on the efficacy of their shot against Omicron.

In samples of blood taken around a month after the third shot the Omicron variant was neutralized about as effectively as two doses neutralized the original virus identified in China.

BioNTech CEO Ugur Sahin suggested that countries might consider shortening the time period between second and third doses of the vaccine to combat the new variant.

He cited recent moves by countries including Britain to bring the third shot forward to three months after the second shot, from six months previously.

"We believe this is the right way to go particularly if the Omicron is now spreading further, to enable a better level of protection in the winter season," Sahin said.

The Omicron variant, first detected in southern Africa and Hong Kong last month, has triggered global alarm about another surge in infections. Cases have already been reported from Japan to the United States and across Europe.

The World Health Organization classified Omicron on Nov. 26 as a "variant of concern" but said there was no evidence to support the need for new vaccines specifically designed to tackle the variant and its mutations.

Nevertheless, the companies said they would continue efforts to bring an Omicron-specific COVID-19 vaccine to market. Work started when the variant first raised concern on Nov. 25.

They said their planned production of 4 billion doses of the Comirnaty vaccine in 2022 was not expected to change if an adapted vaccine was required.

The findings are broadly in line with a preliminary study published by researchers at the Africa Health Research Institute in South Africa on Tuesday, which said Omicron could partially evade protection from two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech



vaccine and suggested a third shot might help fend off infection.

Research on the new variant is still at an early stage. Laboratory analysis at University Hospital Frankfurt in Germany found the ability to mount an antibody response to Omicron in people who had three shots was up to 37 times lower than the response to Delta.

"The companies believe that vaccinated individuals may still be protected against severe forms of the disease," BioNTech and Pfizer said.

The vast majority of surface structures on the Omicron spike protein targeted by the T-cells, which typically emerge after vaccination, are not affected by Omicron's mutations, they said.

T-cells are the second pillar of an immune response, alongside antibodies, and are believed to prevent severe disease by attacking infected human cells.

For their analysis, the two companies used a virus that was bio-engineered to have the hallmark mutations of Omicron, known as a pseudovirus, and blood was collected from subjects three weeks after a second vaccine dose or one month after a third.

There is no significant data yet on how vaccines from Moderna (MRNA.O), Johnson & Johnson (JNJ.N) and other drugmakers hold up against the new variant but they are expected to release their own data within weeks.

Pakistani Senate Committee Undertakes Mission to Boost Barter Trade With Iran

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - As Pakistan has opened an informal border crossing with the Islamic Republic of Iran to facilitate local trade and movement of border residents of the two countries, members of the Pakistan Senate Standing Committee on Commerce are working on an agenda for facilitating border exchanges and barter trade with Iran.

Members of Senate Standing Committee on Commerce have visited Quetta on the direction of Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani to review the issues of barter trade and local traders in Balochistan.

The visit coincides with the opening of a new unofficial border crossing by Pakistan with the aim of facilitating the movement of border residents on both sides of the border and supporting trade between the natives of Iran and Pakistan.

The Consulate General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Quetta states the newly opened crossing by Pakistan is an informal crossing that has been opened due to the demand of border residents on the Pakistani side to facilitate trade and movement with border residents on the Iranian side.

A Senate secretariat statement states says a special meeting of the committee will be held next week in Quetta to resolve issues related to border trade. The meeting will consider barter trade and other issues related to border trade with Iran.

"Promoting barter trade and increasing border relations between Iran and Pakistan is on the agenda of the Senate Committee, and in this regards, the proposals of the Quetta Chamber of Commerce and other institutions related to border cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran will be considered," it said.

On 28th November President of Pakistan Arif Alvi during a meeting with President of Iran Ebrahim Raisi on the sidelines of 15th Summit of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in Ashgabat stressed the need for early implementation of Barter Trade Mechanism with Iran. Local media quoting Deputy Commissioner Chagai Mansoor Ahmed Baloch said a new border crossing with Iran was opened in the Raajay area of Chagai district of Balochistan.

Talking to media Baloch said the new facility would facilitate people from both sides of the border to travel and carry out trade activities.

He said a gate had been recently installed at the border crossing. "This is a historic moment for the people living on both sides of the border as this new border crossing will create job opportunities and remove hurdles being faced by the local people," the deputy commissioner said.

He said the development was made possible after Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani's recent visit to Iran where opening of new border crossings had been promised.

Last week a high-level meeting presided over by Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo has decided to open more border crossing points between Pakistan and Iran so that trade between the two countries does not come to a halt as it is the only source of income for the people of Makran.

Tehran, Yerevan Mull Simplification of Customs Procedures

YEREVAN (Dispatches) - The delegation led by the head of the Customs Administration of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mehdi Mirashrafi has arrived in Armenia on a working visit.

At Meghri border crossing point the delegation was welcomed by Rustam Badasyan, head of Armenia's State Revenue Committee. The officials toured the Meghri checkpoint, got acquainted with the conditions created for foreign economic operators and for delivering services to citizens. During the meeting the parties touched upon issues of mutual interest in customs cooperation, the simplification of customs procedures between the two countries, the steps aimed at improving the conditions of cargo transportation.

The heads of customs services of the two countries discussed the possibilities of preliminary exchange of information, the mechanisms of increasing the effectiveness of the fight against smuggling, as well as the need to intensify the direct contacts of the leaders of the Norduz and Meghri border checkpoints.

Rustam Badasyan and Mehdi Mirashrafi are scheduled to have a private conversation in Yerevan on December 9.

Iran Committed to...

FROM PAGE 1

Addressing such challenges requires a systematic and coordinated response by all Member States. We share the views that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the most appropriate platform for such coordinated response.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has taken significant steps to address and mitigate the negative impacts of climate change.

Nevertheless, the imposition of unlawful sanctions of the United States against Iran in flagrant infringement of the basic principles of international law, has not only prevented our access to much needed financial resources and technological means to tackle challenges associated with climate change, but has also adversely affected our national capacities to carry out our respective undertakings in this regard.

While terrorism, as a serious criminal offence, constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security, climate change is essentially a development issue and there is no scientific evidence establishing a direct link between climate change and international peace and security. Accordingly, the challenges of climate change should be addressed within the context of sustainable development.

At the same time, in certain conflict situations, the impacts

of climate change might create conducive environment for terrorist groups to exploit the situation and recruit vulnerable people for their sinister terrorist purposes. We need to be extremely cautious about establishing a possible linkage between international peace and security and climate change.

In order to prevent such challenging situations to occur, addressing the underlying causes is imperative. To this end, all Member States must adhere to their respective obligations based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Likewise, developed countries must uphold their promises to provide the developing and affected countries with timely and sufficient financial support and technical assistance, including through facilitating the transfer of required technologies.

In conclusion, we reiterate our principled position that the climate change is primarily an issue related to sustainable development, and thus outside the purview of Security Council. Moreover, engagement of the Security Council, which lacks the requisite expertise and tools in this sphere, would trespass the mandate of other main organs of the UN, further complicating their work in effectively addressing the challenges of climate change."

U.S. Sanctions...

FROM PAGE 1

In a supplementary question, the BSP member sought to know from the government if India has signed "any backdoor agreement" to continue using the Chabahar port to provide help to central Asian countries and Afghanistan after the Taliban took over the control of the Afghanistan government.

"All our agreements on the Chabahar port operations are limited to Iran. Originally, there was a trilateral agreement but that was the basis to set it up. In terms of port operations, we are not required to have any agreement with the government of Afghanistan. And, I assure you that the port is functioning and functioning back," the external affairs minister said in his reply.

Adani Ports...

FROM PAGE 1

"The advisory (issued by APSEZ) bears adverse impact on EXIM trade of the country and (is) contrary to the policy of the government of India," the Customs Department wrote in a 10 November communication to APSEZ following representations from trade that the decision was taken "unilaterally".

"Such restrictions of port specific import can be imposed only by the competent authority like Directorate General of Foreign Trade," it said while asking APSEZ to "re-examine" the issue to make policy for facilitating EXIM trade and be in consonance with the policies of the government.

"Port operators are supposed to provide their services on non-discriminatory basis.

However, port restrictions provision can be exercised (only) by the competent authorities of the government of India, Ministry of Commerce, Directorate General of Foreign Trade," Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways wrote in a reply to a Parliament question in the Rajya Sabha on December 7.

On September 16, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence seized 2,988.21 kg of heroin at Mundra Port. The heroin was found in two containers declared as stuffed with 'semi processed talc stones' that originated from Afghanistan and were shipped to Mundra via the Bandar Abbas port in Iran. The case is being pursued by the National Investigation Agency.

Stop Blame Game

FROM PAGE 1

According to the article published by Nour, Washington, which is not allowed to take part in the talks due to its withdrawal from the JCPOA, and its European allies have attempted to intensify pressure on Iran to undermine the domestic cohesion that is the main support behind the Iranian negotiators, and in turn, impose their excessive, unprincipled demands on the Islamic Republic, despite the fact that all participant countries plus the current US administration have admitted that the US withdrawal from the JCPOA was the reason behind the current complex situation.

Although the U.S. itself is the main culprit and the country has been the violator of the JCPOA by leaving it and other Western countries' have followed it, this is Iran which is blamed by the West as the violator while Iran does remain committed to the Safeguard Agreement and now it is simply not ready to accept the voluntary obligations.

And now while the talks in Vienna are underway and Iran insists it is determined to advance the talks, the Western countries try to express pessimism over the result of talks by accusing Tehran of excessive demands while they themselves are pioneer in excessive demanding and Iran just pursues its legal rights.

It seems the West is eager to continue its blame game and psychological war to prolong the talks in order to get concessions from Tehran because Iran's economic situation has unfortunately been tied to the result of the talks by the former government and the Western states are taking advantage of that wave to continue the blame game.

But the West is recommended to be wise and prudent and not to fall in the trap of the Zionists and Washington and they are better to come to terms with the realities and stop fancying bringing down Iran because Iranians are not to retreat any inch from its legal demands and they can overcome the hurdles as they have so far done, and they will not give in to the U.S. and Zionists' bully and threat of attacks.

Tehran wants its legal rights, something which had been missed during the 2015 deal and the West should also stop continuing its excessive demands because Tehran does not welcome prolongation of the talks and continuation of the blame game because the world knows who is the genuine violator and who is the victim and Western media cannot deceive the world public opinion through disseminating poisonous news, reports and analyses and even fictitious claims.

Iran to Slap U.S...

FROM PAGE 1

"George Floyd is merely one among countless people killed in the worst possible way publicly, without justice being served," he said.

He was pointing to the high-profile case of an African-American man, who was caught on camera suffocating to death in May 2020 when a white Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck for over nine minutes during an arrest. The tragic death became the face of a movement challenging police brutality and bias in the US criminal justice system.

The Iranian official also referred to the dire conditions of US prisons, the large number of women in jail, and the use of torture against prisoners as proof to the deplorable human rights violations by the U.S. government.

The U.S. Treasury and State Department announced the anti-Iran sanctions on Tuesday, two days before the resumption of negotiations in Vienna to revive the Iran nuclear deal by removing Washington's sanctions, which it slapped on the Islamic Republic after withdrawing from the nuclear pact, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"The United States is committed to promoting democracy and accountability for those who abuse human rights around the world," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken claimed in a statement on Tuesday.

In response, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said that by doubling down on sanctions, the U.S. cannot gain leverage at the Vienna talks, and that the move showed anything but seriousness and goodwill on Washington's part.



Mauresmo Named as New French Open Director

PARIS (Dispatches) - Ex-women's number one Amelie Mauresmo was on Thursday named director of the French Open, replacing Guy Forget. Mauresmo will be in place until at least 2024, French tennis federation president Gilles Moretton said. A two-time Grand Slam winner (Australian Open and Wimbledon in 2006) and 2004 Olympic singles silver medalist in Athens, the 42-year-old Mauresmo expressed her "pride" at being named director of Roland Garros, the premier claycourt tournament in the world and federation's principal source of revenue.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

Switchboard:
(+98) (21) 44253448

Public Relations Tel:
(+98)(21) 44253450

Editorial Board: 44253449

Public Relations Fax:
(+98)(21) 44253395

Advertising Department:
Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234
Website:
http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:
info@irannewsdaily.com

ISSN 1024-6053

P.O. Box: 15875-8551

Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St., Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzadaran Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Printed by:Honar Sarzmin Sabz

Distributed by:
Cities of Iran Cultural and Artistic Institute

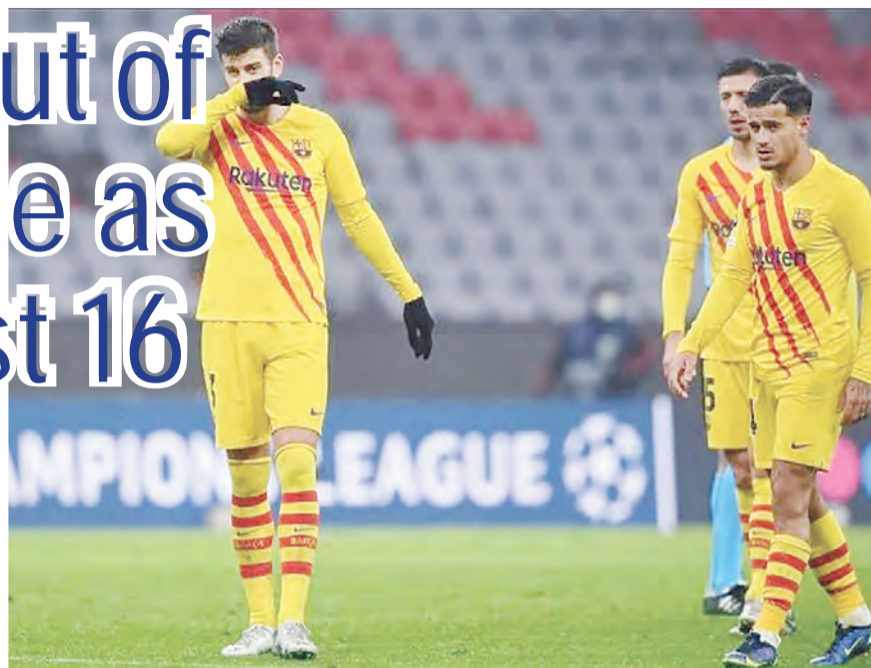
Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

Tedesco Tasked With Reviving Leipzig's Fortunes

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Domenico Tedesco has been tasked with reviving RB Leipzig's season after being named full-time head coach on Thursday on a two-year contract. The 36-year-old Italy-born coach fills the vacancy left when American Jesse Marsch was sacked by the Bundesliga club on Sunday after just four months in charge. Tedesco, who has dual Italian and German nationality, will take his place in the dugout for Saturday's game with Borussia Muenchengladbach bidding to end a run of three successive league defeats.

Barcelona Crash out of Champions League as Benfica Reach Last 16

LONDON (Dispatches) - Barcelona crashed out of the Champions League in the group stage for the first time in over 20 years with a 3-0 defeat at the hands of Bayern Munich, as Benfica, French champions Lille and Red Bull Salzburg all qualified for the last 16. Meanwhile, Chelsea missed out on first place in their group to Juventus after conceding a late equaliser away to Zenit Saint Petersburg, while snow in northern Italy forced the postponement of Atalanta's decisive game against Villarreal. Barcelona started the day in second place in Group E but had to win away to Bayern Munich to be sure of going through, otherwise they risked being overtaken by Benfica. Xavi Hernandez's side were duly outclassed by an already-qualified Bayern who made it six wins out of six in the group, with Thomas Mueller's 34th-minute header just crossing the line before Ronald Araujo could clear. The game was played behind closed doors at the Allianz Arena due to coronavirus restrictions in Bavaria, but that did not handicap Bayern, with Leroy Sane's powerful strike doubling their lead before the break and then Jamal Musiala making it 3-0 just after the hour. The Catalans were knocked out as Benfica beat Dynamo Kiev 2-0 in Lisbon, first-half goals by Roman Yaremchuk and Gilberto seeing them snatch second and a place in next Monday's draw for the last 16.



Kimmich Out Until January After Covid-Related Lung Damage

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich said Thursday that star midfielder Joshua Kimmich would not return to action until January as he recovers from lung damage caused by Covid-19. Kimmich, who is unvaccinated, tested positive for coronavirus last month. "I'm happy my self-isolation caused by the coronavirus has ended," said Kimmich, expected to be one of Germany's leading players at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. "I'm doing very well, but I'm not yet able to train fully due to slight infiltrations in my lungs. "I'll therefore do some rehabilitative training and can't wait to be fully back in action in January."

Russia Says Diplomatic Boycott of Beijing "Pointless"

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia's Olympic Committee chief said on Thursday the country did not support the diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics by some Western countries, denouncing the move as pointless. The United States, Canada, Australia and Britain announced they would not send any state officials to the Games in February because of China's human rights record. China has said these countries would have to pay a price. "From (a) sports point of view, these measures are absolutely pointless," Stanislav Pozdnyakov, president of the Russian Olympic Committee, told reporters. "These measures are exclusively of a political nature ... We really hope that they will not cast a shadow over the Games."

Barcelona, who scored just twice in the group stage, had appeared in the knockout rounds of the Champions League in each of the last 17 seasons, last missing out in 2003-04 when they played in the UEFA Cup after coming sixth in La Liga the previous year. They last went out of the Champions League in the group stage in 2000/01 when a team featuring a 20-year-old Xavi finished third in their section behind AC Milan and Leeds United. The five-time European champions will now drop into the Europa League knockout-round play-offs in February. In contrast Lille are through to the Champions League knockout stages for the first time in 15 years after beating

Wolfsburg 3-1 in Germany to top Group G. Burak Yilmaz gave Lille an early lead and Canadian striker Jonathan David made it 2-0 in the 72nd minute before Angel Gomes got their third. Renato Steffen got a late consolation. Salzburg, Austrian champions in each of the last eight seasons, also progressed thanks to a 1-0 win over Sevilla, with Noah Okafor scoring the only goal before the Spaniards had Joan Jordan sent off. It is the first time Salzburg have reached the knockout phase, while Sevilla join the likes of Barcelona and Borussia Dortmund in the Europa League -- that may suit them given they have won that trophy or its predecessor the UEFA Cup a record six times, all since 2006. Last season's winners Chelsea had already qualified for the last 16 and were on course to top Group H as they led 3-2 away to Zenit going into injury time. But then Magomed Ozdoyev's stunning strike earned Zenit a 3-3 draw, allowing Juventus to snatch first place as Moise Kean's goal gave them a 1-0 win against Malmo. Timo Werner had tapped in to put Chelsea ahead in the second minute, but Claudinho and Sardar Azmoun both scored before the break for Zenit. Romelu Lukaku's first goal in nearly three months made it 2-2, and Werner's second of the night looked to have won it for Chelsea before Ozdoyev struck. "My analysis is very clear: our behaviour changes when we have a lead and this is something we never did and we should never do," said Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel, whose team twice squandered an advantage to lose 3-2 at West Ham United last weekend. Group winners Manchester United drew 1-1 at home to Young Boys, with Mason Greenwood's acrobatic effort putting Ralf Rangnick's side ahead before Fabian Rieder equalized.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is set to attend the Feb. 4-20 Beijing Olympics after receiving an invitation from China. "Our head of state will be present and this will be an additional motivating factor for all members of the Russian Olympic Committee team," Pozdnyakov said. Russian athletes are barred from competing at major international events under their flag and with their anthem as part of doping sanctions that end in December 2022. In Beijing, Russians will compete as representatives of the Russian Olympic Committee under the acronym "ROC".

Pele to Leave Hospital Before Christmas



Three-time World Cup winner Pele, who was admitted to Sao Paulo's Hospital Albert Einstein on Wednesday, underwent an operation to remove the tumor in September and spent nearly a month under care.

RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - Pele was hospitalized for a scheduled procedure as part of his treatment for a colon tumor and the Brazilian soccer great will be home in time to spend Christmas with his family, his daughter Kely Nascimento said. The hospital said at the time that the 81-year-old would need to undergo chemotherapy. "In two or three days he will be back home to enjoy Christmas," his daughter said on Instagram. "This was not a surprise. It was already scheduled and is part of the treatment." Widely considered to be one of the greatest footballers of all time, Pele has suffered from a series of health issues in recent years. Hip surgery left him with recurring pain and he cannot now walk unaided. He appeared upbeat in videos taken during his recovery period in September and October and he said on Twitter last month that he was feeling better every day.

No World Tennis Tour Events in China in 2022

LONDON (Dispatches) - There will be no World Tennis Tour events held in China in 2022, an International Tennis Federation (ITF) source confirmed to Reuters on Thursday. The source did not say if the move was linked to concerns over the health and safety of doubles star Peng Shuai. In the last full season in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic, China hosted about 25 ITF women's and 15 men's events. World Tennis Tour events are professional tournaments below the elite level. The ITF Women's World Tennis Tour offers approximately 500 tournaments across 65 countries offering prize money from \$15,000 to \$100,000.

Rockets Shoot Down Nets

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - The Houston Rockets pushed their NBA winning streak to seven games with a 114-104 victory over the short-handed Brooklyn Nets as the top three Eastern Conference teams suffered setbacks. Eric Gordon scored 21 points before he was ejected in the fourth quarter and Garrison Mathews added 19 for the Rockets, who have their first seven-game winning streak since they won eight in a row in November of 2019. James Harden, playing his second game in Houston since he was traded to the Nets in January, had 25 points for the Eastern Conference-leading Nets, who rested league scoring leader Kevin Durant and LaMarcus Aldridge. In Cleveland, Darius Garland scored 24 points and rookie Evan Mobley added 16 with nine rebounds as the Cavaliers beat the depleted Bulls 115-92. The Cavs posted their biggest winning margin of the season against the Bulls, the second-ranked team in the East. Earlier in the day the Bulls saw Matt Thomas become their fourth player to enter Covid-19 protocols after testing positive for coronavirus. Thomas had made the trip to Cleveland, but Bulls coach Billy Donovan received word early Wednesday morning that he would not be available. Donovan, however, said after the blowout defeat that the available players had to step up. "We're better than that," Donovan said. "And we need to be better than that. I don't know when or who is coming back on what dates. My feeling is right now, we're going into Miami with the same group, and if we don't compete at a higher level, we're going to get the same result we got here tonight. ... It's not to say we're going to win, but we can do a better job than we did tonight."



Hamilton Hungry for Record Eighth Title

LONDON (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton will be in a league of his own if he can secure a record eighth Formula One world championship in Sunday's season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. The 36-year-old Mercedes racer is already the most successful driver in the sport's history having equaled Michael Schumacher's seven titles and overtaken the German on wins, pole positions and podiums. But if he beats 24-year-old Red Bull rival Max Verstappen at Yas Marina, Hamilton will break the last of the Ferrari great's major records. "It wasn't unimaginable but I think it was seen as impossible," Hamilton, level on points with Verstappen after winning the last three races, told F1TV when he clinched his seventh title in 2020. "However I still dreamt of it, I dream of going to space... I believe in things and I think when you dream we all come up with these crazy ideas." Those dreams have driven the sport's only Black driver as he emerged from an underprivileged background far from racing to become one of the world's wealthiest and most prominent sportsmen. The grandson of immigrants from the Caribbean island of Grenada, Hamilton -- now a winner of 103 races -- has stayed close to his roots and family. His parents separated when he was two and father Anthony held down multiple jobs to fund his son's early karting activities until McLaren and Mercedes stepped in. Hamilton's success and varied interests, ranging from making music to promoting young Black fashion designers and embracing veganism, have earned him a global crossover appeal unlike any other champion of the past.

