

Health Ministry Announced on Monday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 130,764 With 42 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Iran and Saudi Arabia's Representatives Have Held a Security Meeting Hosted by Amman to Discuss Various Issues, Including Iran's Nuclear Program, the Jordanian Official News Agency Has Reported

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2 DOMESTIC

Iran, Turkmenistan Stress Measures to Strengthen Transit Ties



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

Iran Priorities in Expansion of Agricultural Ties With EU



> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

G7 Warns Russia Against Invasion of Ukraine



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

Verstappen Wins His First Ever F1 World Title



> SEE PAGE 8

Iran Committed Not to Take Actions Against IAEA Standards

TEHRAN (MNA) – The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami says that Iran is committed not to do anything contrary to established international procedures approved by the IAEA.

Mohammad Eslami made the comments on the sidelines of a ceremony held in northern Tehran to commemorate young Iranian manufacturers and experts on Monday.

“We in the AEOI are committed not to do anything against international rules. We are committed to continuously expanding, influencing and supporting infrastructure and capacities in order to advance the country’s knowledge-based policies, especially in line with the goal of economic prosperity and a knowledge-based economy.”

He said that Iran uses the capabilities and capacities of nuclear energy and technology in various fields to prosper the lives of the people and the economy of the country.

Eslami elaborated on some of the nuclear activities in Iran and the use of nuclear energy while criticizing the images presented by the West and some regional countries of Iranian nuclear activities and nuclear enrichment inside the country.

See Page 7

Iran Marks National Exports Day With an Eye on Boosting Exports



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – In a ceremony held yesterday in Tehran, officials and exporters marked the National Exports Day and the top exporters of the year were awarded with prizes.

The ceremony was held in presence of First Vice-President Mohammad Mokhber, Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Mr. Seyed Reza Fatemi Amin, Vice President for Science and on Technology Mr. Soren Sattari and Vice President on Economic Affairs Mohsen Rezaee.

Addressing the ceremony, Industry Minister Fatemi Amin highlighted the goals of the ministry for boosting exports and reiterated that this year’s exports will increase by \$5b comparing to the preceding year, admitting that methanol and steel have been the main reason in this rise and the country should work to diversify its exports and export destinations.

Meanwhile in the ceremony, Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce Gholam-Hossein Shafei said that while Iran has not grown in the export sector in the past 30 years, exports from countries aligned with Iran, including Turkey, have increased by 7 percent during this period.

He declared Iran’s export volume at \$58.9 billion in 2020, saying it increased by only 4-tenths of a percent compared to the year before.

Referring to the lack of growth in Iranian exports over the past three decades, he said that countries aligned with Iran such as Turkey, Malaysia, Nigeria and North Africa have had 7, 5 and 2 to three times the export growth, respectively.

According to the head of the chamber of commerce, 50 percent of Iran’s total export volume in the past decades has been 50 percent of oil and 50 percent of crude sales.

Meanwhile addressing the ceremony Rezaee says that Iran seriously aims to get sanctions removed while adding that Tehran would not be fooled by empty promises.

The Iranian official said that exports are at the core of generating wealth, and the Iranian nation would not achieve wealth without exports.

Being an important part of the economy in all countries, trade and exports have a double effect on national Iranian production, he added.

Iranian producers, the climate, and human resources of Iran can effectively contribute to the economic leap, Rezaee continued, adding that re-exporting can create billions of dollars of wealth for the country.

The official went on to say that the 13th Iranian administration under President Raisi aims to apply fundamental technical changes, starting with the field of exports.

Pointing to the illegal sanctions, the Iranian Vice-President for Economic Affairs noted that now the Iranian nation has to do great things in a limited time after considering all the aspects.

The Iranian government is seriously seeking the removal of sanctions, Rezaee added, saying that the current Iranian government seeks engagement with the entire world.

At the end of the ceremony, the top exporters of the year were awarded with prizes.

Tehran Imposes Sanctions on 20 American Individuals, Entities

TEHRAN (MNA) - Secretary of Iranian Judiciary’s Human Rights Council Kazem Gharibabadi announced that Islamic Republic of Iran imposed sanctions on 20 American individuals and entities.

Deputy Judiciary Chief for International Affairs made the remarks on Monday, saying that the United States imposed sanctions on any subject it could and then it (United States) turned to the issue of imposing sanctions on individuals and legal entities.

This issue includes two categories, one is the ban on traveling to the United States and the other is freezing the property of individuals in that country, he said, adding, “Generally, 100% of those people who are sanctioned by the United States do not travel to this country and do not have any fund there, so that these sanctions are symbolic.”

There is an issue in the law called “retaliation” and Iran has acted based on this issue and has placed some US individuals and legal entities, including those engaged in the field of human rights, on the sanctions list, Gharibabadi emphasized.

In this regard, the Islamic Republic of Iran put more than 20 American individuals and entities on its sanctions list, he added.

Official Vows Subsidy Cash Handouts To Increase

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran’s Planning and Budget Organization Masoud Mirkazaei defended the elimination of the 4,200-toman dollar saying that eliminating the official dollar rate would create inflation of 7.6 percent, but given that speculators benefit most from the currency, “we have no choice” and that the currency should be eliminated from the budget.

Speaking at a press conference, he promised to increase the subsidy cash handouts of some villages to 90,000 to 110,000 toman to compensate for the elimination of the 4,200 toman currency, and “subsidize some people in low-income deciles above 120,000 tomans.”

Opponents of the removal of the currency, however, say the elimination of the 4,200 toman dollar will cause widespread inflation, and that the inflation of the goods included in the currency “from March 2017 to July 1400 was equivalent to 190 percent, but other commodities faced inflation of 433 percent.”

Iran Receives No Initiative, Proposal From Other Side

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran’s chief negotiator in Vienna talks on the removal of anti-Iran sanctions says the Iranian side has not received any constructive initiative or proposal from the opposite side during the ongoing negotiations.

Ali Bagheri Kani made the remarks in an interview with Press TV on Sunday, saying that the removal of the illegal and cruel U.S. sanctions and Iran’s nuclear activities are two main sticking points in the current talks over which there still remains a host of differences between the two sides.

The Iranian diplomat added that despite this situation, Iran’s delegation has informed the opposite side of its views on differential points through modifications and proposals that it has offered the opposite party.

“When it comes to these points of difference, we have so far received no proposal and initiative from the opposite side,” Bagheri Kani said.

Iran’s lead negotiator further stated that the removal of the illegal and cruel US sanctions and Iran’s nuclear measures are the most important bones of contention between the two sides during Vienna talks over which many differences still remain unresolved.

See Page 7

Iraq Still needs to Import Gas From Iran

BAGHDAD (PressTV) - Iraq’s electricity ministry says the Arab country still needs to import natural gas from Iran because its plan to locally provide fuel for its power plants has not been completed yet.

Ministry spokesman Ahmed Musa said several Iraqi delegations will travel to Tehran to discuss increasing gas exports which have reportedly been cut to eight million cubic meters a day from 50 million cubic meters.

“Negotiations with the Iranian ambassador in Baghdad and the Iranian ministry of energy regarding the increase of gas imports from Iran are ongoing,” Baghdad al-Yawm news agency quoted him as saying Sunday.

Despite its position as a major oil producer, Iraq relies on Iran for natural gas that generates as much as 45 percent of its 14,000 megawatts of electricity consumed daily. Iran transmits another 1,000 megawatts directly, making itself an indispensable energy source for its Arab neighbor.

Earlier this month, the United States granted Iraq a 120-day extension to a sanctions waiver allowing Baghdad to continue energy imports.

See Page 7

10 Freight Trains Moving Between Pakistan, Iran Every Month

ISLAMANAD (Dispatches) - At least 10 freight trains move between Pakistan and Iran every month.

The feasibility study for rehabilitation and improvement of track from Quetta to Taftan was carried out at an estimated cost of us \$698 million in June 2019 to design and run the train at 120km per hour, according to an official document.

Pakistan Railways has offered this section for upgradation to potential investors of different countries including Russia, Kazakhstan, Iran and Belarus on Public-Private Partnership (PPP) and Built Operate Transfer (BOT) model.

About the proposal to extend and connect the rail link between Pakistan and Afghanistan under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, the rail link was discussed in the 5th Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) meeting held in 2015.

However, it has not been included in the CPEC project yet. It was stated that the rail link between Pakistan and Afghanistan via Main Line-1 had been planned through another project of Mazare-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar rail link for which a road map between Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan had already been signed.

Earlier in November, Pakistan Railways was determined to upgrade cargo transportation services to facilitate the industry, Pakistan Railways Secretary Habibur Rehman Gilani had said.

Talking to the business community during his visit to the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (Aptma) office, he had said that the initiative would reduce the cost of doing business for the industry and enable exporters to compete with regional competitors.

Gilani had admitted that Pakistan Railways had turned passenger-centric over the past few years and lost its competitiveness in freight handling.

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Justice Minister Departs for Egypt to Attend COSP

TEHRAN (MNA) – Minister of Justice Amin Hossein Rahimi departed for Egypt to attend the Ninth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

Heading an Iranian delegation, Rahimi traveled to Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt on Monday morning to attend the Ninth session of the Conference of the States Parties (COSP) to the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

The ninth session of the conference will be held in Sharm El-Sheikh on 13-17 December 2021.

Iran, Turkmenistan Stress Measures to Strengthen Transit Ties

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Presidents of Iran and Turkmenistan emphasized the promotion of economic and trade cooperation to increase the level of relations between the two countries.

Speaking in a telephone conversation with Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow on Monday, Ebrahim Raisi thanked the country for hosting the 15th ECO Summit and said, "A good cooperation has been done in the field of gas cooperation and executing the Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan gas swap through Iran."

Iranian President also stressed cooperation in the field of transportation and transit of goods between the two countries, saying, "With the efforts of the leaders of the two countries, good measures have been taken to strengthen border relations, and through the cooperation of the two countries, some obstacles can be removed."

Regarding scientific and technological cooperation between Tehran and Ashgabat, Raisi noted that during his visit to Turkmenistan, a number of Iranian medical and paramedical products were donated to Turkmenistan so that the two countries could have good cooperation in the field of knowledge-based and medical sciences.

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, for his part, stressed the importance of cooperation between neighboring countries, saying, "Relations between Turkmenistan and Iran, with a thousand-year-old civilization, should



continue in the form of cooperation in international organizations."

The President of Turkmenistan described trade and economic cooperation in the relations between the two countries as important, saying, "Iran has a special place in the field of medical development."

Berdimuhamedow considered the gas swap agreement between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan through Iranian soil important and called for the establishment of a joint commission for cooperation in this field among the three countries.

Emphasizing joint support for the development of bilateral relations between Iran and Turkmenistan, the President of Turkmenistan said, "The government of Iran and Turkmenistan are brothers and I wish prosperity and peace for Iran".

Iran Has Abundant Reserves of Basic Goods, Medicine

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The Iranian Administration's Economic Coordination Headquarters has given reports about sufficient reserves of basic commodities and medicine in the country.

In a Sunday session of the headquarters, President Ebrahim Raisi received reports stating that the reserves of basic commodities and pharmaceutical products in the country are in a good and acceptable state.

The reports also noted that there are abundant reserves in the country's ports and aboard cargo ships that are bound for Iran, thanks to the arrangements for the timely allocation of foreign currency for the imports.

Stressing the need to accelerate the process of customs clearance and distribution of the basic commodities, the president said the reserves of foodstuff have reached a reliable level.

Addressing a parliamentary meeting on November 16, Raisi said his administration was "more hopeful than ever" about the settlement of problems and untying the knots.

Pointing to the successful plans to increase the oil sales and raise the country's income, Raisi said good breakthroughs have been made in the process of supplying financial and currency resources.

Moreover, the concerns about the supply and store of basic commodities have been greatly allayed, he noted.

Days after taking office in August, Raisi emphasized the necessity for the removal of obstacles to the activities of Iranian exporters, saying plans must be formulated to eliminate the barriers and provide motivation for the enhancement of exports.

Air Quality in Tehran Remains Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups

TEHRAN (IFP) - The air quality index in Tehran has hit 137, falling within the 101 to 150 range, which is considered unhealthy for sensitive groups.

The Iranian capital city's air quality index was at 145 in the late hours of Sunday.

Tehran has had 195 days with acceptable air quality and 64 days with air quality unhealthy for sensitive groups as well as 6 days rated unhealthy for all since the beginning of the new Iranian calendar year, which began on March 21.

High pollution rate during the cold seasons have turned into a major problem in large Iranian cities over the past years.

Officials say fossil fuels used by millions of vehicles, power plants and factories are the main culprits for the air pollution.

Israel's Empty Threats Against Iran Out of Fear

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The chief commander of Iran's Army says Israel's "empty threats" against the Islamic Republic hail from Tel Aviv's "fear", warning that any Israeli move to operationalize those threats would be met with a "proportionate response."

Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi made the remarks during an opening ceremony of an exhibition on the capabilities and achievements of the Iranian Navy.

"The Zionists' driving hails from fear and horror, as leaders of this ominous regime know that if they wished to get such drivel a bit closer to action, they would receive a proportionate response that would put a sooner end to their existence," Mousavi said.

Israel has recently intensified its attempts to derail the Vienna talks on the removal of US sanctions against Iran by continually bringing up Iran's missile and drone capabilities, by claiming that Iran acts maliciously in the region, and last but not least, by resorting to the old allegation that Iran is trying to build nuclear weapons.

Elsewhere in his remarks, General Mousavi attributed the progressive development of the Navy to "the spirit of moving forward and dissatisfaction with the current situation in the Navy."

The Navy chief said that the progress made by all the Iranian armed forces, including the naval troops, has left "the army of the Global Arrogance (hegemonic powers) face ambiguity," quoting one of their leaders as saying recently that "our actions have no benefit and we can't stop the progress of Iran."

He further said the anti-Iran sanctions "have lost their efficiency a long time ago," stating that the progress achieved by the armed forces is attributed to "domestic capabilities."

FM Stresses Expansion of Trade, Tourism With Neighbors

TEHRAN (MNA) – In a meeting with the heads of Iranian missions in neighboring countries, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian stressed the expansion of trade and tourism with the neighbors.

During the meeting, Amir-Abdollahian outlined the 13th administration's foreign policy program to activate relations with neighbors and develop trade and tourism.

In the field of economic diplomacy, the Foreign Ministry is fully prepared to assist the Ministry of

Interior and the governors in removing obstacles to developing tourism and trade relations, he said.

Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi who also attended the meeting pointed to the importance of relations with neighboring countries, expressing hope that the heads of Iranian missions in neighboring countries and the governors would use all the existing capacities in the region and increase cooperation with neighboring countries.

ICRC, IRC Announce Joint Effort to Vaccinate Afghan Migrants

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) have announced joint measures to vaccinate Afghan migrants living in Iran against the new coronavirus infection as the country boosts efforts made to curb the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a joint press release on Sunday, the two humanitarian bodies announced they have launched a plan to vaccinate up to 125,000 Afghan migrants as well as Iranian nationals against COVID-19 in eastern provinces of Iran as part of a partnership between the ICRC and the IRCS.

The initiative requires a total of 250,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine to fully immunize 125,000 people in target groups against the new coronavirus infection.

During the ceremony held to announce the initiative, Mansoureh Bagheri, the IRCS's Under-Secretary General for International Affairs and International Humanitarian Law thanked the ICRC, saying, "This is a very welcome donation from our long-standing partner the ICRC on such an important humanitarian issue."

"The purchased vaccines as the result of this donation will be used to vaccinate 125,000 individuals, both migrants and members of host communities, in the four eastern provinces of Khorasan Razavi, South Khorasan, Sistan and Baluchistan, and Kerman," she explained

Iran has been fighting one of the deadliest coronavirus outbreaks since the virus emerged in the country in early 2020. So far, over 6,150,000 people have tested positive for the highly infectious disease in Iran, with 130,722 deaths reported.

Iran hosts about 3.6 million displaced Afghan migrants. During the last months, Iran has managed to step up its vaccination campaign with around 83% of the target population now fully vaccinated.

West Cannot Do a Damn Thing Against Iran in Military Areas

TEHRAN (MNA) – According to the IRGC Aerospace Force Commander, Westerners have realized that they cannot do a damn thing against Iran in military fields; therefore, they resort to modern ways to achieve their colonial goals.

Addressing the commanders, professors, and students of Imam Hossein University on Sunday, IRGC Aerospace Force Commander Brigadier General Amirali Hajizadeh said that in the past the Americans used to wage wars on slave people.

Today, however, the issue of slavery has been changed and modernized in a way that drives humans to move in the direction of their colonial goals, he also said.

In other words, Western think tanks and spy agencies with the help of some regional countries resort to sectarian war in the West Asian region and parts of Africa to achieve their goals, Hajizadeh said.

According to him, Westerners have come to the conclusion that they cannot do a damn thing against Iran in military fields; therefore, they seek to spread disappointment and division in elite societies to implement their plans.

Saying that westerners seek to instill the idea that religious rule cannot meet the needs of the people and run the country, he added, "We must prove to everyone that religious and revolutionary management not only meets the needs of the people but can also serve as a good example for other countries."

Iran's advances in some areas, such as missiles and drones, owe much to this approach, he added.

Tehran, Muscat Stress Developing Bilateral Ties, Military Cooperation



TEHRAN (MNA) – Islamic Republic of Iran and Sultanate of Oman emphasized boosting bilateral ties and enhancing military cooperation.

Oman's Assistant to the Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning Brigadier Abdulaziz Abdullah al-Manthri met and held talks with the Chief of Staff of Iranian Armed Forces Major-General Mohammad Bagheri on Monday.

During the talks, the two sides exchanged views on enhancing bilateral ties and broadening cooperation in the military field.

Promoting educational and military relations, countering terrorism and establishing security in the region without the intervention of foreign forces were the main topics discussed between the two sides.

Administration Determined To Reform Budget Structure

TEHRAN (IP) - The head of the Iranian Parliament's Economic Commission says that the administration has taken suitable measures to reform the budget structure.

Mohammad Reza Pour-Ebrahimi pointed out that the 2022 budget plan has been put on the agenda with a few changes. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi referred to its components, specifications, and topics earlier.

Pour-Ebrahimi stated: "Preliminary reviews indicate that while the administration has taken its own measures with regard to reforming the budget structure, it is part of Parliament's goals to reform the budget in a coordinated manner."

"We thank the Planning and Budget Organization for this new approach, but it is part of a capacity that must be used," the MP added.

He went on to say: "The second point is the 8% growth rate mentioned in the Sixth Plan of Development, which means that we were obliged to proceed according to the Sixth Plan of Development, so our policies and goals are the same as the goals towards the economic growth rate set in the Sixth Plan of Development."

"Given that the Seventh Plan of Development was not on the agenda and not implemented, it would be implemented, and part of the reforms suggested by the administration could be operationalized," said the lawmaker.

Islamic Journalists Condemn UK Sanction on Iranian Journalist

TEHRAN (MNA) – Islamic networks' journalists in Iran condemned the British government's decision against Iranian journalist Ali Rezvani who was sanctioned on false charges of spreading "misinformation regarding political prisoners."

The British government, in its latest act of hostility to free media, has imposed sanctions on an Iranian reporter and TV producer on false charges of spreading "misinformation regarding political prisoners".

During Wednesday session of Britain's House of Commons, Labour MP Chris Bryant, who co-chairs the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Magnitsky

Sanctions, read a list of Iranian individuals, including Ali Rezvani, a reporter and producer working for Iran's official Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB).

The British government accused Rezvani, who is an Iranian state media journalist for the popular and highly-watched 20:30 news program, of being involved in the "interrogation of detainees," and broadcasting their "forced confessions," as well as spreading "misinformation regarding political prisoners, dissidents and hostages."

The Iranian reporter was also accused of working with intelligence agencies and "peddling propaganda" on detained dual and foreign nationals.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:59
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:12
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:37
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:06

7. Before thee, also, the apostles We sent were but men, to whom We granted inspiration: If ye realise this not, ask of those who possess the Message.

8. Nor did We give them bodies that ate no food, nor were they exempt from death.

Surah 21. The Prophets (7-8)

Sarv Co Helps Country to Join Catalyzer Exporting Countries

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The knowledge-based Sarv Oil and Gas Company as the leading catalyst producer in the national refining, petrochemical and steel industries was selected as the national exemplary exporter of the year in a ceremony which marked the National Exports Day.

Iran yesterday marked the National Exports Day by naming the top and exemplary companies in the fields of exports and this year's ceremony witnessed a special event and it was the export of catalysts.

Catalyst is considered as a strategic commodity that activities of petrochemical, refining and steel companies are heavily depended on this advanced technological commodity. The number of countries enjoying this technology in the world is less than 10, and with activities of Sarv Oil and Gas Company, the new industry of producing catalyst was set up in Iran some two decades ago.

For the first time in the national petrochemical industry, Iran started producing catalysts by Sarv Company and currently the heart of one of the refineries in one of Iran's neighboring states is beating with using one of Iranian-produced complicated catalyst which has been produced by Sarv Company.

This happens while the country is under cruel sanctions and Sarv Company has succeeded in getting past its big international rivals and it has opened a new gateway for Iran and its new catalyst industry to have access to the international markets. As pre reports, Sarv Company is continuing its activities to expand its international market by finding new markets.

Of course this achievement and honor belongs to all industries of the country and those who have accompanied the knowledge-based Sarv Oil and Gas Company and its experts for improving the quality of its export catalyst products.

Now Sarv Company has provided a climate for production as well as occupation of over 500 top national scientists and experts, and produces over 30 types of products for production process of olefin, methanol, urea and ammonia in petrochemical industry, and other catalysts for the downstream industries of petrochemical industry as well production of catalyst for sponge iron production in steel industry.

It is expected by getting more supports the company to become a constructive model in the country as well as it enhances capability for competing with its foreign rivals.



After receiving the exemplary exporter of the year award, the CEO of Sarv Company Mr. Hooman Karimi elaborated the programs of the company for export of its products and said that meeting the domestic needs is the focus of all companies in the country but due to sanctions, Sarv Company has also focused on export because it believes to be among the international producers, and in the global scene the company can maintain quality of its products and in case the sanctions are removed, it can export high quality products and it should take advantage of this opportunity for presence in the national and international scenes.

Karimi said lack of good rival in the country is the main reason for the idea of presence in the international market and winning many tenders is the outcome of this approach. He noted that in March 2021, the company won its first tender in one of the neighboring countries and it has been exporting catalysts to this country for 9 months.

Diesel Demand Drops by 10% With Quota System

TEHRAN (PressTV) - An Iranian Oil Ministry official says demand for diesel in the country has declined by more than 10% as a result of introducing a quota system that allocates the fuel to heavy vehicles based on their use.

A deputy head of Oil Ministry's fuel department (NIOPDC) said on Sunday that demand for diesel as fuel for vehicles had declined by around 7-10 million liters per day in Iran with a full implementation of the new quota system.

Ali Akbar Nejad Ali said that current average demand for diesel in Iran is around 52 million liters, adding that a bulk of the supply is given to vehicles at a heavily subsidized price of 3,000 rials (\$0.01) per liter.

Nejad Ali said that under the new quota system, truck and bus drivers are entitled to a fixed ration while they receive an extra amount of the fuel based on the mileage driven.

He said the system has led to a major reduction in diesel smuggling to neighboring countries. NIOPDC figures show that nearly 690,000 heavy vehicles have been covered by the diesel quota system of which some 430,000 vehicles are traveling between the cities and the rest are operated by municipalities and private owners for delivering intra-city services.

Recent data shows the company supplies only around one million liters per day of diesel at a second subsidized price of 6,000 rials (\$0.02) per liter for drivers who have no access to their ration cards.

Iran Priorities in Expansion of Agricultural Ties With EU

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The managing director of Agricultural Jihad Ministry's International Affairs Office referring to the ministry's approach in healthy food provision for nation, listed Iran's priorities in cooperation with the EU.

Alimorad Sarfarazi in a meeting between the representatives of Agricultural Jihad Ministry's affiliated organizations and visiting representatives of the European Union said that Iran and the EU have a good record of cooperation in the agricultural field in the past, which was decreased due to sanctions.

Expressing hope that such cooperation will begin once again, he said that joint projects halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and also the ones in the Iranian Agricultural Ministry can be defined in the framework of the new joint projects.

He also said that his affiliated ministry's main priority is ensuring healthy food provision security for the Iranian nation.

Four million and 300,000 Iranian farmers are working in Iran, and therefore, another priority for this ministry is designing and improving a national agricultural research plan, added Sarfarazi. He said that Iran intends to take advantage of the EU experience to improve agricultural commerce in Iranian villages with emphasis on women's employment.

Managing Director of EU International Cooperation II (Asia, Africa, Middle East & External Relations-RTD.F.2) Sara Rinaldi, too, expressing delight for attending the meeting, said that a strategic seven-year cooperation document aimed at expanding the Iran-EU cooperation has been devised and the EU has allocated a 78-million-euro budget to the purpose.

This session and the ones in the future will provide opportunities for the EU to get familiarized with the priorities and development needs of the Iranian Agricultural Jihad Ministry and to include those priorities in the comprehensive cooperation document, she added.

Referring to the top priority of the Iranian Agriculture Ministry, provision of healthy food for the Iranian nation, the EU official said that the EU's strategy, too, is adopting organic methods in improvement of agricultural activities.

Rinaldi said that the EU is also ready to assist the Iranian farmers in marketing of their agricultural products, standardizing them, provision of organic products, and establishment of sustainable development projects in the production chain of agriculture, all in the framework of a new round of Iran-EU cooperation.

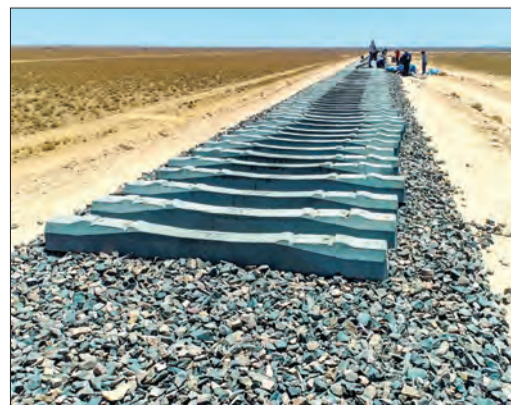


Manager of Shahrabak Copper Complex: The Railway Project of Khatunabad Copper Smelter is Ready for Operation

Engineer Hossein Ebrahimi Nasab, manager of Shahrabak Copper Complex, presented a report on the status of the complex's development projects during the production meeting of Shahrabak Copper Complex.



Rail transport is one of the tools of national sustainable development and is of great strategic importance," he said. He added: "In today's world, rail transport is one of the basic sectors of the economy that has affected the process of economic development." This is the basis of trade and the key to economic and social development. Therefore, the project of connecting Khatunabad copper smelter to the country's railway network as one of the development projects of Shahrabak copper complex has entered into force and is fortunately ready for operation. According to the public relations of Shahrabak Copper Complex, Engineer Ebrahimi Nasab mentioned the benefits of this project. He said: "Considering the consequences of road transport of sulfuric acid, this project will play a very important role in the easy transfer of sulfuric acid produced by Khatunabad acid factory to international and domestic markets." He specified: Transportation of products and raw materials of Khatunabad copper smelting factories, transportation of energy carriers and raw materials required by factories are other benefits of this project. The 17-kilometer project was launched in 2020, connecting the Khatunabad Shahrabak copper smelter to the country's rail network.



Kazakhs in Tehran Mark 30th Independence Day

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Embassy of Kazakhstan in Tehran held a reception at Parsian Azadi Hotel on Sunday to mark the 30th independence day of Republic of Kazakhstan.

Ambassador of Kazakhstan H.E. Askhat Orazbay hosted the reception where Iran's Deputy Minister of Agriculture Jihad Mohammad Ghorbani and some of Iran's Majlis and Foreign Ministry officials, foreign diplomats and media persons were also present.

The reception began with playing some music by some Iranian artists and then Kazakh Ambassador to Tehran H.E. Orazbay delivered a speech.

Addressing the guests, Mr. Orazbay expressed his thanks to the participants for joining them for marking this day together with Kazakh nationals in Tehran. He then said this day is a very important milestone symbolizing the rebirth of Kazakhstan statehood.

He went on to brief the audience of some major achievements of Kazakhstan since its independence day in the past three decades. He reiterated that since the early independence, Kazakhstan implemented economic reforms resulted in replacing the Soviet-type planned economy with a modern free-market economy fully integrated into the global trade-economic system.

Mr. Orazbay then said the country has so far attracted almost \$380b of direct foreign investment, compromises over 75% of the whole amount of foreign invested by all Central Asian countries as Kazakhstan ranks first among all CIS states by net volume of foreign direct investment per capita.

He noted that Kazakhstan ranks 25th in the latest World Bank's Doing Business report as the country is now among the top 50 developed countries and it eyes

joining to the top 30 by modernization.

The diplomat then said today 130 various ethnicities in Kazakhstan peacefully live and coexist in one country. He then briefed the participants of the geographical location of Kazakhstan and its properties.

He reiterated that Kazakhstan is now best known for its contribution to the international security widely recognized by the UN and the international community.

He went on to say that in spite of economic difficulties, the country built from a scratch a new capital called now Nur-Sultan City and transformed it into a major center of international cooperation in Eurasia. He reiterated the country spent some \$1b on development of the city despite the pandemic.

He then touched upon Kazakhstan's ties with Iran and hailed Tehran and said Iran was among the first countries which recognized independence of Kazakhstan. He added Kazakhstan has never left Iran during the time of its hardship.

Orazbay also said that Iran and Kazakhstan have witnessed over two-fold growth in their trade exchange during the first nine months of 2021 compared with the preceding year.

Orazbay expressed hope that Kazakhstan president's visit to Iran being planned for the nearest perspective to be preceded by the 17th meeting of the joint economic commission of the two countries.

Then Iranian officials addressed the ceremony and they hailed the relations with Kazakhstan and expressed hope the ties between Tehran and Nur-Sultan would get stronger.



Zuma Releases Book To Set Record Straight

JOHANNESBURG (Dispatches) - South Africa's former president Jacob Zuma, accused of orchestrating the systematic plunder of government coffers during his rule, launched a new book on Sunday in which he intends "to the set record straight".

Titled "Jacob Zuma Speaks", the book comes after the 79-year-old was released from prison in September due to ill health, just two months into a 15-month sentence for continually refusing to appear before a corruption inquiry into his 2009-18 presidency. Zuma's spokesman Mzwanele Manyi said the book can be bought for 300 rand (\$19) -- or 1,000 rand (\$62) for a signed copy -- at "Car Boot sales" in Johannesburg on Sunday.



Johnson Accused of Breaching Own Covid Rules

LONDON (AFP) - Boris Johnson on Sunday faced fresh questions about alleged government breaches of coronavirus restrictions after a photo emerged of him at a Christmas event last year.

The British prime minister has faced a barrage of criticism and calls to quit over claims of an illegal Downing Street party on December 18, 2020. He has repeatedly said he was assured the gathering complied with social distancing restrictions in place at the time and has ordered an internal investigation.

But the Sunday Mirror published a photograph of Johnson said to have been taken three days before that party, at a "virtual quiz" for his staff, in which four teams of six people took part to raise funds for charity.



G7 Warns Russia Against Invasion of Ukraine



LONDON (Dispatches) - The G7 on Sunday warned Russia of "massive" consequences if it invades Ukraine.

Foreign ministers from the world's richest nations held a two-day meeting in Liverpool, northwest England, seeking to present a strong, united front against global threats.

On Iran, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, from G7 host Britain, said resumed talks in Vienna were the Islamic Republic's "last chance to come to the negotiating table with a serious resolution".

"There is still time for Iran to come and agree this deal," she told a news conference.

The final communique from the talks said Iran "must stop its nuclear escalation and seize the opportunity to conclude a deal, while this is still possible". Negotiations restarted on Thursday to try to revive the 2015 deal between Iran and world powers, which the United States withdrew from under Donald Trump in 2018.

Iran claims it only wants to develop a civilian capability but Western powers say its stockpile of enriched uranium goes well beyond that, and could be used to develop a nuclear weapon. Truss's comments are the first time a signatory to the original deal has given an ultimatum for the talks.

Britain, which hands over the G7 presidency to Germany next year, portrayed the two-day conference in Liverpool, northwest England, as a chance to stand up to authoritarianism around the world.

As well as Iran, Russia's build-up of troops on the border with Ukraine dominated talks, given fears of a possible invasion of the former Soviet state.

Truss said there was "very much a united voice... that there will be massive consequences for Russia in the case of an incursion into Ukraine".

In the final communique, ministers unanimously backed Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, praising President Volodymyr Zelensky for Kiev's "posture of restraint".

All options, including wide-ranging political and economic sanctions, are on the table if Russia ignores a diplomatic solution, officials indicated.

A senior U.S. State Department official on Saturday said "a large number of democratic countries" were ready to join the G7 nations of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States in taking action.

Biden earlier this week held a virtual summit with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to voice Western concerns.

He is sending his top diplomat for Europe and Eurasian affairs to Kiev and Moscow next week for follow-up talks with senior officials.

Russia says the military build-up is a defensive measure against Ukraine moving closer to NATO.

Pope Francis also called for the situation to be "resolved through serious international dialogue and not with weapons", following the Angelus prayer at St Peter's Square.

Putin Rues Soviet Collapse as Demise of Historical Russia

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - President Vladimir Putin has lamented the collapse of the Soviet Union three decades ago as the demise of what he called "historical Russia" and said the economic crisis that followed was so bad he was forced to moonlight as a taxi driver.

Putin's comments, released by state TV on Sunday, are likely to further fuel speculation about his foreign policy intentions among critics, who accuse him of planning to recreate the Soviet Union and of contemplating an attack on Ukraine, a notion the Kremlin has dismissed as fear-mongering.

"It was a disintegration of historical Russia under the name of the Soviet Union," Putin said of the 1991 breakup, in comments aired on Sunday as part of a documentary film called "Russia. New History", the RIA state news agency reported.

"We turned into a completely different country. And what had been built up over 1,000 years was largely lost," said Putin, saying 25 million Russian people in newly independent countries suddenly found themselves cut off from Russia, part of what he called "a major humanitarian tragedy".

Putin also described for the first time how he was affected personally by the tough economic times that followed the Soviet collapse, when Russia suffered double-digit inflation. "Sometimes (I) had to moonlight and drive a taxi. It is unpleasant to talk about this but, unfortunately, this also took place," the president said.

Putin, who served in the Soviet-era KGB, has previously called the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was ruled from Moscow, as the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe" of the 20th century, but his new comments show how he viewed it specifically as a setback for Russian power.

Ukraine was one of 15 Soviet republics and Putin used a lengthy article published on the Kremlin website this year to set out why he believed Russia's southern neighbor and its people were an integral part of Russian history and culture. This view is rejected by Kyiv as a politically motivated and over-simplified version of history.

Several rounds of United Nations-brokered negotiations in Geneva since 2019 between the government and opposition aimed at forging a new constitution have so far failed.

"I think there is a possibility now to start to explore what I call 'a step for step' approach, where you put on the table steps that is defined with precisions, that is verifiable, that hopefully can start to build some trust," he said after talks in Damascus with Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad.

"My message is that there is another possibility to start to explore possible avenues, to start to move forward on this process," he told journalists.

Pedersen has toured all the main foreign players with a stake in Syria's conflict.

With major fighting having subsided since 2020, Damascus has made inroads into easing its international isolation, especially with fellow Arab states.

"I think we should now analyze not only the Arabs but also the American position, the Europeans, the Turkish, the Russians, the Iranians," the UN envoy said.

The war in Syria is estimated to have killed nearly half a million people and displaced millions more since it began with anti-government protests in 2011.

It quickly spiralled into a complex conflict that pulled in numerous actors, including jihadist groups and foreign powers.

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UN Envoy Sees "Step" Toward Syria Solution

DAMASCUS (AFP) - UN special envoy Geir Pedersen called Sunday for a "step for step" approach in finding a political solution to Syria's conflict, following his tour of Europe, the U.S. and Arab states.



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3 Hamas Members Shot Dead at Palestinian Camp in Lebanon

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Three members of Hamas died Sunday when shooting erupted at the funeral procession for a member of the Islamist movement in a south Lebanon Palestinian refugee camp, the group said.

Hamas official Raafat al-Murra said militants from the rival Fatah movement "shot at the funeral procession" of a Palestinian killed in a blast Friday at the Burj al-Shemali camp, outside the port city of Tyre.

Six people were wounded, he added.

Hamas and Fatah, the secular party led by Mahmud Abbas, have been at odds since 2007 when the Islamists seized Gaza after a week of deadly clashes.

One camp resident told AFP that there was a dispute "when the funeral procession arrived at the camp cemetery and suddenly there was shooting towards the crowd", adding that in the chaos it was unclear who was shooting at whom.

Another resident said that "when the shooting started, the funeral procession pulled back... and people fled". The resident added that Fatah was on alert following the incident.

An electrical short circuit in a store containing oxygen supplies for Covid patients caused Friday's blast, Hamas had said, denying reports that an arms depot blew up.

A Lebanese military source had said that the explosion went off in an ammunition dump kept by Hamas militants alongside food and other stores.

The explosion blackened the walls and shattered windows of a nearby mosque.

"The fire caused damage to property but the impact was limited," Hamas said. According to a Palestinian official, one man died of his injuries from the explosion, which also left several people wounded.

Hamas said on Saturday that one of its members, whom it identified as Hamza Shahin, had been killed. It said Shahin was "martyred on a jihadist mission", without elaborating on the mission.

On Sunday, mourners had been out on the streets of the Burj al-Shemali camp, shouting pro-Hamas slogans.

Armed elements of both Fatah and Hamas had been deployed before the funeral.

Officially, Lebanon hosts about 192,000 Palestinian refugees, most of whom live in the country's 12 camps, according to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

By longstanding agreement, the Lebanese army does not enter the camps, leaving security inside to Palestinian factions.



New Caledonia Rejects Independence in Final Vote Amid Boycott

CANBERRA (Dispatches) - The French territory of New Caledonia voted against independence in a referendum on Sunday, provisional results showed, amid a big drop in turnout due to a boycott of the vote by the independence movement.

The indigenous Kanak population, who largely favor independence, had called for non-participation in the referendum because they are in a 12-month mourning period following a September surge in coronavirus infections.

Provisional results published by French authorities showed support for a "no" to independence was at 96.5%, while turnout stood at 43.9%. Sunday's vote, the third and final ballot on the issue, follows two previous polls in 2018 and 2020 in which the "no" vote got 57% and 53% respectively.

"The Caledonians have chosen to remain French. They decided that freely," French President Emmanuel Macron said in a televised address.

"We can't ignore that the electorate remained deeply divided over the years. (...) A period of transition is now starting," he added.

New Caledonia's congress president, Roch Wamytan, a pro-independence leader, said he regretted the French government had rejected their call to postpone the third referendum to September 2022 out of respect for local mourning customs.

"This referendum, for us, is not the third referendum. We consider that there are only two legitimate referendums. 2018 and 2020. This referendum is the referendum of the French state, not ours," he said on Franceinfo radio.

Analysts fear a "no" vote will anger independence supporters, creating instability. "The worst of scenarios? A "no" vote which bans independence, but whose legitimacy is rejected by the Kanaks via a massive abstention rate motivated by Paris's refusal to postpone the vote," François Heisbourg, an analyst for the IISS think-tank said on Twitter.

One of five island territories spanning the Indo-Pacific held by France, New Caledonia is the centrepiece of Macron's plan to increase its influence in the Pacific.



Shanon
(adviser)

Elahieh Apt (\$2300)
200sq.m, 3bdrs
S/pool, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Niavaran Villa (\$5000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
green yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

Zaferanieh Apt
250sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, S, J, balcony
(\$3000)

Farmanieh Apt
200sq.m, 3bdrs
S/pool, S, J, pkg
(\$2000) F.F

Darrous bldg
4storey, 20bdrs
enough pkg lots
(\$10000)

Jordan Apts
(\$1200) 2bdrs, F.F
(\$1800) 3bdrs, F.F

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

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Kazakhstan's Economic Growth Reaches 3.8%

NUR-SULTAN (Dispatches) - Kazakhstan's economic growth reached 3.8 percent in 11 months, said Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin at a government meeting on Tuesday giving hope that the country's economy will rebound soon to pre-pandemic levels.

The government meeting focused on the country's socio-economic development and the state budget in the

first 11 months of 2021. Mamin said that Kazakhstan's economy successfully adapted to the challenges caused by the pandemic and demonstrates a steady growth rate.

The Kazakh Minister of National Economy spoke about the economic performance saying that growth in the real sector was 2.9 percent and the service sector grew to 3.9 percent. —The Astana Times



Turkey Says No Compromise On Free Market Principles

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey has reaffirmed its determination to stick to free market economic policies, as the newly-appointed finance minister reassured that the government will be proceeding hand in hand with the business world as it pursues a new policy axis.

Nureddin Nebati met a large group of businesspeople and private and public bank executives in a meeting on Saturday to address the ongoing developments, the government's economic policies in the new period and to discuss steps to be taken to increase investment, production and employment. The almost six-hour meeting in Istanbul was the first for Nebati since he took the helm of the Treasury and Finance Ministry on Dec. 2, after his predecessor Lutfi Elvan stepped down.

The new finance minister reassured the business world that the government will not retreat from free market principles, pledging continuing support for all segments in the economy, according to reports in the Turkish media.

Nebati also listened to the demands of the businesspeople and emphasized that the government would act upon a participative understanding with the business world.

Over 60 participants at the meeting conveyed their concerns over the issues related to the recent volatilities in the markets, rising consumer prices and tax receivables, among others, according to Rifat Hisarciklioğlu, head of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB).

Nebati dubbed the meeting "very productive." "We will act in the coming period with an understanding based on consultation, and we will take our steps quickly," he said.

Nebati has been echoing the government's new economic model based on lower interest rates, which is being endorsed by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who says the new policy direction will boost production, jobs, exports and growth.

A week before he was appointed minister, Nebati praised Erdoğan's drive to bring down borrowing costs and said that Turkey had sought for years to implement a policy of low rates but had faced strong opposition.

He has said the current-account deficit was the economy's biggest problem and that rates should be cut against supply-side inflation.

Nebati promised fiscal discipline and said policy under his watch would be transparent. He also reiterated that the government would focus on improving the current account balance.

Erdoğan has repeatedly defended the low-rate policy over the last three weeks as necessary to boost growth, exports and credit. The government, regulators and the banks association have all rallied around the new economic policy.

The Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT) has cut rates three times since September, slashing 400 basis points from its benchmark policy rate to bring it down to 15% and is widely expected to lower it again this month.

On the other hand, annual inflation accelerated to 21.31% last month, the highest reading since November 2018, up from 19.89% in October, according to official data.

Azerbaijan to Invest \$250m in Industrial Zones

BAKU (Dispatches) - The acting chairman of Azerbaijan's Agency for the Development of Economic Zones, Elshad Nuriyev, has said that Azerbaijan plans to invest \$250 million in industrial zones.

He made the remarks at a briefing on the work done in the Sumgayit Chemical Industrial Park and industrial zones in Karabakh. Nuriyev said that Azerbaijan has five industrial zones and that their main goal is to ensure the sustainable development of the non-oil sector, create and expand new production areas in the country using innovative technologies, and expand the export map of these products.

"Currently, 55 economic entities are registered as residents in industrial zones. A total of \$3.7 billion has been invested in industrial zones, and in the future, it is planned to invest half a billion manats, or \$250 million," he said.

Moreover, stating that industrial zones are expected to create an additional 1,500-2,000 jobs, he noted that 9,500 people are currently working there.

"Today the industrial zones of Azerbaijan produce products that have not been produced before. It is not only sold in the domestic market but also exported to foreign countries. We have a wide geography of export. Our products are delivered to neighboring Turkey and Russia, as well as to Central Asian countries, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Ukraine, Brazil, Canada, USA and China," he said.

Speaking about the Sumgayit Chemical Industrial Park, Nuriyev stated that three more enterprises will start operating there in 2022. "Residents of the Sumgayit Industrial Park are increasing output and export of the products. In 2021, here two more residents began



their activities: a glass production plant and a battery recycling plant. In the first half of 2022, we expect to launch three more enterprises. They will manufacture glass containers, sulphate and packaging products," he said.

He added that the issue of opening a logistics center in the Sumgayit Chemical Industrial Park is being discussed. "Taking into account the fact that the Sumgayit Chemical Industrial Park is located near the North-South international transport corridor, the opening of a logistics center on its territory is being discussed. There is a very serious interest in this issue," he said.

Additionally, the chairman stated that the possibilities of using renewable energy sources there are being studied. He noted that in this regard vacant areas in the park are being investigated, and the project is being analyzed.

Cuba Sees Slow Economic Recovery at 4% in 2022

HAVANA (Dispatches) - A cash short and crippled Cuban economy will grow 4% next year as the Communist-run country struggles to recover from an economic crisis, according to a report by the prime minister posted over the weekend.

Prime Minister Manuel Marrero's annual report said the economy began a slow recovery of around 2% this year after declining 10.9% in 2020 and stagnating for several years before that.

New U.S. sanctions on top of the decades-old trade embargo and the coronavirus pandemic cost the import-dependent nation at least \$4 billion in revenues over the last two years, according to the government.

The shortfall led to a 40% decline in imports and has hobbled the government's ability to provide Cubans with food, medicine, consumer goods and inputs for industry and agriculture. Cuba has defaulted on some payments to its creditors and suppliers.

The government's decision to devalue the peso for the first time since Cuban leader Fidel Castro's 1959 revolution combined with increased dollarization of the economy have sparked triple-digit inflation estimated by local economists at around 500% this year.

The goal of 4% growth could indicate that Cuba will still see shortages of critical goods and have continued difficulty paying creditors, said a western businessman in Cuba with years of experience in the market.

The government is preparing measures to tame inflation and strengthen the peso, Marrero said. The peso is trading for around 70 to a dollar on the informal market versus the official rate of 24 pesos.

Australia to Improve Budget Bottom Line

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - The Australian government is on track to deliver deficits totaling nearly \$240bn over four years, an estimated improvement of \$100bn since the last budget, a respected economic forecaster says.

With the government due to publish a budget update on Thursday, Deloitte Access Economics has released its own predictions for an improved bottom line, arguing the economy has been recovering much faster than Treasury assumed seven months ago.

Deloitte says the rapid uptake of vaccines will deliver a "more reliable" economic recovery - but warns that the budget will remain under pressure because government spending on aged care, disability and mental health is still "in catch up mode".

With the government preparing for an election by May, and with both major parties already stepping up their campaigning, this week's budget update will set the scene for a battle on competing economic visions.

The government has brought forward next year's budget to March, apparently to allow it to deliver a major economic statement before officially launching an election campaign, but Scott Morrison retains the option of going to the governor general any time after the summer break.

The budget delivered in May this year estimated an underlying cash deficit of \$106.6bn in 2021-22, followed by years of red ink including a shortfall of \$57bn in 2024-25. Those four years of deficits added up to \$342bn.

Deloitte, in a new forecast released on Sunday night, predicted deficits totalling \$239bn over the same four-year period - on the proviso that the Omicron variant "doesn't send many Australians back into lockdown for lengthy spell".

"Our latest assessment is that Thursday's budget update will reveal lower cash underlying deficits to the tune of \$103bn," said the Deloitte Access Economics partner Chris Richardson.

"That's remarkable, given everything that's gone wrong in the seven months since the budget was released, including Delta's dawn, iron ore's collapse, and multi-billion dollar rescue packages."

Deloitte argued that the economy had been recovering faster than Treasury previously assumed. "Even when Delta locked down half the population, the damage to the economy was just a fraction of that in mid-2020," it said in a statement.

"Given that the best way to repair the budget is to repair the economy, that combination of resilience and recovery is helping the budget get its mojo back."

S. Korean Economy Forecast to Grow 2.8% In 2022

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korean economy is expected to expand 2.8 per cent on-year in 2022, slower than this year's projected 3.9 per cent growth, amid weaker private consumption and global demand, a local think tank said on Sunday.

The projection by the LG Economic Research Institute (LGERI) is lower than that by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) of 3.3 per cent and the 3.0 per cent estimate by both the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Bank of Korea, Yonhap news Agency reported.

"The export-led growth is likely to lose steam next year, as global demand boosted by a post-pandemic recovery is expected to get weakened," the institute, affiliated with South Korea's fourth-largest conglomerate LG Group, said.

During the first 11 months of this year, the country's cumulative exports logged the highest ever figure of \$583.8 billion, on the back of strong global demand for chips and petroleum products.

The yearly figure is expected to hit an all-time high by beating the previous record of \$604.9 billion set in 2018, according to government data.

The institute forecast the South Korean economy to increase 3.9 per cent on-year this year, but the figure could fall further to around 2 per cent after 2023.

Private consumption is expected to mark a 3.1 per cent on-year rise in 2022, compared to 3.4 per cent this year, according to the report.

Employment in such service sectors as food and accommodation is likely to increase to lead the overall gain, but not as much as previous levels due to the Covid-19 pandemic and continued growth in unmanned stores, it showed.

Consumer prices are to grow 2.2 per cent in 2022, compared to 2.4 per cent this year, as global oil prices are forecast to stabilize and overall demand slows down, the institute said.

LGERI also predicted the global economy to grow 3.9 per cent next year, slower than this year's 5.8 per cent growth.

Bangladesh Now a Digital Economy



DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has said Bangladesh has now become a digital economy and the country is now a role model of development to the world.

"Information technology is changing day by day. To keep pace with the world, we have to adapt with the establishment of Digital Bangladesh. As developing countries, we are ahead of our neighbors in various social indicators," he was addressing a function virtually at the Foreign Service Academy here, marking the "Digital Bangladesh Day" on Sunday.

The minister said his ministry is always providing the desired services to the service seekers through maximum use of information technology. For further facilitation of consular and administrative services to the service seekers, the ministry added its 62 services in MyGov platform. The process is underway to provide these services through National Call Center 333 and Union Digital Center.

"In collaboration with the A2I project, the ministry has also created a unified website for all Bangladeshi missions abroad to facilitate its services. To modernise the data storage system, the ministry also started the process to create a Digital Archive. To ensure transparency and accountability, the ministry is going to introduce Government Resource Planning (GRP) and digital documents in the missions," Abdul Momen said.

Moreover, the work of creating Digital Service Design Lab (DSDL) is also going on with the help of A2I project. The ministry is modernising its services in line with the development of information technology, he added.

The minister further said, "From now on, we're live on the MyGov application platform, and for the first time in the ministry's history, our services are available from the village level."

"We have a plan to introduce a neural network among all the missions and headquarters along with A2I. With this, Bangladesh can tap the potential of business, trade, education, medicine, entrepreneurship and innovation with all over the world."

"Artificial intelligence is not far away - and the foreign ministry will be the first in Bangladesh to use artificial intelligence. Our aim is to stand side by side with all the innovative and economic and commercial initiatives of the government," he said.

Iranian, Mexican Universities Sign Academic MoU

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Iranian University of Maragheh and the Mexican University of Queretaro signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on academic cooperation.

The chancellor of Maragheh university Mohammadali Lotfollahi announced that the university signed an educational and research memorandum with the University of Queretaro in Santiago, Mexico

to expand international cooperation.

Using innovative methods and new technologies to advance joint projects and facilitating access to research infrastructure are among other goals of the signed MoU, he added.

The professors and students of the two universities will be able to use the laboratories and libraries of each other for research, the chancellor said.



Dubai Now World's First Paperless Gov't

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of The Executive Council of Dubai, announced that the emirate has achieved the objectives of the Dubai Paperless Strategy launched in 2018 to establish itself as a leading digital capital and become the world's first paperless government.

"Today marks the beginning of a new stage in Dubai's journey to digitise life in all its aspects - a journey rooted in innovation, creativity, and a focus on the future," said HH Sheikh Hamdan. "As we complete a full transition to a paperless government, we are proud to see the ambitious vision of our leadership being fulfilled by the people of our country who have worked hard to enhance Dubai's competitiveness as a world-leading digital capital and reinforce its profile as a role model in designing government operations and services that enhance customer happiness." His Highness praised the teams working across all participating government entities in the emirate, whose efforts have further strengthened Dubai's position as a global role model for integrated and sustainable smart cities.

"We mark this achievement with our sights set firmly on the future, and we look forward to providing a fully digital life for residents of the emirate," His Highness said, adding that the next stage will be marked by advanced strategies to create and enhance digital life in Dubai over the next five decades. The new phase of Dubai's digital journey will enable and empower future governments to meet the expectations of the residents of a thriving smart city and provide them with renewed opportunities for prosperity, sustainable development, and happiness.

"Four years ago, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, had a vision that no Dubai Government employee or customer would need to print any paper document after 2021," Sheikh Hamdan said. "Today, that promise has been fulfilled." Hamad Al Mansoori, Director General of Digital Dubai, said that the realization of Dubai's vision to become the world's first paperless government is a proud moment for the country. All internal and external transactions and procedures in the Government of Dubai are now 100% digital and managed from a comprehensive digital government services platforms, he noted.

"This achievement is all the more important since it coincides with the UAE's 50th anniversary celebrations when we are looking forward to another five decades of success," Al Mansoori added. "This accomplishment, which reflects the determination that drives taskforces and teams across Dubai Government institutions, will have a tremendous positive impact on government efficiency. It will enable the optimal use of resources and encourage the greater use of innovation and technology to design advanced solutions and digitization of services and procedures," lauded the efforts to establish a new work culture in the Dubai Government and encourage customers to opt for paperless transactions and digital services in their everyday



lives, which saves their time and effort, raises happiness levels and promotes resource sustainability.

With the Dubai Paperless Strategy fully implemented, no employee or customer of the Dubai Government will need to print any paper documents or transactions, unless they personally prefer to do so. Printing can be done at service or typing centers.

The Dubai Paperless Strategy was implemented in five consecutive phases, each of which enlisted a different group of Dubai Government entities. By the end of the fifth phase, the Strategy was fully implemented across all 45 government entities in the emirate. These entities provide more than 1,800 digital services and over 10,500 key transactions.

Collaboration and integration among participating entities enabled the automation of processes and services provided to customers, cutting paper consumption by more than 336 million papers. The Strategy also helped save more than AED1.3 billion and over 14 million man hours across the Dubai Government.

The Dubai Paperless Strategy was launched in 2018 with an initial group of six entities: Roads and Transport Authority (RTA), Dubai Police, Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA), Department of Economic Development, Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing, and the Department of Land and Property. Stage one helped cut paper usage by more than 72.5 million sheets of papers.

The second phase followed in 2019, with eight additional entities joining: Dubai Courts, Dubai Municipality, Dubai Public Prosecution, Knowledge and Human Development Authority, Dubai Health Authority, Community Development Authority, Dubai Customs, and the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs, who succeeded in reducing paper usage and saving more than 229.5 million sheets of papers.

Istanbul Most Affordable Place to Relocate in World



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's largest city Istanbul has been chosen as the most affordable city in the world to relocate to, according to a study by a U.K.-based credit broker.

The research conducted by money.co.uk took into consideration factors like house prices, living costs and average salary to determine the most affordable places to relocate.

With an annual living cost of 12,753 British pounds (TL 231,271), Istanbul became the most affordable place to relocate, 15,963 British pounds less than the average.

Istanbul was followed by Buenos Aires in Argentina, where the annual cost of living is 13,802 British pounds, and Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia claimed third place with an annual living cost of 15,240 British pounds.

Meanwhile, the city of Basel in Switzerland is the most expensive city to relocate to, with a \$72,118 annual cost of living, according to the study.

The city of Doha in Qatar is the top relocation destination along the shoreline, according to the study, which noted that the city's water temperatures are 24.83 degrees Celsius (76.69 degrees Fahrenheit) on average and it offers high wages, with the average being around \$54,683.

The best city to relocate is Austin, with its third-best internet speed of 87.5 Mbps and average temperature of 20.4 degrees Celsius.

Istanbul was also ranked as the second most affordable city break destination in the world in new research from travel expert Bounce.

However, the city is the most expensive city in Turkey in terms of housing and with rising inflation.

German Coalition Partner FDP Wants More Migrants for Labor Market

BERLIN (Dispatches) - The Free Democrats (FDP), the smallest member of Germany's nascent coalition government, announced its support for a significant increase in immigration to secure the labor market.

This is a necessary move to cover the demand for labor and to enable growth and also secure the social welfare systems, said Christian Duerr, the new leader of the FDP's parliamentary group.

"The federal budget is now pouring over 100 billion euros (\$113 billion) into the statutory pension insurance system as a tax subsidy. These are all justified claims by pensioners. But it shows the demographic imbalance," he told German press agency dpa.

Duerr had been elected on Tuesday to succeed Christian Lindner as parliamentary group leader of the liberal party in the Bundestag.

"The head of the Federal Employment Agency talks about a need for immigration of 400,000 people per year. I think the figure is realistic and I want to justify it," Duerr said.

"Firstly, in terms of economic policy: Together with Japan, we are one of the oldest countries in the world. Workers are currently in demand in all sectors in Germany without exception. Our prosperity depends on whether we can manage this."

The goal must be to enable migration into the



German labor market, not only into the social security systems. Only if this succeeds will Germany have growth rates that can then be used for investments in education, climate protection and stabilizing the social security systems.

Germany must behave like a modern immigration country and take its cue from countries like Canada, New Zealand or Australia in managing immigration.

"Everyone who wants to immigrate to Germany and also everyone who is here must ask themselves the question: Does he or she have a lasting desire to live in the midst of German society? And does he or she want to be successful in the labor market? I think these are two prerequisites," said Duerr. "And if they are not met, then integration will not be successful."

Regardless, he said, it is right to grant asylum or refugee status to people fleeing wars and whose lives are directly threatened.

"But I would separate the two things. One is humanitarian aid, and the other is targeted immigration into the German labor market," he said.

It is also unclear where immigrants will come from in the future, he said. "I can only speculate, it will also be the Asian region, but that remains to be seen," Duerr said.

"But just the fact that we don't really know today shows how bad we were in the past."

Blistering Fertilizer Prices Add to Global Food Security, Cost Pressure

LONDON (Dispatches) - Soaring prices and the tight supply of fertilizers are putting key crops at risk, from Brazilian corn to Malaysian durians, prompting farmers to scrimp on vital crop nutrients, adding to fears related to global food security and inflation.

Fertilizer costs soared this year amid rising demand and lower supply as record natural gas and coal prices triggered output cuts in the energy-intensive fertilizer sector. Urea surged more than 200% this year while diammonium phosphate (DAP) prices have nearly doubled. With global food prices at their highest in more than a decade, rising fertilizer costs will only add to pressures on food affordability, especially in import-reliant economies, while stretched budgets leave little room for government subsidies, said Frederic Neumann, HSBC's co-head of Asian economics research.

"At a time when COVID-19 already decimated the lives and livelihoods of untold millions, soaring food costs are hitting the poor especially hard," he said. "This raises the risk that higher fertilizer costs will not only hit farmers but will also be passed on to consumers via higher food prices." With the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) food price index at its highest since 2011 - when high food prices helped foment the "Arab Spring" uprisings - the world's farmers are already under strain to increase food supply.

But analysts say fertilizer supply tightness will worsen early next year. European, North American and North Asian farmers all need to step up purchases ahead of spring planting, while key producers China, Russia and Egypt have curbed exports to ensure domestic supplies.

"Most stockpiles of urea are now secured, meaning global producers will be 'sold out' until Jan. 1," said U.S.-based Josh Linville, director of fertilizer at StoneX Group Inc.

"Producers start the New Year very low on unsold inventories and they will be met by sizeable global demand in Q1 as U.S., Canada, Brazil, Europe, Asia all step forward to purchase." In response, farmers across the world are either delaying purchases or reducing fertilizer use to save money.

India and Egypt - both major farm economies - increased government subsidies in November, with India's fertilizer ministry boosting supplies to districts with low stocks to ensure availability for winter-planted crops.

So far, high crop prices have cushioned the blow for many growers, and some can switch from nitrogen-hungry wheat and corn to soybeans next season.

But in 2022, few crops or farmers will be spared, sources say.

Iran Committed...

FROM PAGE 1

He added that the country's peaceful nuclear activities are going on in such fields as medicine, industry, agriculture, environment, water and soil, etc.

The Iranian nuclear chief also said that the field of radiation is one of the areas that will be utilized soon.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian AEOI chief underscored that "what matters for the AEOI is to set our quantitative and qualitative goals in accordance with the IAEA standards", adding that Iran has to be able to benefit from IAEA support in return for observing the standards.

Iran Receives...

FROM PAGE 1

"...these differences are clearly visible in the final draft that was achieved following the sixth round of talks in Vienna... The differences, especially on the nuclear issue, are numerous and varied."

Bagheri Kani noted that during the past few days, many sessions have been held both at the expert level and among chief negotiators to discuss modifications, viewpoints, and proposals offered by the Iranian side, which had been applied to the text of drafts drawn up during the sixth round of Vienna talks.

"These talks have been positive and moving forward," Iran's top negotiator concluded.

In an interview with Iran's IRIB earlier on Sunday, Bagheri Kani said the general atmosphere in the ongoing Vienna talks is very serious, adding that he is optimistic that a final agreement would be reached.

He added that Iran and the five remaining signatories to the landmark 2015 nuclear agreement are holding talks on a host of issues during the new round of the Vienna negotiations, and have reached agreements on some of them, though a comprehensive agreement has not yet been reached on many issues.

"For example, when it comes to Iran's nuclear activities, an agreement has been forged between the two sides on some of [outstanding] issues, but there are other issues in this area...which still remain to be agreed upon and negotiations on those issues will continue," said Bagheri Kani.

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

Iraq Still needs to...

FROM PAGE 1

Musa recently claimed that Iran was slashing the gas flow, while the electricity transmission line had totally been cut off over Iraq's outstanding debt to the Islamic Republic.

The exact amount of the Iraqi debt is not known. In the past, Iranian officials have said between \$6 billion and \$7 billion of Iranian funds are held in the Arab country.

Iraq has paid some of its debts over the years, but US sanctions and economic troubles in the Arab country have made the transfer of money much slower than Iran expected.

Iran gets paid partly in cash, but it mostly receives goods from Iraq to cover the debt.

The country imports a wide range of goods from Iran, including food, agricultural products, home appliances, air conditioners and car parts.

Official customs data released last week showed Iran's exports to Iraq in the past eight months increased by 40 percent compared to the same period last year, making it the second importer of Iranian goods.

Pena Stuns Nunes to Claim UFC Bantamweight Crown

LAS VEGAS (Dispatches) - Julianna Pena pulled off one of the biggest upsets in mixed martial arts history to score a second-round submission win over Amanda Nunes and win the UFC bantamweight title at UFC 269.

In the main event, Charles Oliveira retained the lightweight title, submitting Dustin Poirier with a standing choke early in the third round of a thrilling battle. Pena looked to be in trouble in the first round of the co-main event against one of the most dominant champions the sport has ever seen, but the 32-year-old came storming back in round two, rocking Nunes with combinations.

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Martinez Named WTA Coach of the Year

LONDON (Dispatches) - Conchita Martinez has been named WTA Coach of the Year, the governing body of women's tennis announced on Sunday, after helping Spaniard Garbine Muguruza to three titles this year.

Muguruza won in Dubai and Chicago before the two-times Grand Slam champion claimed her first season-ending WTA Finals title in Guadalajara, Mexico. Iga Swiatek's coach, Piotr Sierzputowski, won the award last year. World No.1 Ash Barty was earlier named WTA Player of the Year for the second time and U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu took the Newcomer of the Year title.

Verstappen Wins His First Ever F1 World Title

ABU DHABI (Dispatches) - From the moment that Max Verstappen joined the Red Bull Junior Team in 2014, there was an inevitability that he would one day become Formula One world champion.

That it came in the shape of a sensational last lap sprint in Abu Dhabi on Sunday which toppled seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton from his throne will make it even sweeter to the 24-year-old, the first Dutchman to wear the crown.

"My goal when I was little was to be a Formula One driver," said Verstappen after the finish in Abu Dhabi.

"You dream of podiums and victories. But when they tell you that you are world champion, it's incredible."

The 36-year-old Hamilton has been a sensational champion with Mercedes but Verstappen's victory suggests the arrival of a new world order.

His pace and talent has long been evident but it is his calmness under pressure and willingness to go toe to toe with a genuine F1 great, even when things got hairy, that has marked out this season's rise to the top.

At Silverstone, Verstappen ended up in the crash barriers; at Monza he crash-landed his Red Bull on top of the Mercedes. In Saudi Arabia, Hamilton crunched into the back of the Red Bull after Verstappen braked to let him pass.

The incidents on the track have led to a war of words off it. The Dutchman labelled the seven-time world champion a "stupid idiot" while Hamilton accused the young pretender of being "over the limit" in Jeddah.

In Abu Dhabi, Verstappen produced one of the most unlikely wins imaginable with



a last lap dash that confounded the experienced Hamilton.

Not once, though, did the challenger take a step back or wilt under the pressure.

"He seems to deal with the pressure better than other people," said two-time world champion Fernando Alonso earlier in the season.

"Everyone is different, but it seems that for him it is not a big deal."

Verstappen is used to the spotlight, the pressure and, with already 20 years on the track, is experienced beyond his years as a racing driver.

According to his father Jos Verstappen, who raced in over a hundred Grand Prix between 1994 and 2003, Max first clambered into a go-kart when he was four and a half years old.

"He was keen, watching all my races, he knew what was going on. He was brought up with racing," Jos told the official F1 podcast Beyond the Grid in 2019.

"I never had to tell him racing lines, he knew."

In Abu Dhabi, the two shared what Max called a "special" moment. His dad was in no doubt about his son's achievement.

His father was not the only influence on his early racing career; his mother is Belgian ex-kart driver champion Sophie Kumpen. Her uncle competed in motocross and rally and her cousin Anthony Kumpen raced NASCAR in the United States.

Titles followed and the teenage Verstappen made the step up to Formula Three, winning 10 races in his debut season when he finished third in the championship which was won by Esteban Ocon, a year his senior and now with the F1 Alpine team.

Verstappen would almost certainly have gone on to win the Formula Three title but after one season he made the step up to the biggest stage.

Kimmich Decides to Get Covid Vaccine After Infection

BERLIN (AFP) - Bayern Munich midfielder told ZDF broadcaster Sunday that he has decided to be vaccinated against Covid-19 after recovering from an infection which will keep him out of action until next month.

"When it is recommended and the time is right, I will get vaccinated," Kimmich said in an interview with the public broadcaster.

The Bayern and Germany midfielder, who has until now declined the vaccine, said he may have to wait "some time" for the jab, having only just recovered from his coronavirus infection.

Kimmich sparked a heated vaccination debate in October when he revealed that he had declined a vaccine against Covid due to "personal concerns".

"It was difficult for me to deal with my fears and concerns, which is why I was undecided for so long," he told ZDF.

"I thought I could protect myself from the virus if I stuck to all the rules and tested regularly," he said.

The 26-year-old added that he had already booked a vaccination appointment before he contracted the virus last month, and admitted that "it would have been better to do it earlier".

De Gea Reveals Fears Over Lindelof's Breathing Scare

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United goalkeeper David De Gea said Victor Lindelof's breathing scare during the 1-0 win over Norwich provoked unsettling memories of incidents involving Christian Eriksen and Sergio Aguero.

Lindelof had to be replaced in the second half at Carrow Road on Saturday after the United defender received treatment on the pitch when he suddenly clutched his chest.

United interim manager Ralf Rangnick revealed the Swedish international centre-back was fine after the match, but De Gea conceded seeing his team-mate having difficulties reminded him of Eriksen's shocking cardiac arrest while playing for Denmark in the European championships in June.

Like Eriksen, Barcelona striker Aguero is also currently sidelined after collapsing with heart issues in October.

"As soon as it was like difficult breathing and feeling strange, the game doesn't matter or football. First of all is life," De Gea told Sky Sports.

"We saw some players who are feeling a bit, I don't know what was going on, but Victor was feeling his breathing."

"We saw already Eriksen, Aguero... so it is sometimes a bit difficult to see your player acting like this so it was better to change. I hope he is completely fine."

Despite the anxiety over Lindelof's health, Rangnick raised the prospect of the 27-year-old being fit to face Brentford on Tuesday.

"Victor can't even remember himself how it happened. I think he had a collision with another player and had problems to breathe," Lindelof said.

"For more than 10 mins his heart rate was higher than normal and he was a little shocked by this, so we had to replace him."

"The doctor has checked him after the match and it seems everything is OK now, but we still have to see how he is doing tomorrow. Hopefully he will fit for the Brentford game."

Brignone Wins Second St Moritz Super-G



(60mph) as she clocked 57.81 seconds down the Engiadina course on a track shortened because of high winds.

It was the 31-year-old's 17th victory on the World Cup circuit and fifth in the super-G. Curtioni was 0.11sec off Brignone's pace, while American Mikaela Shiffrin followed up on Saturday's podium showing with another third-place finish 0.32sec adrift.

Late starter Alice Robinson of New Zealand grabbed fourth (+0.52sec), just ahead of Austrian Ramona Siebenhofer.

ST. MORITZ (Dispatches) - Italy's Federica Brignone edged teammate Elena Curtioni to win the second of two World Cup super-G races in St Moritz on Sunday as Swiss Lara Gut-Behrami crashed out.

Olympic giant slalom bronze medallist Brignone topped speeds of 97km/h

In a remarkable day's skiing for Italy, Saturday's second-placed finisher Sofia Goggia, Marta Bassino and Francesca Marsaglia ensured five Italian skiers in the top nine.

There was early drama, however, as the winner on Saturday and home favourite Gut-Behrami suffered a heavy crash.

Leading the interval timings at the time, the Swiss skier skidded through two sets of safety netting.

After a lengthy period of on-piste treatment, Gut-Behrami was able to stand and walk away.

The weekend's racing was an unclassified success for Shiffrin in particular, the American slalom specialist honing her speed event skills in perfect timing ahead of February's Beijing Winter Olympics.

The four-time world slalom champion and double Olympic gold medallist won bronze in the super-G in the world championships in February this year and has said she wants to try to win more speed events this season.

Klopp Backs Gerrard as His Successor at Liverpool

LIVERPOOL (Dispatches) - Jurgen Klopp said he would "love" Steven Gerrard to be his successor after ensuring the former Liverpool captain's return to Anfield as Aston Villa manager ended in a 1-0 defeat on Saturday.

Mohamed Salah's second half penalty secured a vital three points for the Reds as they remain just one point behind Manchester City at the top of the Premier League.

Klopp's men should have been more convincing winners as they dominated the vast majority of the game, but were frustrated by a combination of desperate Villa defending and poor finishing.

Liverpool had to withstand a nervy finale as Gerrard believed his side should also have been awarded a penalty when Alisson Becker bundled over Danny Ings.

"The first 75 minutes was incredible football," said Klopp. "We played in the spaces we wanted to play but we did not finish the situations which is tricky."

"We scored with the penalty then the relief was obviously too big and it was an unnecessary open game. (The last 15 minutes) was like tooth ache! Nobody needs that."

Gerrard said before the game he would gladly sacrifice some of his legendary status among the Liverpool support for a result on his first trip to Anfield as part of the visiting team.

The man who scored 186 goals in 710 games as a Liverpool player was welcomed with gentle applause as he emerged from the tunnel, but there was no great fanfare for his return until the Kop chanted his name shortly after the full-time whistle.

"You have to understand when you come to the Premier League, you are going to have these days," said Gerrard. "There is a lot of emotion, but I tried to focus on Aston Villa and make sure that is the priority."

Gerrard, who joined Villa last month after three-and-a-half years as Rangers manager, has been tipped as Klopp's successor when the German's contract expires in 2024.



Leicester Thrash Sorry Newcastle

LONDON (Dispatches) - Leicester left Newcastle still rooted in the Premier League relegation zone with a 4-0 thrashing of the Magpies on Sunday, while West Ham's Champions League ambitions were dented by a 0-0 draw at Burnley.

Despite being hit by a coronavirus outbreak that left Brendan Rodgers without seven players, the Foxes gave Eddie Howe another reminder of the task he faces to keep Newcastle in the top flight as Yuri Tielemans struck twice at the King Power.

Howe will be able to call on the resources of the Saudi sovereign wealth fund in the January transfer window and results elsewhere this weekend mean they remain just three points adrift of safety.

But Newcastle face Liverpool, Manchester City and Manchester United in their next three games and, on this form, will be lucky to escape that run without another severe hit to their goal difference. Leicester had won just two of their previous nine games in all competitions and were dumped out of the Europa League by Napoli on Thursday.

However, they got the break they needed to edge in front before half-time when James Maddison engineered contact with Javier Manquillo to win a penalty.

With Jamie Vardy watching on from the bench, Tielemans took responsibility from the spot to open the scoring seven minutes before half-time.

Patson Daka's form has seen him earn his spot ahead of Vardy in recent weeks in the Premier League and Zambian had the easiest of tasks to roll in his seventh goal of the season from Harvey Barnes' unselfish pass to double Leicester's lead.

Tielemans rounded off a fine team move for his second of the afternoon before Maddison's fine finish compounded Newcastle's pain five minutes from time.

Victory lifts Leicester to eighth and back in the fight for a place in the top four while West Ham wasted the chance to extend their advantage over the chasing pack.

