

**Health Ministry Announced on Tuesday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic In Iran Increased to 131,474 With 40 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

# IRAN NEWS

**Secretary General of the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought Terming the Zionist Efforts to Normalize Ties With Some Muslim States, a Conspiracy to Divide Islamic World**

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## Enemies Unable to Bear Costs of All-Out Confrontation With Iran

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Iranian military commander has advised the enemy not to test the might of the country's armed forces, saying it will not be able to bear the costs of an all-out confrontation with the Islamic Republic.

Major General Gholam-Ali Rashid, commander of the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, warned on Tuesday of a well-calculated response at the right time and place should the enemy make the slightest mistake.

The enemy should know that "we are always watching them, we are ready, and we will surely impose more costs on them compared to what they can achieve," Rashid asserted.

He hoped that the enemy would not seek to "test our will and strength," otherwise it will not be able to "bear the costs of an all-out confrontation."

"Believing in the Islamic Republic of Iran's power will definitely cost the enemy less," Rashid added.

The remarks follow weeks of increasing tensions between Iran on the one hand, and the US and its allies, in particular Israel, on the other hand, especially over the ongoing negotiations in Vienna to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement, which the Israeli regime staunchly opposes. **See Page 7**

## Effective Removal of Sanctions Key to Success of Vienna Talks

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Almost all participants emphasized the priority of removing the cruel sanctions on Iran, Ali Bagheri Kani told reporters, after a Joint Commission meeting of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the 2015 Iran agreement, in the Austrian capital.

"In today's meeting, the Islamic Republic of Iran once again stressed that the key to the success and progress of the talks toward reaching an agreement is the effective and practical removal of sanctions," Bagheri Kani said.

Accordingly, he continued, it was decided that meetings will be held between Iran and the P4+1 group of countries with the issue of removing the anti-Iran sanctions on the agenda.

"This is a promising sign that our opposite sides have accepted to seriously put the issue of sanctions removal on the agenda. If this matter advances, we think that could facilitate a future agreement," he added.

Iran and the remaining parties to the JCPOA - Russia, China, France, Britain, and Germany - began the eighth round of the Vienna talks on Monday afternoon, with the objective of resuscitating the agreement, which was abandoned by former US president Donald Trump without any legal justification. **See Page 7**

## Iran Foreign Trade Surpasses \$72b



### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iranian Customs Administration (IRICA) Alireza Moghadasi said that the country's foreign trade exceeded \$72 billion in the first nine months until the end of the fall.

Moghadasi announced that during the first 9 months of the year 1400 (Mar. 21-Dec. 21), 122,500,000 tons of goods worth more than \$72 billion were exchanged between Iran and other countries, showing an increase of 11% in weight and 38% in value compared to the corresponding period last year.

Moghadasi also said if the trade relations continue at the same pace, by the end of the year, the total trade value of the country will increase to \$98 billion.

Of the total trade recorded during that period, 92,300,000 tons worth \$35,100,000 billion were exports, which show an increase of 8% in weight and 40% in value compared to the same period last year, the official added.

Referring to the growth of the Iranian non-oil exports despite the sanctions and the Covid-19 restrictions, the IRICA head noted that it is expected to see even more improvements in the future by resolving existing problems.

Petrochemical products with a volume of 42,400,000 tons worth \$ 14 billion and \$ 700 million were at the top of the exports table in that period, which accounted for 46% of the total weight and 42% value of exports, showing a growth of 40% compared to last year.

The value of Iran's non-oil trade rose 38 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, he added.

According to the official, petrochemical products accounted for 42 percent of the total value of the exports in the said time span, with 42.4 million tons worth \$14.7 billion of the said products being exported to foreign markets.

He said major export destinations of the Iranian non-oil goods were China, Iraq, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Afghanistan.

Moghadasi further announced that the Islamic Republic imported 30.1 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$37 billion in the first nine months of the present year, with a 37-percent growth in value and a 20-percent rise in weight year on year.

The United Arab Emirates was the top exporter to Iran in the said period, followed by China, Turkey, Germany, and Switzerland, he stated.

According to the IRICA acting head, out of the total non-oil goods imported into the country in the first nine months of this year, 23.1 million tons worth \$12.4 billion were basic goods, which indicate an increase of 32 percent in weight and 61 percent in value, year on year.

IRICA has previously announced that the value of Iran's non-oil trade stood at \$73 billion in the past Iranian calendar year.

## ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

## Tehran, Caracas True Anti-Hegemony Allies

The Islamic Republic of Iran and Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in recent decades have proved that they are really against the world hegemony and especially West's and they have fought bravely for their independence and cutting dependence on the aliens.

Tehran and Caracas since the presidency of Hugo Chavez have set up a strong bond and they have turned into allies especially against Western meddling and colonialism, and in the hard times they have supported each other despite the West's rage.

On Sunday Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in an interview once again hailed Iran and its anti-hegemony position and called for a stronger tie with Tehran. He once again proved that he is a strong man in defending Venezuela's independence.

In the interview he announced he was to visit Iran for signing several economic agreements to strengthen the economic ties of the two states.

The Bolivarian Revolution refers to a left-wing popular social movement and political process in Venezuela led by Venezuelan president Chávez, who founded the Fifth Republic Movement in 1997 and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela in 2007. The "Bolivarian Revolution" is named after Simón Bolívar, an early 19th-century Venezuelan and Latin American revolutionary leader, prominent in the Spanish American wars of independence in achieving the independence of most of northern South America from Spanish rule. According to Chávez and other supporters, the "Bolivarian Revolution" seeks to build a mass movement to implement Bolivarianism—popular democracy, economic independence, equitable distribution of revenues, and an end to political corruption—in Venezuela.

The principles of the two countries to some extent are very similar or at least in terms of in terms of cutting independence and spreading justice in their territories and for this reason they have many commonalities to form a strong tie especially against the West's intrusion.

In his interview Maduro said his South American country's relations with the Islamic Republic have always been really good. The Venezuelan president said he has agreed on several new cooperation agreements with his Iranian counterpart President Ebrahim Raisi.

He explained that joint commissions are working on the new projects, adding that he will soon visit Iran to finalize the new deals. **See Page 7**

## Raisi to Visit Moscow In early 2022

TEHRAN (MNA) - President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi will travel to Russia in early 2022, said Ali Bahadori Jahromi, the Iranian government spokesman on Tuesday.

Speaking in a press conference on Tuesday, Bahadori Jahromi said that President Raisi will travel to the Russian capital of Moscow in early 2022 at the invitation of President Vladimir Putin.

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

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

"I think my invitation to the Iranian president has been accepted and he will travel to Russia early next year," he said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the government spokesman commemorated 9 Dey (December 30) adding at that day, Iranians spoiled the US plots to divide Iran.

On December 30, 2009, millions of people took to the streets in Tehran and several other major cities to condemn the unrest, which erupted following the 2009 presidential poll. **See Page 7**

## Yemen Announces Temporary Resumption of UN Flights into Sana'a

SANAA (Dispatches) - Yemen's civil aviation authority has announced a temporary resumption of aid flights by the United Nations to Sana'a International Airport, a week after Saudi aerial assaults put the facility out of operation.

"The civil aviation authority announces the resumption of UN and other organization flights into Sana'a airport on a temporary basis," Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television network reported on Tuesday.

"The Foreign Ministry was contacted to notify the UN and all international organizations that Sana'a airport was ready to receive flights."

The aviation authority said in a statement that it had taken the measure "after the malfunctions in communications and navigational devices were temporarily fixed," according to Saba news agency.

It also complained that it could not guarantee the long-term continuity of these old devices, calling on the UN to help the entry of new devices that it had purchased.

The airport has been closed to civilian flights since 2015, after the popular Houthis took over Sana'a, but UN planes have been permitted to land there.

On December 20, the Saudi-led coalition targeted the airport, causing severe damage to the facility and a halt to its flights.

Khaled Al-Shayef, director general of Sana'a airport, said the latest Saudi air raids completely destroyed the aviation school and the quarantine building, as well as hangars and warehouses where the humanitarian aid shipments to the Yemeni people are kept.

Since the closure of the airport, more than 100,000 patients, who had been denied travel abroad for treatment, have died, he told IRNA, warning that more patients will lose their lives or face permanent disabilities if the siege on Yemen continues.

Shayef also stressed that the invading coalition seeks to intensify the siege of the Yemeni nation through the bombing of Sana'a airport. **See Page 7**

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## Significant Role of Iranians Living Abroad in Diplomatic Progress

TEHRAN (IRNA) Foreign Hossein Amirabdollahian highlighted the significant role of Iranians living abroad in progress of the country's diplomatic efforts.

In an Instagram post on Monday, he referred to the Iranian government's "balanced, dynamic and intelligent" policy of cooperating with neighboring countries and progress in economic diplomacy and said Iran is now quite determined to open the gates towards bilateral and multilateral cooperation more than ever before.

## Vienna Talks On Right Track



**TEHRAN (Dispatches)- Stating that the Vienna talks are on right track, the Iranian Foreign Minister said that reaching an agreement will be possible if the other parties negotiate in good faith.**

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks on the sidelines of the memorial ceremony of the former Iranian envoy to Yemen Hasan Irloo on Tuesday.

"The negotiations are on the right track. The important thing is that we now have a common, unified text that our negotiating team is focused on. The opposing parties also focus on the issues of dispute," he added. "If the other parties continue the negotiations in good faith, it is possible for all parties to reach a good agreement."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Amir-Abdollahian noted the Iranian diplomatic mission in Yemen is now run by chargé d'affaires, adding that the new ambassador will be introduced soon.

Iran believes that in order to preserve the national unity and territorial integrity of Yemen, a government should be formed with the participation of all Yemeni parties, he added.

He noted that Iran is against disintegrating the regional and Islamic states, adding that Iran will continue following up developing cooperation, lifting the humanitarian blockade, and ending aggression against Yemen.

The foreign minister stressed that the Yemeni crisis will merely have a political solution.

Meanwhile on Monday Amir-Abdollahian inaugurated the Exhibition of Iran's Foreign Relations Documents at the venue of Political and International Studies (IPIS) of the ministry.

He opened the Exhibition of Iran's Foreign Relations Documents.

Subjects and contents of the documents include problems, issues, activities, trade challenges, travel of Iranians and their relationship with the Iranian government in different periods.

The exhibition also displays 30 documents along with a picture regarding all the issues that Iranians residing abroad have faced during the last 200 years.

The exhibition is held simultaneously with the 5th Conference of History of Iran's Foreign Relations so that researchers can use the documents displayed at the Exhibition.

### Commander Calls for Following Martyr Soleimani's Path

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Coordinator of the Iranian Army Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said that the path of the late General Qassem Soleimani who was martyred by the US army should be followed.

Martyr Soleimani was a courageous soldier who obeyed the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution and struggled a lot for the security of Iran, Sayyari told IRNA on Tuesday.

Soleimani was assassinated by the US army along with nine companions January 3, 2020 in Baghdad. The killing was carried out at the direct order of the then President Donald Trump

## Tehran Not Afraid of Hostile Moves by Any Country

TEHRAN (MNA) - Stating that Tehran is not hostile to any country with which it has diplomatic relations, the Iranian envoy to London Mohsen Baharavand said that at the same time Iran will not be afraid of hostile moves of any country.

The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to London wrote on his Instagram account that Tehran does not welcome being hostile to any country with which it has diplomatic relations.

Mohsen Baharavand made the remarks in reaction to the baseless remarks of the Britain Minister of State for Security and Borders Damian Hinds against Tehran.

He has accused Russia, China, and Iran of launching disinformation campaigns. He claimed that China, Russia, and Iran are among the "hostile nations" and cited the cyber security concerns they pose to the United Kingdom. Mutual respect and mutual interests are among the principles of Iran's foreign policy, Baharavand said, adding, "At the same time, we will not be afraid of hostile moves of any country."

"We will stand by our principles when it comes to providing security and protecting the national interests of our country", he stressed.

According to him, Tehran adopts reciprocity which is also one of the established principles of diplomatic relations.

## Cigarette Production Increases 14%

TEHRAN (MNA) - Production of cigarette in Iran rose 14 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the board chairman of Iran's Tobacco Products Manufacturer Exports and Imports Association announced.

Mohammad-Reza Tajdar said that 47.1 billion cigarettes were produced in the nine-month period of this year, while the figure was 41.444 billion in the same time span of the past year. He also said that 3,700 tons of tobacco was produced in the country in the first nine months of this year,

while the figure was 1,872 tons in the same period of time in the past year, showing 98 percent rise year on year.

In early July, the head of Iran Headquarters for Combating the Smuggling of Commodities and Foreign Currency said 90 percent of the cigarettes consumed in the country are produced domestically.

"Smuggled cigarettes account for only about 10 percent of the market, and with the activities of the headquarters in recent years, according to last year's statistics, 90 percent of the country's cigarettes are now produced domestically," Ali Moayedi Khorramabadi stated.

## Tehran-Baku Tension Resolved

BAKU (IRNA) - The Azeri Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov said here that the tension that had emerged a while ago in Tehran-Baku relations is now over.

The Iranian minister of foreign affairs had an official visit of Azerbaijan a few days ago and before that, too, I had three meetings with my Iranian counterpart, he said in a press conference on his country's diplomatic activities during the ending Christian year, 2021. He said that in his meeting with Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian they had surveyed the perspective of bilateral relations and sought ways for their further expansion.

He said the misunderstandings which happened in Iran-Azerbaijan relations were resolved in shortest possible time.

He pointed to the meeting between the two countries' presidents in Ashgabat in which the various dimension of expanding bilateral ties were surveyed.

Bayramov said Tehran and Baku have agreed about regular diplomatic meetings at least every six months.

## Iran Among Top 10 States on World Heritage List

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has registered 26 Iranian cultural heritage monuments from 1979 to 2021, turning the Islamic country into one of the leading states with most sites inscribed on the World Heritage List.

The inscription of 26 cultural, historical, and natural heritage monuments proves the fact that Iran has got a special position in UNESCO's World Heritage List since the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

Historical and ancient structures, traditional artifacts, and natural landscapes are parts of cultural assets and are considered tangible cultural heritage, which is preserved in an ancient area or a museum.

Prior to the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, none of the Iranian cultural, historical and natural assets had been registered on the World Heritage List. Chogha Zanbil in Khuzestan province, Persepolis in Fars province, and Naghsh-e Jahan Square in Isfahan province were inscribed on the List in the first year

following the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

Prior to the Rouhani administration, 16 monuments were registered on the List. The administration succeeded in paving the way for registering 10 more monuments within eight years of tenure.

Iran ranks ninth among countries with the most registered monuments on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Inscription of Burnt City in Meymand, Lut Desert, Susa or Shoosh ancient city, Iranian aqueducts, historical city of Yazd, Sassanid Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region, Caspian Hyrcanian mixed forests, Trans-Iranian Railway and Cultural Landscape of Uramanat in last eight years helped Iran to stand ninth in terms of possessing cultural, historical and natural monuments of the World Heritage List.

Although both governments and the public are expected to preserve cultural and natural monuments, administrations are tasked to pursue inscription of their national tangible heritage on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

## Iran to Dispatch 1st Group of Pilgrims to Syria

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Head of Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization Ali-Reza Rashidian announced on Tuesday that the first group of Iranian pilgrims will be dispatched to Syria next week based on coordination and after some years of pause.

The new cycle of sending Iranian pilgrims to Syria will be activated as of next week after the Syrian side's approval of Tehran's political representative in Damascus, Rashidian said at a meeting on planning for pilgrimage.

Speaking about the Hajj rituals, the official said the country is ready for dealing with possible scenarios due to the coronavirus pandemic.

About the annual Hajj, Supreme Leader's representative in Hajj and pilgrimage affairs Hojjatoleslam Abolfattah Navvab has expressed hope that it will be held through proper planning by the host country and participation of pilgrims from the countries.

The annual Hajj is a major religious duty for Muslims.

## Iran Export to Turkmenistan Sees Six Fold Increase

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador to Turkmenistan Gholamabbas Arbab Khales said on Tuesday that Iran's exports to the country has increased five to six fold in terms of weight and value.

Arbab Khales also remarked on the recent reports on the rejection of Iran's agricultural product exports by some countries, saying that there had been no export rejection from the side of Turkmenistan since the beginning of this year.

The current rejection of potato cargoes by Turkmenistan was due to staleness of the cargo not the use of pesticide.

Turkmenistan had imposed limitations on entry of people and goods, the diplomat said, adding that the restrictions have been recently lifted and Iran is able to export its cultural products to the country and thence to the Central Asia.

## Iranian Firms Use Nanotechnology In Producing COVID Jobs

TEHRAN (IFP) - Two Iranian knowledge-based firms have produced mRNA Covid-19 vaccines using nanotechnology and have completed their pre-clinical phase research.

Director of the human resources development working group of the special committee for nanotechnology development said "files for these products have not been completed, and fortunately these vaccines have completed pre-clinical trials (monkey research) and are in the process of preparing documents to obtain a license."

"This generation is very different from the current generations of corona vaccines based on inactivated virus, but at the same time they are a very important platform for the production of many types of medicine other than vaccines," Mahdi Rezayat explained.

Referring to the application of nanotechnology in the production of Covid-19 shots, he explained that the new generation of jabs is important because they use the nano drug delivery system to enter a special protein into the body with minimum complication.

Messenger RNA vaccines like the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 shots teach human cells how to make a protein that will trigger an immune response against viruses.

China's Sinopharm and Iran's Barekat are inactivated vaccine types that are made of virus particles that lack disease-producing capabilities.

Iran is domestically manufacturing several types of Covid-19 vaccines in a bid to limit reliance on imports of foreign coronavirus shots.

## Male, Female Literacy Rates Differ Only 6.1% in Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Statistics indicate that difference of literacy rates between Iranian men and women is 6.1 percent in the current year (March 21, 2021 to March 20, 2022), an official announced.

Shapoor Mohammadzadeh, the head of the Literacy Movement Organization of Iran, made the remarks on Monday on the occasion of 42nd year of establishment of the Literacy Movement Organization, noting that the Islamic country has made all-out efforts to give importance to gender equality in education.

## Japan to Send additional 700,000 COVID-19 Vaccine Doses to Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Japan will deliver additional 700,000 doses of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine to Iran, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi said on Tuesday.

"The government of Japan has decided to send to Iran additional 7 lakh doses of the AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine. They will be delivered through COVAX. The talks on the matter are currently at the final stage," Hayashi said during a press conference.

This will take the total of Japan's COVID-19 vaccine deliveries to Iran to 3.6 million doses.

"With this delivery in mind, the total number of doses sent by Japan to the world's 23 countries and regions will be 36 million," Hayashi added.

In June, Japan hosted the virtual Gavi COVAX Advance Market Commitment Summit, which aims to provide equal and just access to vaccines among developing countries. The June summit succeeded in securing enough funds for 1.8 billion doses to vaccinate 30% of the developing countries' population.

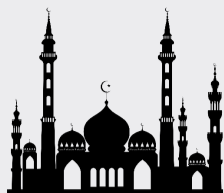
## Iran's Recent Drills, Simulation of Reality

TEHRAN (IP)- Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of Iran says the simulation of the attack on the enemy in the recent large-scale drills codenamed "The Great Prophet 17" was not a show but a complete simulation of reality.

Major General Mohammad Bagheri, Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of Iran, said in a TV program broadcast on Sunday: "In the IRGC drill, the attack on one of the main targets in case the enemy dares to attack Iran, was planned."

The simulation showed that with a large number of simultaneous firings from different directions, the Israeli regime's so-called Iron Dome could be ineffective and Iran's missiles can destroy targets.

The Great Prophet 17 drill was conducted along the southern coastlines of the country on December 19 and lasted until December 24. It involved various Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) forces, including the Army, Navy and Aerospace. The exercise simulated an attack against some targets on Israeli soil.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:06
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:19
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:43
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:13

32. And We have made the heavens as a canopy well guarded: yet do they turn away from the Signs which these things (point to)!

33. It is He Who created the Night and the Day, and the sun and the moon: all (the celestial bodies) swim along, each in its rounded course.

Surah 21, The Prophets (32 - 33)

# Joint Investment Best Way for Boosting Iran-Belarus Trade

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

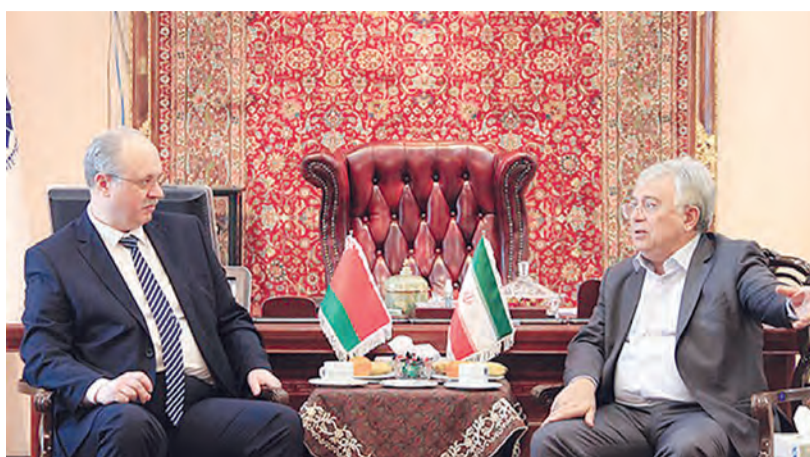
**TEHRAN - Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to Iran Mr. Dmitry Koltsov met Head of Tabriz Chamber of Commerce Mr. Younis Jaaleh and during the meeting both sides explored ways for boosting bilateral trade.**

In the meeting, Jaaleh emphasized the necessity for creating the grounds for cooperation for boosting bilateral trade between Iran and Belarus, adding that East Azarbaijan enjoys this capability for providing some of goods that Belarus imports and in return some of the industrial needs of the province can be provided by Belarus.

He then said East Azarbaijan is the industrial and agriculture hub of the country, adding that Belarus enjoys having strong industries like textile and dairy, and this province is customer of some of Belarussian raw materials for production. He then pointed to exports of some of energy intensive goods to Belarus and this province is ready for investment in case it finds attractive fields for investment in Belarus.

Jaaleh also announced readiness for joint production of heavy vehicles and all of its related industries as Belarus has good experiences in this field. He said both sides have their own capacities and in case the ground is provided by the embassy and a change in the approach of Belarus towards the overseas markets, both countries can make most out of this capacity.

He also called for establishment of joint companies for expansion of cooperation, noting that currently Iran can export granules from its petrochemical plants to Belarus. He also emphasized finding ways for boosting bilateral trade between Iran and Belarus, stating that East Azarbaijan can meet some required goods of Belarus



like exporting dried-fruits and therefore both sides should take essential steps for boosting trade relations with operational programs.

Then Belarussian Ambassador Koltsov, for his part, expressed his satisfaction over presence at the Tabriz Chamber of Commerce and said that despite high capacities, the trade volume between the two states is unfortunately low and expressed hope the two countries would expand their tie in this field like other fields.

Koltsov also referred to the capacity of Tejarat Bank of Iran and said that there is possibility to take advantage of UAE and Turkey's banks for transfer of money but at first the goods and mechanisms of trade should be determined.

He added that machine manufacturing as well as chocolate producing companies exist in Belarus and this country has high potential in producing milk powder. He went on to say that in the Soviet Union era, Belarus was known as production workshop and after its collapse, this title and development of national industries has been saved by Belarus.

Koltsov then pointed to the presence of Belarussian heavy vehicles in Iran's roads and some of the after-sale office in Tehran, noting that technical equipment with high technology is produced in Belarus and it is possible to be exported to Iran.

At the end of the meeting, the diplomat pointed to problems relating to the barter as well as to the webinar which was held in July between the Tehran Chamber of Commerce and the Mogilev Chamber of Commerce and invited the Tabriz Chamber of Commerce for sending a trade delegation to Minsk.

## Latest Petchem Research Achievements Unveiled

TEHRAN (Shana) – Oil Minister Javad Owji attended a ceremony to unveil the latest research achievements of the Petrochemical Research and Technology Company (PRTC).



Javad Owji on Tuesday during a visit to the Petrochemical Research Institute of Petrochemical Company, unveiled a polyethylene pipe measuring device in contact with chlorinated water, technical know-how of making industrial-scale ammonia synthesis catalyst and acetylene selected hydrogenation catalyst base.

Also, the Petrochemical Research and Technology Company (PRTC) has signed two contracts with Tondgouyan as well as Pouya Pajooheh Bakhtar petrochemical companies and a memorandum of understanding with Tabriz Petrochemical Company.

The third contract for the development of polyethylene terephthalate products with Shahid Tondgouyan Petrochemical Company, the contract for providing technical knowhow and commercialization of ethylene oxide catalyst with Pouya Pajooheh Bakhtar Company and the Memorandum of Understanding were signed with Tabriz Petrochemical Company for product development.

## Razavi Khorasan to Hold Exclusive Exhibition in Tajikistan



MASHHAD (IRNA) - The sixth exclusive exhibition of Razavi Khorasan Province will be held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on February 26-1 March 2022, the deputy governor of Razavi Khorasan said.

Morteza Ashrafi said that the event will be organized by Mashhad International Exhibition.

He added that following up economic diplomacy and developing interactions with Tajikistan is one of the policies adopted by the 13th government.

He noted that Iran exclusive products exhibition will be the first event after the outbreak of COVID-19.

## Development of Azadegan Field Complete by Mid-2023



TEHRAN (Shana) - The CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) said that the development of Azadegan field would be complete by mid-2023, adding: "With the completion of the development project of this field, crude oil production will reach 320,000 barrels per day from the field."

Mohsen Khojastehmehr said this morning (Monday, December 27) after the signing ceremony of four memorandums and agreements between the subsidiaries of the National Iranian Oil Company and the Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research (ACECR) said the value of the documents is 275 million dollars and Rls. 160 billion.

The deals were signed in a ceremony held in the presence of Iranian Minister of Petroleum Javad Owji between ACECR and a number of MOP subsidiaries on Monday.

Accordingly, the National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) and the Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC) signed deals each concerning their focus of operations with ACECR.

Meanwhile, Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC) signed a 4-year contract for the purchase of crude oil processing services using rapid processing equipment for the construction of a factory by the method of construction, ownership and operation with a value of about \$71 million, and the Construction Support and Goods Procurement Department of the MOP signed another deal worth €5 m for a period of 2 years.

## New Flight Check Planes to Arrive Soon



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The Managing Director of Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company says soon the new purchased flight check airplanes will arrive into the country and immediately FIS equipment will be installed on them.

Speaking to ILNA and touching upon renovation of navigation equipment and systems, Siavosh Amirmokri said that that systems in the field of navigation operation are divided in three groups of navigational aid, communication and monitoring (radar system) that 90 percent of the needs in the communication system is provided by the domestic producers and there is no concern in this field due to the country's capabilities.

He went on to say that in the field of navigational aid in the past four years and during the JCPOA, the company purchased major part of its required equipment and some of the systems came on stream and they are now in use.

Pointing to the condition of monitoring systems better to say radar system, Amirmokri said in this field the country is to some extent dependent on foreign companies, adding that major part of needs in this field were also provided during the JCPOA and the country bought two radar systems and installed them and these two systems cover the activities of the two national crowded airports and one radar system will come on stream fully by next April.

He reiterated due to the cruel sanctions, the company resorted to the domestic producers to provide some of its needs, adding that Isfahan Industrial University is one of the producers which has signed contract for manufacturing advanced radar MSSR-S and the university is to deliver it by the end of next year.

He added that in the past, Iran used to provide this radar system from France and Spain and now Isfahan-produced radar will be used in the national navigation.

Flight Check airplanes fly preplanned low-altitude patterns—such as grids, orbits, DME arcs, tracks, instrument approaches and low (50 ft agl) passes along the full length of the runway—often in the opposite direction of the normal traffic flow

## MAPNA Group, Chadormalu Co. Sign Deal for Construction of Two 546-Megawatt Combined Cycle Power Plants

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – MAPNA Group and Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company signed a deal for construction of two 546-megawatt combined cycle power plants Ardakan and Bahabad.

In a ceremony which was held yesterday, the CEO of MAPNA Group Mr. Abbas Aliabadi and the CEO of Chadormalu Company Mr. Taghizadeh signed the deal.

After the signing the deal, Mr. Taghizadeh said that one of the major problems of the national steel industry is lack of infrastructures like electricity, water and gas that steelmakers should themselves think of these infrastructures which is actually a good idea in order to help the country a great deal on way to development by providing these infrastructures.

He went on to say that Chadormalu Company in cooperation with steelmaking and industrial companies have resolved the concern regarding the water crisis in the Iranian Plateau and currently the second concern is the electricity shortage that of course Chadormalu Company by construction of the 500-megawatt combined cycle power plants as well as 10-megawatt solar power plant in Ardekan of Yazd have succeeded not only in required



electricity supply but also in transferring half of the produced electricity to the national grid and now the company intends to increase its power production to 1730 megawatts by investment in construction of two 546-megawatt combined cycle power plants and one 120-megawatt solar power plant.

He welcomed the signing of the contract for construction of these power plants in Ardekan which will be based on the EPC and Behabad power plant based on BOT methods. He expressed hope MAPNA Group would complete the project very soon to connect them to the network.

Then the CEO of MAPNA Group Mr. Aliabadi pointed to the significance of electricity power and called for investment on this field.

He then hailed Chadormalu Company for trusting MAPNA Group, adding that according to the plannings, four steam power plants will join the national power plants by the end of the current year. He also announced readiness for construction of power plants for the neighbor countries, adding that other countries choose Iran for construction of power plants due to its quality and price.

## Gov't Raises Electricity Prices for Heavy Consumers

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has decided to increase the price of electricity for top-band users as the country struggles to contain a growing demand for power which has been exacerbated by cryptomining activity in recent years.

Iran's Energy Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian said that electricity price hikes had been approved in a session of the Cabinet a day earlier.

Mehrabian said the new tariffs are meant to change electricity consumption behavior in Iran and to distribute heavy subsidies given by the government for electricity in a more balanced way.

The minister said most of electricity users in Iran will continue to pay a baseline rate of 4,000 rials (\$0.013) per kilowatt hour (kwh) of electricity if their consumption does not exceed limits set by the state-run electricity company Tavanir for various climate regions.

However, Mehrabian said the rates will increase to 6,000 rials per kwh for those who consume 1.5 times the cap, while those using two times the limit will pay 10,000 per kwh.

The minister said prices will more than triple to 14,000 (\$0.046) per kwh for high-use customers whose consumption are triple the amount allowed in various seasons in each climate region.

The price hikes come as growing demand for electricity in Iran has caused brief power cuts in large cities in recent years while placing a heavy burden on the country's Oil Ministry to supply enough fuels to power plants to respond to the rising demand.

Iranian Energy Ministry authorities say low tariffs have made it difficult to attract investment into the power sector. They insist that heavily-subsidized prices have mainly benefited the rich and those active in the cryptocurrency business.



## Heavy Snow Causes Travel Chaos in Japan

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Heavy snow caused traffic jams, flight cancellations and disruption to train services in central Japan on Monday, with record drifts recorded in some areas.

More than 3,200 households have been left without power in the region, according to Kansai Electric Power, as officials warned more snow was forecast overnight.

No injuries or deaths due to the freezing weather have yet been confirmed, government spokesman Hirokazu Matsuno said. "A strong winter pressure pattern is causing heavy snow, mainly along the Sea of Japan side of the country from northern to western Japan, with some areas experiencing record snowfall," Matsuno said.



## Philippines Typhoon Death Toll Rises to 388

MANILA (Dispatches) - The death toll from one of the most destructive typhoons to hit the Philippines in recent years rose to 388 on Monday, the government said, as disease outbreaks threatened some of the stricken areas.

Typhoon Rai struck the south and center of the Asian nation on December 16 and 17, toppling power lines and trees and unleashing deadly floods that also left hundreds of thousands homeless.

The civil defense office in Manila raised the death toll from Rai to 388 with 60 others missing and hundreds injured. Police previously put the death toll at 375.



## U.N. Official Condemns Reported Killings of Civilians in Myanmar



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - A senior U.N. official called on Myanmar authorities to investigate the reported killing of at least 35 civilians that opposition activists blamed on government soldiers, saying he was "horrified" at the violence.

The ruling military has not commented on the killings near Mo So village in Kayah State on Friday and junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun could not be reached by phone for comment.

State media reported on Sunday that soldiers had fired on and killed an unspecified number of "terrorists with weapons" from forces fighting the military government. State media did not say anything about civilians.

U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths said reports of the killing of civilians, including at least one child, were credible.

"I am horrified by reports of an attack against civilians... I condemn this grievous incident and all attacks against civilians throughout the country, which are prohibited under international humanitarian law," he said in a statement.

Griffiths called for "a thorough and transparent" investigation so the perpetrators could be brought to justice.

Residents and a human rights group working in the area said soldiers had killed the civilians. Photographs posted by the rights group showed charred bodies, some in the back of a burned-out truck.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military on Feb. 1 overthrew the elected government of Nobel Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

Some opponents of the military have taken up arms, some linking up with ethnic minority guerrillas who have for years been fighting the government for self-determination in various parts of the country, including Kayah State in the east.

On Monday, three sources in the western Thai city of Mae Sot, 330 km (205 miles) to the south, said there were further signs of fighting on the Myanmar side of the border, including gunshots, plumes of smoke and an air strike.

According to Thai authorities, 5,260 refugees have fled the area into Thailand since a flare-up in fighting between the Myanmar army and the Karen National Union (KNU) insurgent group on Dec. 16.

Thailand's foreign ministry spokesman said Thailand was working with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in case "Thai authorities are unable to manage the situation", following calls by aid organizations for Bangkok to do more to help.

Since Myanmar's military launched the coup, more than 1,300 people have been killed in crackdowns on protests and more than 11,000 have been jailed, according to a tally by the Association for Assistance of Political Prisoners rights group.

## Polish President Vetoes Media Bill, Seeks to Calm U.S. Fears

WARSAW (Dispatches) - Poland's president vetoed a media bill that critics said aimed to silence a Discovery-owned news channel critical of the government, citing worries about the strain the law would put on relations with the United States.

The move allows NATO-member Poland to sidestep a potentially explosive row with Washington at a time of heightened tension in eastern Europe amid what some countries see as increased Russian assertiveness.

However, the decision means that a project voted through parliament by ruling nationalists Law and Justice (PiS) has been blocked by a president elected as their ally.

President Andrzej Duda said in a televised statement on Monday that if the law came into force it could violate a treaty signed with the United States on economic and trade relations.

"One of the arguments considered during the analyses of this law was the issue of an international agreement that was concluded in 1990... this treaty speaks about the protection of investments," he said.

"There is a clause which says that media-related investments may be excluded, but it concerns future investments."

Unexpectedly rushed through parliament this month, the legislation would have tightened rules around foreign ownership of media, specifically affecting the ability of news channel TVN24, owned by U.S. media company Discovery Inc (DISCA.O), to operate.

TVN24's parent, TVN, is owned by Discovery via a firm registered in the Netherlands in order to get around a ban on non-European firms owning more than 49% of Polish media companies. The law, which drew nationwide protests, would have prevented this workaround.

"We note with appreciation and joy the decision of the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, who spoke in favour of the freedom of the media and the right of viewers to choose," TVN Grupa Discovery said in an emailed statement.

Once parliament holds its inaugural session, lawmakers will elect a president, who will in turn appoint a prime minister to be approved by the legislature.



## Iraq's Top Court Ratifies Parliamentary Election Results

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraq's Supreme Court ratified the results of the October 10, 2021, legislative elections after rejecting a motion by the Hashed al-Shaabi ex-paramilitary alliance that contested its defeat in the polls.



The ratification, following a delay of more than two months, clears the way for a new parliament to hold its inaugural session within two weeks, under Iraqi law.

"The Federal Supreme Court has ratified the results of the legislative elections," its media officer announced in a brief statement.

In multi-confessional and multi-ethnic Iraq, the formation of governments has involved complex negotiations ever since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion toppled dictator Saddam Hussein.

Shiite Muslim firebrand cleric Moqtada al-Sadr was declared on November 30 as the biggest winner of the election.

Sadr's movement won nearly a fifth of the seats - 73 out of the assembly's total 329, well ahead of the 17 seats of the Fatah (Conquest) Alliance, the political arm of the pro-Iran Hashed.

Hashed leaders rejected the result - sharply down from their 48 seats in the outgoing assembly - as a "fraud".

The Hashed organized protests and appealed the results hoping to have them annulled, claiming "serious violations".

The Fatah Alliance alleged the electronic voting system had failed to recognize the finger print identification of many voters.

It also protested at what is claimed were the alleged failings of a new electronic machine used for the election.

Once parliament holds its inaugural session, lawmakers will elect a president, who will in turn appoint a prime minister to be approved by the legislature.

## Turkey Probes Istanbul Municipality Staff Over Alleged Militant Ties

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkey has launched an investigation into hundreds of staff at the opposition-run Istanbul municipality accused of links to militant groups, drawing fierce criticism from the city's mayor on Monday over the handling of the probe.

Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu is from the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) and is seen as a potential challenger to President Tayyip Erdogan.

Since a failed 2016 coup, Turkey has investigated and tried tens of thousands of people accused of militant links in a crackdown which rights groups say has been used as pretext to quash dissent. The government has said its actions are necessary given the gravity of the threats faced by Turkey.

The Interior Ministry said on Twitter on Sunday it had begun a probe of 455 people working at the municipality and related companies accused of connections to Kurdish militants, along with more than 100 allegedly linked to leftist and other groups.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu said the investigation was not directed at the city council itself.

"Our business is not with anyone's municipality. Our business is with the fight against terror and

we have to keep Turkey on alert," Soylu told reporters.

He said those targeted are "not just those who clean and sweep the streets" but could also include some in senior posts.

Imamoglu criticised the ministry statement, made via Twitter, saying it suggested those set to be investigated had already been judged.

"You give a number (of suspects) and make a judgment and then launch an investigation," Imamoglu said in comments to reporters. "What sort of an investigation is it? If you have reached a decision then take them by the ear to prison."

He said the ministry had not provided information regarding those being probed, two weeks after Soylu had first referred to them, adding that municipality procedures for employing staff included checking whether applicants have criminal records.

Opinion polls show Erdogan's approval rating has hit a six-year low and that he may lose to potential presidential rivals in elections scheduled for 2023.

Imamoglu took office in 2019 after defeating the candidate of Erdogan's ruling AK Party. While he has been touted as a potential challenger, he told Reuters this month his only focus is on doing his job as mayor.



## Somalia's PM Suspended as Election Spat Deepens

MOGADISHU (Dispatches)

- Somalia's long-running political crisis escalated on

Monday as the president announced he was suspending Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble, who blasted the move as unconstitutional.

The announcement came a day after the two men sparred over the country's sluggish preparations for elections, with Roble accusing President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, who is better known as Farmajo, of sabotaging the polls.

Relations between Farmajo and Roble have long been frosty, but the latest development raises fears for Somalia's stability as it struggles to stage elections and fight a jihadist insurgency.

On Monday, Farmajo's office said the president had "decided to suspend Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble and stop his powers since he was linked with corruption", accusing him of interfering with a probe into a land-grabbing case.

But Roble hit back, accusing Farmajo of attempting "to take over the office of the prime minister by force (in) a move violating the constitution and the law of the country".

"The prime minister... is committed to not being deterred by anyone in fulfilling his national duties in order to lead the country to elections that pave the way for peaceful power transfer," said the statement released by Roble's office.

Despite a heightened military presence around the prime minister's office, Roble was still able to enter the premises, a day after Farmajo withdrew his mandate to organise the elections and called for the creation of a new committee to "correct" the shortcomings.

The two men have traded accusations in recent days, with Roble alleging that Farmajo did not want to hold "a credible election".

Farmajo in turn has accused Roble of trying to influence a probe into a scandal involving army-owned land after the premier sacked the defence minister and replaced him on Sunday.

"The prime minister has pressurised the minister of defence to divert the investigations of the case relating to the grabbed public land," Monday's statement by Farmajo's office said.

The dispute alarmed international observers, prompting the US embassy in Mogadishu to urge Somalia's leaders "to take immediate steps to de-escalate tensions... refrain from provocative actions, and avoid violence."



**Mahmodieh (\$3500)**  
400sq.m, 4bdrs  
S/pool, S, J  
L.balcony  
Nice view  
Fully Furn

**Shanon (adviser)**

**Shariati Villa (\$3500)**  
1000sq.m  
5bdrs, S/p, S  
J, balcony  
pkg, & yard

**Parsian**

**(\$1800)**  
Darrous Apt  
160sq.m, 3bdrs  
balcony, & F.F

**(\$1400)**  
Shahrak-e-Gharb  
170sq.m, 3bdrs  
F.F

**(\$8000)**  
Fereshteh bldg  
4storey, 12bdrs  
yard, & pkg lots

**Vanak (\$1300)**  
130sq.m, 2bdrs  
balcony, & Nicely Furn

**Jordan office**  
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## China Drafts Rules to Tighten Management of Company Registrations

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's central bank and market regulator issued draft rules on Monday requiring companies to improve the management of their registration information, with any deferred registration filings likely to be subject to the rules.

The proposals aim to improve transparency and strengthen the enforcement of anti-money laundering laws, the two regulators said in a joint-statement on their websites. The regulators will seek feedback on the draft rules from the public before they take effect from March 1, with a grace period for businesses to comply.



## Uzbekistan Launches Key 3.6b Gas-to-Liquid Plant

TASHKENT (Dispatches) - Uzbekistan has inaugurated its \$3.6 billion state-of-the-art GTL (gas-to-liquids) plant, one of the largest and most advanced plants of its kind in the world, in the Qashqadaryo Region.

Full operational capacity is expected in the first half of 2022 when Uzbekistan GTL will process 3.6 (billion cubic metres) bcm of gas annually.

Using the latest technology and engineering, Uzbekistan GTL (UZGTL) converts domestic natural gas into clean, high-quality liquid fuels and products with import substitution potential estimated at over \$1 billion annually.

When fully operational, the plant will produce over 1.5 million tonnes of high quality, environment-friendly synthetic liquid fuel annually, under the brand name Oltin Yo'l GTL (Golden Way) - a symbol of the new path Uzbekistan is taking towards a more sustainable, prosperous, and environment-friendly future.

The project, designed using modern gas and petrochemical technologies from such leading companies as Sasol (South Africa), Haldor Topsoe (Denmark) and Chevron (USA), was implemented by a consortium including Korean companies Hyundai Engineering and Hyundai Engineering & Construction, and Uzbekistan's Enter Engineering.

Opening the plant, Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev said: "With the launch of the plant, 1,300 specialists will be provided with permanent high-paying jobs. It is especially pleasing that about 80% of the specialists who participated in the construction of the plant are our local people, including young people who are striving to work in a new way, full of strength and energy. These youth are the youth of New Uzbekistan."

Visiting dignitaries were shown around the facility and briefed on the plant's immense potential as a key contributor to the country's economic future. Among them were President of Hyundai Engineering Kim Chang Hag, Deputy Chairman of the Board of Gazprombank Alexei Matveev and President of Air Products and Chemicals Seyfi Gasimi.

Marking this important milestone for the energy sector and the whole country, Minister of Energy, Alisher Sultanov, said: "Uzbekistan GTL is a testament to a truly international effort and a great example of our commitment to build a new Uzbekistan with a cleaner environment and self-reliant economy, - a country our children would be happy to live in."

"Our main goal is to expand Uzbekistan's capacity for the deep processing of domestic natural gas; significantly decrease imports of hydrocarbons; satisfy local demand for high-quality and environment-friendly fuel; and provide the market with strategic value-added products made from our own raw materials."

"Together with all our partners, licensors, lenders, EPC contractors, legal and financial advisers, state officials, workers, suppliers, some of whom are here today, we are proud of this huge accomplishment."

## Japan's Sales Retail Pick Up Pace

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Retail sales in Japan rose for the third consecutive month in November, in a favorable sign for businesses in the country.

Sales were 1.2 percent higher in November - on a monthly basis. This was driven by higher expenditure on clothes and cars, which went up by 7.5 percent and 7.2 percent, respectively, according to data from the country's Ministry of Economy and Trade.

In yearly terms, retail sales increased by 1.9 percent in November, accelerating from the previous month's 0.9 percent.

Expenditure on clothes, jewelry and electronics pushed US holiday sales up by 8.5 percent from a year ago, according to a report from Mastercard SpendingPulse.

Both online and in-store sales grew as consumers looked for gifts earlier than usual. In addition, stores tried to introduce more promotions to stimulate the holiday shopping season despite supply chain issues, Bloomberg reported.

The holiday season is defined as Nov. 1 to Dec. 24.

The Real Sector Index in Turkey dropped by 2.3 points to 106.1 in December, the country's central bank said.

This was driven by a major decline in the general business situation sub-index, as it decreased to 77, down from 90.6 in the previous month.

This comes against the backdrop of the country's persistent move towards lower interest rates amidst high inflationary pressures.

Moreover, the survey - conducted by Turkey's central bank for manufacturing companies - showed that firms' reporting of both current and future orders worsened. On the other hand, total employment and volume of output are expected to increase in the coming three months.

Industrial profits for Chinese firms went up by an annual rate of 38 percent in the January-November period, data from the country's official statistics agency showed.

In particular, mining firms' profits fueled this increase, surging by over 180 percent during the same period.

However, profits rose by an annual rate of 9 percent in November, decelerating significantly from October's 24.6 percent jump.

This was attributed to tumbling prices of some raw materials, a faltering property market and weaker consumer demand.

Current account surpluses in Germany are starting to drop, causing major trade partners some relief.

Europe's top economy had the biggest current account surplus for four consecutive years through 2019.



## Turkish Lira Slides Almost 8% After Intervention-Driven Surge

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - The lira tumbled almost 8% against the dollar amid persisting investor concern over Turkey's monetary policy, having surged more than 50% last week after billions of dollars of state-backed market interventions.

The lira was also supported last week by a government move to cover FX losses on certain deposits.

It weakened to as low as 11.6 against the greenback on Monday before trimming losses to trade at 11.35.

"The main exchange rate resistance is at 11.45 and 12.0, with support levels of 10.57 and 10.25," QNB Invest said in a daily bulletin.

Last week's rally brought the Turkish currency back to mid-November levels.

Last Monday, it had plunged to an all-time low of 18.4 per dollar, after a months-long slide due to fears of spiralling inflation driven by a succession of interest rate cuts engineered by President Tayyip Erdogan.

At current levels the currency is still 35% weaker than at the end of last year.

Erdogan unveiled late last Monday a scheme under which the Treasury and central bank would reimburse losses on converted lira deposits against foreign currencies, sparking the lira's biggest intraday rally.

Turks did not sell dollars in large quantities on Monday and Tuesday of last week, according to official data that suggested they had played little role in the gains. State interventions, meanwhile, cost the central bank more than \$8 billion last week, according to traders' calculations.

The central bank sold \$1.35 billion in direct forex interventions on Dec. 2-3 to support the lira when it stood around 13.5 per dollar, according to data.

In an interview with broadcaster A Haber, Erdogan said Turks showed confidence in the local currency and deposits increased by 23.8 billion lira after the anti-dollarisation plan announcement.

But data from the BDDK banking watchdog showed that after heavy accumulation of dollars the previous week, Turkish individual depositors held \$163.7 billion of hard currencies last Tuesday, virtually unchanged from Monday and Friday, when the total was \$163.8 billion.

The lira got a big boost last week from what traders and economists called backdoor dollar sales by state banks, supported by the central bank.

Under pressure from Erdogan, the central bank has slashed its policy rates by 500 basis points to 14% since September, despite inflation that has risen to more than 21%. Price rises are set to exceed 30% next year in part due to the lira depreciation, economists predict.

## Indonesia's Economic Performance Better in 2021



JAKARTA (Dispatches) - Indonesia's economic performance in 2021 was better than in 2020, acting head of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Center of the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), Ahmad Najib Burhani, said.

"Although economic growth in early 2021 was negative, the government's policies to recover the national economy have shown significant results," he remarked during a media briefing on the '2022 Indonesian Economic Outlook' here.

In the second quarter of 2021, the country's economic growth was recorded at 7.1 percent, while in the third quarter of 2021, it reached 3.5 percent, he noted.

The positive growth rates indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic could be controlled well, he said.

The strict implementation of large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) in the second and third quarters of 2020 had led to negative growth of 3.49 percent in the third quarter of 2020, he noted.

However, in 2021, the economy still grew positively although the government implemented Level 3 and 4 community activity restrictions (PPKM) amid a surge in COVID-19 Delta variant cases from July to August, Burhani said.

It is expected that Indonesia's economy will grow positively in 2022 due to various efforts made by the government in handling the pandemic and recovering domestic economic activities, he added.

## Mexico's Economy Expected to Grow Amid Multiple Challenges

MEXICO CITY (Dispatches) - Mexico's economy is expected to grow next year though it faces multiple challenges, including the raging Covid-19 pandemic, according to an economist.

Mexico's economy could see improved performance in the fourth quarter of this year, following a dip in gross domestic product in the third quarter, the first contraction in five quarters, Alejandro Saldana, chief economist for Mexico's Ve por Mas financial group, has said.

In the third quarter, GDP grew at 4.6 per cent year-on-year, a drop of 0.2 per cent compared to the previous three months, according to preliminary estimates from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography.

"We estimate a better dynamism in activity during the fourth quarter, due to a broader economic reopening and the dilution of the effects of a law on employment, although bottlenecks will continue to limit industrial production," Xinhua news agency quoted Saldana as saying. "We reaffirm our GDP projection for 2021 and 2022, at 5.8 per cent and 2.6 per cent, respectively," he said in a recent report.

Among the future risks, Saldana listed additional disruptions in global value chains, along with low investment in Mexico, implications of higher local and global inflation, and an accelerated withdrawal of monetary support.

Inflation in Mexico stood at 6.24 per cent year-on-year as of October, the highest level since December 2017, which motivated the central bank of Mexico to raise the benchmark interest rate this month to 5 per cent, the fourth hike in a row. Spain's insurance giant Mapfre Group forecast "increased pressure" on consumer prices in 2022 across the globe, especially in emerging countries such as Mexico.

A Mapfre report issued in November warned the global economy faces several shocks that are having a larger economic impact than first expected, such as supply chain disruptions caused by the pandemic, especially in the components industry.

## Taliban Looks to Dodge Economic Crisis by Boosting Afghan Exports

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - The Taliban administration is working to boost exports to save the Afghan economy from collapse, with a government official saying international humanitarian aid alone won't prevent the country from slipping deeper into poverty.

"Humanitarian aid cannot solve Afghanistan's economic problems. The only

way to achieve economic self-sufficiency is to boost domestic products and export them abroad," the Taliban deputy foreign minister Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai told a gathering in Kabul Sunday.

Stanekzai's comments mark a shift in a country where foreign aid makes up more than 40% of the economy, according to data from the World Bank. The attempt to move toward self-sufficiency also comes as Afghanistan has lost access to its foreign reserves of around \$9 billion after the U.S. froze them following the Taliban take-over in August.

In 2020, the country imported most of its essential items worth around \$9 billion. Exports accounted for just over \$800 million and consisted of agricultural products such as pine nuts and dried fruits mainly to China, Pakistan and Iran.

As the economy has fallen apart over the last four months, the United Nations has warned that more than half the country's nearly 40 million people are facing acute hunger and a million children could die as a consequence.

Stanekzai once again blamed the U.S. for the chaos and called on it to release the funds that belong to "Afghan people."

Under a new measure to bypass the Taliban, the U.S. is planning to deliver aid directly to the Afghan people. The Biden administration said last week it would expand ways aid groups can help ease a rapidly worsening humanitarian crisis in the country.

The Taliban also appear to be easing their stance on women's rights, with a promise to end restrictions next year on teenage girls trying to access schools, according to Nazar Mohammad Urfan, a spokesman of Ministry of Education. The move could see more foreign aid pour into the country. -Bloomberg

## Agricultural Products Main Part of Russia's Imports From Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali said on Tuesday that agricultural products are the most important part of Russia's one-billion-dollar imports from Iran.

Trade exchange between Tehran and Moscow has had a remarkable development in the recent year, Jalali said. Iran exported 77m dollar worth of products during the first ten months of 2021, which is a record in the recent years, the ambassador noted.

Russia's imports from Iran have witnessed a 122 percent growth during the mentioned period, he added.



## Southeast Asia's Oil, Gas Output May Never Recover to Pre-COVID Levels

LONDON (OilPrice) - The Covid-19 pandemic has marked the end of an era for Southeast Asia's combined oil and gas production, pushing the region's output in 2021 to below 5 million barrels of oil equivalent per day (boepd) for the first time since 1998, a threshold that is not likely to be exceeded again in the future despite new project start-ups in coming years, a Rystad Energy analysis shows.

Daily average hydrocarbon production tumbled to 4.86 million boepd in 2021, down from 5.06 million boepd in 2020, and a massive 12% drop compared to the pre-pandemic volumes of 5.5 million boepd in 2019, Rystad Energy data shows.

Operators have struggled to regain production losses triggered by the pandemic as operators slowed down activity levels amid an unprecedented disruption in oil markets. The decline is projected to continue into the middle of the decade. Although volumes will remain stable in 2022, production will drop an additional 10% by 2025 to around 4.3 million boepd versus current levels.

"Liquids production in Southeast Asia has been on the decline for almost 20 years due to a lack of discoveries and project sanctioning activities in the region. While new government incentives may help, the region looks set to experience declining production levels well into the future," says Prateek Pandey, upstream vice president

By contrast, natural gas production in the region stayed steady between 2009 and 2019, at around 20.8 billion cubic feet per day (Bcf/d). Despite expectations of a rise in gas sales volume that would counter the 8% fall in production in 2020, volumes are expected to be down around 2% this year compared to 2020, at about 19 Bcf/d. This is primarily due to falling production at mature legacy projects including Mahakam, MLNG Dua and MLNG Satu PSCs, Yetagan.

The share of volume from projects under development and existing commercial discoveries are substantial and reflect the region's timely execution of projects. Several projects were successfully brought onstream in 2021, including the highly anticipated Rotan field, utilizing PFLNG Dua, which started in March, making Petronas the only operator globally to produce LNG from two floating facilities. In Indonesia, Eni completed a timely development, with Merakes achieving its first gas production in April 2021

However, despite these successes, Southeast Asia is still plagued by delays and stalled projects. In Indonesia, a recovery in gas production has been further delayed after the two significant developments -Tangguh LNG T3 and Jambaran Tiung-Biru Unitisation (JTB) - were postponed until 2022.

For most of Southeast Asia, over 60% of output comes from mature blocks - fields producing more than 50% of its resource. Volumes from such blocks are likely to see a consistent decline over the next few years, with an estimated 60% of production by 2030 likely coming from projects currently at the pre-FID (final investment decision) stage. Consequently, the driving force behind the region's upstream outlook will be the sanctioning of new developments.



2020 was a nightmare year for regional sanctioning activity, with only around 300 million barrels of oil equivalent (boe) of resources from six assets reaching FIDs. As operators tried to move forward in 2021, the region has seen more than ten projects secure FIDs, with around 750 million boe of reserves and some \$3 billion in greenfield investment, with Malaysia accounting for 85% of the total.

Sanctioning activities in 2022 are likely to remain at similar levels, with FIDs planned on around 800 million boe of resources in the region, of which 60% are in Indonesia and over 35% in Malaysia. Projects operated by majors and NOCs are likely to dominate in Malaysia, whereas regional players and E&P companies will primarily drive Indonesian developments.

However, planned FID projects in 2022 may still face challenges in securing the final approval. Indonesia's domestic gas price regulation remains a concern for most large gas developments in the pipeline. Although incentives are being discussed for blocks such as Kasuri, it is still one of the factors that could further delay progress. The planned developments from production sharing contracts (PSC) due for current contract expiry in the near term are also at risk unless host country governments initiate early discussions on potential extensions.

Southeast Asia is unlikely to see a substantial increase in spending in 2022, with investments projected to be in the range of \$15 billion to \$20 billion across the year. Investments will likely be driven by increased drilling activity in mature blocks in Indonesia and Thailand, as NOCs take the reins and focus on top-producing blocks.

Around 360 million boe in resources have been discovered at eight fields as of November 2021, surpassing 2020 volumes by 40%. About 78% of total discovered resources this year in Southeast Asia are gas or gas condensate, while the remainder is oil. About 84% come from shallow waters, with around 86% at NOC-operated blocks. In line with the trend, over 90% of volume in the region in 2021 has been discovered in the Miocene-Clastic formation.

### Tehran, Caracas True...

FROM PAGE 1

He explained that joint commissions are working on the new projects, adding that he will soon visit Iran to finalize the new deals.

"I am going to Tehran very soon, for a visit that President Raisi offered me, so that we meet in person, to hold conversations and sign new agreements ... and speed up processes of cooperation," Maduro said.

The Venezuelan president also revered Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei as a man of great wisdom and prudence.

In October, Raisi hailed the expanding and friendly Iran-Venezuela ties, saying Tehran is determined to boost its relations with developing countries, especially nations that seek to maintain their independence.

"Latin America, especially Venezuela, is on the top of the Islamic Republic's economic, diplomatic priorities, and we are determined to expand our ties with these countries," Raeli said during a meeting with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Felix Plasencia in Tehran on October 18.

The Iranian president stressed the necessity of expanding Tehran-Caracas ties in different fields and underscored the importance of having "a clear and long-term plan" in order to strengthen the bilateral ties to their maximum.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Maduro said his country like Iran will never abandon the Palestinian cause, calling on the international community and world states not to leave Palestinians unprotected in the face of the Israeli regime's crimes against them.

He underscored that no one in the world can force Caracas into withdrawing support from the Palestinian issue.

"We will not yield to such demands. It is a sin to simply think of abandoning Palestine or leaving it by itself. Palestine is humanity's Holy Land, and we hold Palestinian lands in such high regard. We hear the name 'Palestine' loud and high," Maduro said.

He also denounced the ongoing heinous crimes against Palestinians across the occupied territories, emphasizing that Israel will pay for them one day.

He added that Palestine deserves unwavering and fearless support from all world leaders, noting, "Palestine is crying out for help. Palestine is asking for your support. Crimes are being committed against it every day, and its young people are getting killed every day."

The Venezuelan leader described the Israeli regime's crimes against Palestinians as "inexplicable" and unmatched in history, reiterating his country's deep-seated support and affection for Palestinian people.

Maduro also expressed support for Syria, stating that he is confident the Arab country will finally overcome the existing conflict under President Bashar al-Assad.

"The Arab world and the entire international community will be astonished at how Syria will rise from the ashes in the following years," he stated.

Since taking office as Venezuela's president, Maduro has been committed to close ties with Tehran and Caracas has also been a trustable ally for this Latin American country and this strong bond has enraged the West especially the U.S. and for this reason sanctions against Caracas have been intensified to bring this country's government to its knees but Venezuelan government has followed Iran's path in making ineffective sanctions and pressures to survive against the plots.

Now Venezuela has turned into a true anti-hegemony country in the very neighborhood of the U.S. and Washington fears of this independent country like its fear of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the West Asia.

Iran and Venezuela can strengthen their ties through more economic co-operations to thwart sanctions effects like what Tehran has done in the gasoline crisis era in Caracas that the country dispatched its oil tankers to supply Venezuela with gasoline regardless of the U.S. barking and threats.

It is expected by Maduro's visit to Tehran, a new chapter will open in the ties of Tehran-Caracas and anti-hegemony front and the two states will benefit of this tie both economically and politically and both confront their ill-wishers.



### China Oil Demand To Peak by 2030 on Petrochemical Use

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's oil consumption is expected to keep growing for a decade on robust chemical demand, reaching a peak of about 780 million tons per year by 2030, a research institute affiliated with China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) said on Sunday.

Last year, the research group, called the CNPC Economics & Technology Research Institute (ETRI), said that China's oil demand would peak at 730 million tons per year by around 2025.

In its latest report, the ETRI said diesel fuel, gasoline and kerosene consumption are forecast to peak sometime around 2025 at about 390 million tons per year. The strong petrochemical demand will support rising consumption through to 2030.

Overall oil demand will fall after 2030 as transportation consumption declines amid the electrification of vehicles while chemical demand remains stable during the period, the ETRI said.

The ETRI also revised the peak of China's total primary energy consumption to 6.01 billion tons per year of standard coal by around 2030, from 5.6 billion tons per year by around 2035 previously.

"Coal consumption in China would enter a plateau at around 3.6-4 billion tons in 2021-2030," the ETRI said, adding that the use of the dirty fossil fuel would decrease steadily in 2031-2050 as coal-fired power plants become a back-up energy source.

This follows plans from the government to reduce coal consumption in China, the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, in an "orderly" manner as part of its drive to reach a peak in carbon emissions.

### Yemen...

FROM PAGE 1

Saudi Arabia launched the devastating war on its southern neighbor in March 2015 in collaboration with a number of its allied states and with arms and logistics support from the US and several Western states.

The aim was to return to power the former Riyadh-backed regime and crush the popular Ansarullah movement which has been running state affairs in the absence of an effective government in Yemen.

The war has stopped well shy of all of its goals, despite killing tens of thousands of Yemenis and turning entire Yemen into the scene of the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Yemeni forces have in recent months gone from strength to strength against the Saudi-led invaders and left Riyadh and its allies bogged down in Yemen.

### Enemies Unable to...

FROM PAGE 1

Israel has suggested that it will attack Iran, with Israeli minister of military affairs Benny Gantz telling American officials that he had directed the regime's military to prepare for the possibility of a military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities.

"Of course, we prefer to act in international cooperation, but if necessary - we will act alone. We defend ourselves by ourselves," Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid warned on Monday.

Iranian generals, for their part, have decisively warned the Tel Aviv regime against any adventurism against the country, pledging a crushing response to any attack.

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) also launched a massive military exercise last week, after which both the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Mohammad Baqeri and IRGC Chief Commander Hossein Salami warned that the Iranian armed forces will "cut off" the hands of aggressors in case of an attack against the country.

"25 large-scale exercises have been planned for this year," Rashid said, hinting at the latest exercise. "So far, 15 major exercises have been conducted by the Army and the IRGC, some of which, of course, will not be publicized." He said military exercises are held annually by the Iranian armed forces to test the perception of enemy threats and assess the level of combat readiness, adding that more importantly, the drills show the adaptation degree of the preparations to the risks ahead.

In fact, the general continued, conducting exercises "means a war before the war. Therefore, it requires precision and creativity in targeting and planning, as well as novelty in execution in order to surprise the enemy."

### Effective Removal of...

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At issue in the Vienna talks have been the scope of the removal of US sanctions, Iran's verification thereof, the provision of guarantees by the US that it will not leave the deal again, and finally, Tehran's reversal of its nuclear advancements.

Bagheri Kani once again emphasized that regarding the removal of sanctions, Iran is considering two main issues, including the verification of sanctions removal and US guarantees.

The kernel of the two issues has been accepted by the other side, but discussions are needed to determine their mechanisms and frameworks, he said.

Iran's top negotiator further explained that the sanctions targeting Iran's financial and banking sections will be on the agenda of the talks in "the next one or two days."

"The Islamic Republic has stated that if an agreement is reached, the party that violated the deal, the United States, needs to first remove the sanctions, then Iran would verify [the process], and after that it would

fulfill its nuclear obligations within the framework of the JCPOA," he said.

Pointing to the guarantees that Iran seeks, Bagheri Kani explained, "The United States must not violate the deal again or impose new sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran which are contrary to the agreement. The rightful and logical demand of the Islamic Republic has been that the other side must offer guarantees."

Asked how long the new round of the Vienna talks would take, he said it depends on the serious will and readiness of the other side on the removal of the sanctions. "The more serious and objective this readiness and will is, the less time the talks will take. As long as they do not show this will and lack practical readiness for the removal of sanctions, negotiations may take longer."

Earlier on Monday, reporters asked Bagheri Kani whether he was optimistic about the negotiations, to which he replied: "If we were not, we would not have come to Vienna."

### Raisi to Visit Moscow...

FROM PAGE 1

"There is no plan in the government to change the price of gasoline," the government spokesman said.

Bahadori-Jahromi, referring to the gasoline project that is to be implemented in Kish and Qeshm islands, said: "Currently, those who have several cars, receive petrol subsidies many times more than those who have one car, which is an unfair distribution system."

"The plan is to make the distribution system more equitable. Therefore, the pilot project of supplying gasoline at the same rate will be implemented in two islands (Kish and Qeshm) and then its implementation will proceed at the national level using the experiences of the pilot period," the spokesman noted.

## NBA, Players Discuss Adding In-Season Tournament

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The NBA and the players union are discussing making an in-season tournament part of the annual league calendar -- an addition that could shorten the league season by four games, ESPN reported.

If the league and the National Basketball Players Association come to an agreement, the tournament could be added to the league calendar as early as the 2022-23 season, per the report.

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## Ferrari Signs Deal With Tech Firm Velas

LONDON (Dispatches) - Ferrari has signed a multi-year accord with Swiss technology firm Velas Network to create digital content for its fans, the luxury sports car maker said on Monday.

From next season, Velas, a provider of digital products and services, will become a partner of Ferrari's Formula 1 racing team.

"In addition, Velas will be Title Sponsor of the Ferrari Esports Series, the online mono-brand series of the Prancing Horse, and of the Esports team that will compete in the F1 Esports Series, the official digital championship competed in by all teams participating in the FIA Formula 1 World Championship," Ferrari said in a statement.

# Butler Returns to Lead Heat Over Magic

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Jimmy Butler returned from an eight-game injury absence to post a double-double in the Miami Heat's 93-83 NBA victory over the Orlando Magic.

Butler, who was sidelined with a bruised tailbone, scored 17 points and pulled down 11 rebounds, handing out four assists and coming up with three steals.

His return from an injury that has seen him miss 15 games this season couldn't have been more timely after Miami guard Kyle Lowry on Saturday joined the parade of NBA players sidelined by Covid-19 concerns.

Miami were also without regular starters Bam Adebayo and P.J. Tucker. Orlando were even more short-handed and the teams reached halftime with Miami holding a slim 42-39 lead, despite connecting on just 37.8 percent of their shots from the field.

Six three-pointers in a 30-point third quarter helped the Heat pull away. They led by as many as 18 in the fourth quarter.

Caleb Martin scored 17 points for Miami, while Omer Yurtseven scored 16 points and grabbed 15 rebounds in his first start at center because of the injuries to Adebayo and Dewayne Dedmon.

Coping with inevitable injuries has become more problematic for all teams amid the wave of coronavirus cases in the league that mirror the rise of the Omicron variant in the United States.

The Magic had six players in the league's Covid protocols on Sunday, with another player cleared to return but still absent because of conditioning issues. Another six players were out with injuries.

"You expect the unexpected," Magic coach Jamahl Mosley said.

In Cleveland, the Cavaliers thrashed Toronto 144-99 in the Raptors' first game since December 18.



The Raptors, who had three of their past four scheduled games postponed because of lack of available players, had the league minimum eight on Sunday -- four on regular contracts and four signed under the league's hardship rules.

"We haven't done a thing since our last game," Toronto coach Nick Nurse said before the game.

Kevin Love and Darius Garland scored 22 points each for the Cavs, who tied a club record with 46 points in the third quarter.

Lauri Markkanen added 20 points for Cleveland, who drained 22 three-pointers and led by as many as 47 points in the fourth quarter on the way to their fifth straight home win. Japan's Yuta Watanabe posted career highs of 26 points and 13 rebounds for the Raptors, whose Covid-19 absentees included top scorer Fred VanVleet and Pascal Siakam.

It was another lopsided affair in Washington, where Philadelphia's Joel Embiid scored 36 points and grabbed 13 rebounds in the 76ers' 117-96 victory over the Wizards, who were without top scorer Bradley Beal because of Covid.

The Memphis Grizzlies, who lost Dillon Brooks and two other players to Covid concerns on Sunday morning, shook off a slow start against the Kings in Sacramento to triumph 127-102.

Desmond Bane led Memphis with 28 points. Jaren Jackson Jr. added 21 and Ja Morant chipped in 18 for Memphis, who used a 40-point third quarter to take control of the contest.

Tyrese Haliburton scored 18 points for the Kings, while De'Aaron Fox added 12 in his return from Covid protocols.

## Rublev's Aussie Open Prep Disrupted by Positive Test For Covid

PARIS (Dispatches) - Russian tennis star Andrey Rublev became the latest player to have played in an Abu Dhabi exhibition tournament earlier this month to test positive for Covid-19 just weeks away from the Australian Open.

The 24-year-old world number five tweeted he was self-isolating which places in doubt his competing in the ATP Cup (Jan 1-9) in Australia.

The Australian Open -- where Rublev reached the quarter-finals this year -- runs from January 17 to 30 in Melbourne.

"I am currently in Barcelona and unfortunately I have tested positive for Covid-19," said Rublev on Twitter.

"I have minimal symptoms. I am isolating and respecting all the protocols under the supervision of the doctors.

"As you know I am completely vaccinated and I was preparing for the ATP Cup and Australian Open.

"Now I have to recover and I will go to Melbourne only when I am certain it is safe for everyone.

"I am very upset and concerned about what is happening. Please, take care of yourself and of the people around you.

## Burrow's Record Day Carries Bengals Past Ravens

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The showdown for the AFC North lead turned into a showcase for Joe Burrow as the Cincinnati Bengals hammered the visiting Baltimore Ravens 41-21.

Burrow had his best game as a pro, as he completed 37 of 46 passes for a career-high and franchise-record 525 passing yards and four touchdowns.

Tee Higgins had career highs with 12 catches for 194 yards and two touchdowns. Fellow wideout Ja'Marr Chase added 125 yards receiving, and Joe Mixon added 135 scrimmage yards and two scores for the Bengals, who scored on each of their first seven possessions.

The win gave Cincinnati (9-6) sole possession of first place in the AFC North with two games to play. The Bengals swept the Ravens in both meetings this season for the first time since 2015, and did so with a combined score of 82-38.

Baltimore (8-7), which had a combined 33 players on the injured reserve and reserve/Covid lists Friday, dropped its fourth in a row. Journeyman quarterback Josh Johnson, making his first start since 2018, played well for the Ravens, who were without starting quarterback Lamar Jackson (ankle) and backup Tyler Huntley (COVID list).

### Rams 30, Vikings 23

Sony Michel ran for 131 yards and a touchdown, while Brandon Powell returned a punt for a score as Los Angeles clinched a playoff berth with the victory over Minnesota in Minneapolis.

Los Angeles (11-4) overcame three interceptions by Matthew Stafford, who was 21-of-37 passing for 197 yards. Stafford did connect with Odell Beckham Jr. for the wide receiver's fourth touchdown in the last five games, while the Rams' Cooper Kupp continued his productive season with 10 catches for 109 yards.

Kirk Cousins had 315 yards on 27-of-38 passing with a touchdown and an interception for Minnesota (7-8), which had won four of its previous six games. Justin Jefferson had eight receptions for 116 yards.

# Shiffrin Tests Positive for Covid-19



she will hope to add to the slalom gold she won in 2014 and the giant slalom title in 2018. "Unfortunately I had a positive COVID test. I'm following protocol and isolating, & I will miss Lienz," she tweeted.

PARIS (Dispatches) - American double Olympic alpine ski gold medalist Mikaela Shiffrin has tested positive for Covid-19, she announced on social media on Monday.

The 26-year-old three-time overall World Cup champion will miss the meeting at this week.

Her positive test comes just over a month from the Winter Olympics in Beijing, where she will hope to add to the slalom gold she won in 2014 and the giant slalom title in 2018.

## Klopp Slams Festive Fixture Pile-Up

LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp and Leicester manager Brendan Rodgers joined forces to slam the festive fixture schedule ahead of their clubs' Premier League clash.

Klopp believes teams should not be made to play on both December 26 and December 28.

Liverpool were spared the burden of having to play twice in three days when Leeds' visit to Anfield on Boxing Day was called off following a Covid-19 outbreak and injuries within Marcelo Bielsa's side.

The Reds head to Leicester with Fabinho, Virgil van Dijk, Thiago Alcantara and Curtis Jones all available again after their positive coronavirus tests.

But Klopp, who has repeatedly spoken out against the Christmas programme, insisted the Leeds and Leicester games being originally slated for December 26 and 28 was unacceptable.

"The situation should not be like this and we can discuss this every year," he told reporters on Monday.

"It's tradition and we want to play on Boxing Day, we could have played on Boxing Day and that would have been no problem at all.

"But playing on the 26th and the 28th is just not right, I just say that because it's true and I think we can find solutions for that.

"It's not that difficult to play football in a slightly different way. The 26th and the 29th, where's the problem?"



## Martial Keen To Leave Man United But No Offers Yet

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Anthony Martial has asked to leave Manchester United but there have been no offers for the French forward and the club may need to hold onto him if the squad is hit by injuries or more Covid-19 issues, interim manager Ralf Rangnick said.

The 26-year-old has started only two league games this season and his representative said this month he wanted to secure a move away in January to get more game time.

"We spoke on Wednesday, we spoke at length," Rangnick told British media. "He explained to me he's been at United for seven years and he feels it's the right time for a change, to go somewhere else.

"In a way this is understandable, I could follow his thoughts but on the other hand, it's also important to see the situation of the club. We have Covid times, we have three competitions in which we still have high ambitions.

"I told him as long as there's no club showing interest in him, and it shouldn't only be in the interest of the player it should also be in the interest of the club. So far... there's been no offer ... and as long as this is the case he'll stay."

Rangnick also said French midfielder Paul Pogba would require another two weeks to regain fitness following his return from Dubai, where he was nursing a thigh injury.

