

Health Ministry Announced on Saturday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic In Iran Increased to 131,639 With 33 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

According to the Head of the Agricultural Commission of Majlis, An Iranian Delegation Has Traveled To Russia to Resolve the Issues That Had a Hand in the Rejection of Iranian Agricultural Products

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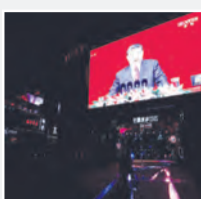


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No UNSC Resolution Bans Iran Satellite Launching

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman says claiming that the recent launch of a satellite carrier by Tehran was in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 is a pointless fallacy.

Referring to the launching of Simorgh satellite carrier, Saeed Khatibzadeh said no UN resolutions ban the Islamic Republic from having a space research program and from doing related tests including the launch of satellite boosters.

He added that the Iranian people have an inalienable right to scientific and research advancements, particularly in the field of aerospace.

Khatibzadeh referred to statements by the U.S. and some European governments regarding the matter, saying such meddling remarks will not weaken Iran's will to progress.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman added that the Islamic Republic of Iran is entitled to use peaceful technologies for scientific and research purposes in line with international law and, in this way, it will not wait for the governments which seek to impose their views on others.

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Q2 Non-Oil GDP Growth Stands at 3.3%

TEHRAN (MNA)- Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) excluding oil grew 3.3 percent in the second quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (June 22 - September 22, 2021) compared to the same period last year, according to the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI).

The figure including oil increased 4.2 percent, IRNA reported. The non-oil GDP reached 16.23 quadrillion rials (about \$54.6 billion) in the mentioned period.

The SCI put the average inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on September 22, 2021, at 45.8 percent, while the unemployment rate was 9.5 percent.

Back in October 2021, International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its latest World Economic Outlook report titled "Recovery During a Pandemic", had predicted 2.5-percent real GDP growth for Iran in 2021, with no change from the fund's previous report.

The entity had modified its forecasts of the global economic growth from six percent in its previous report to 5.9 percent; the fund expects the global economy to shrink even more in 2022 to settle at 4.9 percent in 2022.

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Martyr Soleimani Represents "Secret of Victory"



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei says Iran's legendary anti-terror commander Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani represents the "secret of endurance and victory", adding his danger to the enemies in his martyrdom is greater than in his life.

"Today, Soleimani is a symbol of hope, self-confidence, courage and the secret of endurance and victory in our region, and as some have rightly said, Martyr Soleimani is more dangerous to his enemies than Commander Soleimani," the Leader said during a meeting in Tehran on Saturday.

His remarks came as Iran began marking the second anniversary of the US assassination of the top general, with the Leader meeting Gen. Soleimani's family in Tehran and tens of thousands taking part in ceremonies to pay tribute to the highly charismatic commander.

"The enemies thought that with the martyrdom of Soleimani, Abu Mahdi and his other companions, the work would be over, but today, thanks to that dear blood wrongly spilled, the United States has fled Afghanistan," Ayatollah Khamenei said, referring to the general's Iraqi trenchmate Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

In Iraq, the Leader said, the Americans "were forced to feign pullout and declare advisory and non-combat role, but our Iraqi brothers must follow this issue with vigilance".

"In Yemen, the resistance front is advancing; in Syria, the enemy is paralyzed without hope for the future, and in general, the resistance and anti-colonial current in the region is more prosperous, buoyant and hopeful than two years ago."

Ayatollah Khamenei called Gen. Soleimani an "enduring and everlasting reality", saying his assassins, like former US president Donald Trump and others like him, will be "among the forgotten of history and will be lost in the dustbin of history - of course, after repaying their crime in this world".

After the terrorist act, Iran pummeled two US military bases in Iraq with a volley of precision missiles, with the Leader calling it "the first slap".

The Leader on Saturday touched on the participation of tens of millions of people in Iraq, Iran and other countries in the funeral and other processions held for Gen. Soleimani after his assassination.

"This fact shows that Haj Qassem was and is the most national figure, while the growing influence of his memory and name in the Islamic world proves that the beloved Soleimani was and is the most popular figure in the Islamic world," he said.

Gen. Soleimani, the Leader said, was "the manifestation of tireless and stunning endeavor" and his sincerity in working for God was the source of the abundant effects of his unmatched efforts.

"The dear commander of the Iranian nation endured the suffering of the struggle for the ideals with all his being and was carefully faithful to his duties towards the Iranian nation and the Islamic community throughout his life," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

"The heroic commander of the Iranian nation," he added, "had an admirable level of courage and at the same time rationality in all his endless works and activities."

"With accurate knowledge of the enemy and its possibilities, he would enter the field of combat with strength and tact without the slightest fear and fulfill amazing tasks," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

"He fled from being seen and was not a man of pretense and bluff, and that funeral of tens of millions and the spread of his name and memory in the world was the first reward and divine recompense for his sincerity in the world," the Leader added.

Costly Saudi Weapons Prove No Match for Yemeni Missiles, Drones

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Billions of dollars spent by Saudi Arabia on cutting edge Western military hardware mainly designed to deter high altitude attacks have proved no match for ballistic missiles and combat unmanned aerial vehicles that Yemeni armed forces have domestically developed and manufactured, a report says.

The report on Lebanon's Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network said Saudi Arabia and its allies launched a devastating military campaign against Yemen on March 26, 2015, spuriously claiming they would emerge victorious within months.

But more than six years after the onset of the war, Yemen has become a quagmire for Riyadh, and the kingdom has suffered enormous military and economic losses, which are estimated to stand at billions of dollars.

Despite massive efforts by Saudi media outlets to cover up the extent of damage caused to the country as a result of the military aggression against Yemen, the spokesman for Yemeni Armed Forces Brigadier General Yahya Saree once stated in a news conference that more than 10,400 Saudi soldiers have been killed and wounded in action.

Saree noted that 400 Saudi troops were killed and wounded throughout last year.

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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Iran Progress Has No Boundary

Since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the country has made amazing progresses in several fronts and now the country is entering among the top ten countries in the scientific, military and even space-related sciences.

On Thursday another news shocked the enemies and it signaled another victory for Iranian scientists which enraged the U.S. and its allies.

On Thursday, a spokesman for Iran's Defense Ministry announced that the country's domestically-built satellite carrier rocket, Simorgh (Phoenix), launched three research devices in a space research mission that scored yet another achievement for the Islamic Republic's civilian space program.

"We will speed up work so that we can become one of the six countries that can launch satellites into the GEO (geostationary) orbit," Ahmad Hosseini said.

Immediately after this amazing successful achievement, signs of anger and frustration from the enemies of the Islamic Revolution resurfaced and the United States, Germany and France voiced concerns over Iran's launch of research devices into space, which marked another major milestone and scientific achievement for the Islamic Republic in the midst of the "toughest ever" U.S. sanctions against the country.

"The United States remains concerned with Iran's development of space launch vehicles," a U.S. State Department spokesperson said on Thursday after Iran successfully launched a rocket carrying three research devices into space.

The spokesperson claimed that Iran's space launch vehicles pose a "significant proliferation concern" and that they "incorporate technologies that are virtually identical to, and interchangeable with, those used in ballistic missiles, including longer-range systems."

Nevertheless, the U.S. spokesperson claimed that Tehran's space launches violate UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

Resolution 2231 was adopted on July 20, 2015, endorsing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear program. The U.S. exited the deal on May 8, 2018 to impose sanctions against the Islamic Republic without any legal justification.

According to the resolution, "Iran is called upon not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology."

Iran contends that it has never negotiated over its missile program and that nothing in Resolution 2231 prohibits the country from its defensive missile activities, citing the non-mandatory terminology used in it.

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Second ITI Freight Train Begins Journey From Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - Ten days after the resumption of Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul freight train called ITI railway project, the second cargo with 550 tons of goods begins its journey from Pakistan.

Local media on Friday reported that the train started its journey from Azakel Dry Port in northwestern Pakistan and will reach Istanbul within 12 to 15 days, as compared to the 45 days long journey by sea route.

The Special Assistant to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Abdul Karim Khan, Member National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance Nawabzada Salahuddin, and notable traders, the higher authorities of Pakistan Railways attended the inaugural ceremony.

The second cargo train will take over 550 tons of goods from Azakel Dry Port to Istanbul via Tehran.

Special Assistant to KP CM on Industries & Commerce, Abdul Karim Khan said the resumption of the ITI train and the development of rail transport in the region will make it easier for the province's traders to access international markets. He has said that the provincial government is taking serious steps for promotion of trade and industries.

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IRGC Forces Annihilate Three Bandits

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says it has killed three elements behind the martyrdom of two Iranian troops during clashes in the southeast Sistan and Baluchestan province.

In a statement issued on Friday, the Quds Base of the IRGC's Ground Force identified one of the slain elements as Mehrab Shah-Bakhsh, saying he and his two accomplices were actively involved in subversive acts in the country's southeast.

"Following the martyrdom of two fighters of the Quds Base - Mehran Shourizadeh and Mohsen Kaykhaa'I - by armed bandits and mercenaries of the global arrogance, IRGC forces killed the perpetrators of the crime during a precise operation," read the statement.

Decent Global System Needs Rationality, Justice, Spirituality

TEHRAN (PressTV)- President Ebrahim Raisi says security and destiny of all human beings are intertwined with each other, stressing that a decent international system is in dire need of rationality, justice and spirituality.

"Global developments, especially the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, have shown that security and destiny of human beings are interdependent," Raisi said in separate congratulatory messages to world Christian leaders on the occasion of the New Year.

"Cooperation among countries in this crisis, particularly in the field of [COVID-19] vaccination, in the face of some countries' move to withhold sending essential items in the field of health and imposing sanctions on nations, clearly showed that a decent international system is in dire need of rationality, justice and spirituality."

He expressed hope that all global problems would be settled and nations' resistance to achieve their rights would bear fruit in the New Year by resorting to the moral virtues of the Abrahamic religions and in light of joint efforts by countries.

The Iranian president once again extended his sincere congratulations over the birth anniversary of Jesus Christ, adding that the Prophet is a manifestation of resistance against the oppressors and inspiration for freedom-seeking efforts in the struggle against the arrogant powers.



The Iranian president last week penned a letter congratulating Pope Francis on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Jesus Christ and the Gregorian New Year. In his message, Raisi expressed "cordial congratulations" to the head of the Roman Catholic Church and all the Christians across the world on the jubilant birth anniversary of Jesus Christ.

He said Jesus Christ's birth is the "manifestation of God's will and power" and added that the spiritual status of Saint Mary, the Prophet's mother, shows the lofty position of women in divine religions.

Nine Iranians Missing In Turkey to Return Home

TEHRAN (IP) - Foreign Ministry spokesman announced that nine Iranians who had traveled to Turkey to migrate would return to the country on Saturday.

Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Saturday: "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Iranian ambassadors to Turkey and Syria, and the Turkish and Syrian embassies in Iran cooperated to help the return of these people."

In September, there were reports that nine Iranians had been detained by Turkish police and handed over to militia groups in northern Syria.

The nine were in Turkey seeking asylum. After being detained by the Turkish government, they had introduced themselves as "Syrian Kurds" and were handed over to militia groups in Syria by the Turkish government.

Output shut at Platform of S. Pars Due to Fire

TEHRAN - Gas production was shut down at Platform 16 in Iran's South Pars field in the Gulf after a fire broke out nearby when lightning ignited leaking gas, the operating company said on Saturday.

"The gas emitted at the water level (from a leaking undersea pipeline) was ignited by lightning 15 km (9 miles) from the platform," Pars Oil and Gas Company said in a statement on its website.

The fire was contained after production was shut down at the platform and planning for repair work has begun, it said.

Situation Back to Normal at Iran-Turkey Border Crossing

TEHRAN (IFP) - The spokesman for Iran's Customs Organization says the situation has returned to normal at the Bazargan crossing on Iran's border with Turkey.

Seyed Ruhollah Latifi said long queues had been formed at the crossing in the last days of Gregorian year.

He added that the long queues were cleared thanks to diligent efforts by Iranian authorities at the border crossing.

He added that Last night, with the arrival of 650 trucks at the Bazargan customs, the number of trucks queuing there in the last 72 hours reached 2,050, soon things returned to normal.

Latifi also said cooperation of all border organizations, holding several border meetings with Turkish customs officials, round-the-clock measures, full support from Iran's Foreign Ministry and other regulatory bodies, rapid evacuation of parking lots and internal transit of shipments at the order of the Director General of Customs all helped things return to normal at this border crossing.

Iranian Laboratory Network Cooperating With 7 Countries

TEHRAN (MNA) - The international laboratory network of Iran is cooperating with 7 countries and 21 laboratories across the world, according to the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology.

The international laboratory network has been established with the aim of presenting laboratory services to the university and industrial researchers around the world.

Improving the quality and quantity of high-tech laboratory services by standardization of laboratory activities; improving the knowledge of laboratory technicians by the organization of training courses and experience-sharing; and facilitating access of industrial and academic researchers to laboratory services are the actives of the network.

The international laboratory network presents laboratory services to the university and industrial researchers around the world. The laboratory maintains a variety of international collaborations and welcomes all forms of international collaboration in laboratory services, inter-laboratory comparisons, training, standardization, renovation, and other projects of mutual interest.

It has introduced national laboratory capabilities to other countries by displaying 412 pieces of laboratory equipment.

Turkey, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mozambique are the countries collaborating with Iran in the network.

In January 2021, Sourena Sattari, the vice president for science and technology, said the country was planning to boost 'technology diplomacy' through expanding innovation and technology centers in export target countries.

Knowledge-based companies are seriously collaborating with the ministry of foreign affairs to expand target markets, IRNA quoted Sattari as saying.

Currently, some 6,000 knowledge-based companies are active in the country, manufacturing diverse products to meet the needs of the domestic market while saving large amounts of foreign currency.

Iranian Community in Malaysia Helps Flood Victims



TEHRAN (MNA) - In solidarity with the Malaysian flood victims, the Iranian community in Malaysia have come together to contribute relief supplies to help alleviate their burden.

As Malaysia was hit by floods recently, the local Iranian community stepped forward with heartfelt contributions for flood victims in the Klang Valley and the east coast of the peninsula.

Iranian Ambassador Ali Asghar Mohammadi engaged the Malaysian Consultative Council of Islamic Organisation (Mapim) to disburse essential items to the victims.

Mohammadi handed over a one-tonne load of items to Mapim president Mohd Azmi Abdul Hamid at a simple ceremony at the Iranian embassy in Lorong U-Thant Satu, Taman U-Thant.

"Our people very much never forget how Malaysians rallied to assist us during our trying times during the 2003 earthquake in Bam," he said.

While extending his condolences to the flood victims, Mohammadi said it was times like these that unity and solidarity among Muslims mean a lot.

"Our people are passionate and sincere in helping out Malaysians in whatever way possible," he said.

Martyr Soleimani, Influential Figure In Military, Cultural, Political Arenas

GORGAN (IP) - The vice president and head of Iran's Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs said that the effects of Martyr Soleimani's actions in various fields, including military, cultural and political, were profound.

Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh-Hashemi said: "General Qasem Soleimani, was not just a military general, and his character was praiseworthy and influential in all matters."

Referring to Martyr Soleimani's admirable actions in essential events and helping people in different parts of Iran, Ghazizadeh-Hashemi said that Martyr Soleimani in Iraq could also defeat the United States.

He made the remarks on the second martyrdom anniversary of General Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) deputy head Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

The top anti-terror commanders were assassinated along with their companions in a US drone strike authorized by former President Donald Trump near Baghdad International Airport on January 3, 2020.

Decisions Made to Solve Problems

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - During his visit to Qom province, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi met with Grand Ayatollah Seyed Mousa Shobeyri Zanjani on Friday evening.

In this meeting, while presenting a report on the actions and plans of the 13th government, the President referred to the provincial trip to Qom and added, "The basic principle of the government was that along with the national work, a visit to the provinces should also be on the agenda".

Presenting a report on the meetings of the two-day trip to the province, Raisi stated, "Short-term and medium-term decisions were made to solve some problems in Qom".

Emphasizing that the situation of basic goods is in good condition, Ayatollah Raisi said, "At the beginning of the government, we had shortcomings in meeting the basic needs of the people, but with measures, this problem was solved".

Referring to the existence of inflation in the society, the President noted, "We have not taken a series of wrong actions of the previous ones against the inflation, which has led to the downward trend of the inflation index in the country".

Referring to the two agendas of the government in neutralizing and lifting sanctions, Raisi said, "A headquarters headed by the First Vice-President has been established to neutralize sanctions in the government and the diplomatic apparatus is working to lift the sanctions".

Grand Ayatollah Shobeyri Zanjani also expressed his hope for solving the problems of the people in this meeting, "Whoever does his duty, God will help him".

He stated, "May God help you to solve the problems".

It Is a Mistake to Trust U.S.

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - A ranking diplomat at the Iranian Foreign Ministry warned that nobody, even the Taliban, should make the dire mistake of trusting the United States.

In a post on his Twitter account on Friday, director general of the South Asia department at Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs hit back at the US' former special representative for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, for his recent comments that former Afghan president Mohammad Ashraf Ghani should have asked the U.S. for help.

The Iranian diplomat, Seyed Rasoul Mousavi, said what Khalilzad was doing in Afghanistan had nothing to do with the peace process, but was part of efforts for a regime change.

He said Ashraf Ghani realized the destructive role of the US when it was too late. "With his escape (from Afghanistan), Ghani ruined Khalilzad's scenario, knowingly or unknowingly."

Mousavi said the real cause of any corruption attributed to Ghani was the US.

"It is absolute mistake to trust the US, even the Taliban trusting the US," the Iranian diplomat warned.

Afghanistan's former president said on Thursday that he had no choice but to abruptly leave Kabul as the Taliban closed in and denied an agreement was in the works for a peaceful takeover, disputing the accounts of former U.S. officials.

Int'l Bodies Need to Appreciate Iran's Police Sacrifices

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The secretary of the Iranian Judiciary's Human Rights Council criticized the indifference of the international assemblies to the martyrdom of Iranian police forces in the fight against drug trafficking and terrorist groups.

In a letter to Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kazem Gharibabadi, the secretary of Iranian Judiciary's Human Rights Council blasted the silence of the International bodies towards the martyrdom of Iranian police forces in the fight against smugglers and terrorist groups.

Gharibabadi stressed that other countries and relevant international organizations need to condemn the unilateral and illegal sanctions against Tehran, which prevent the Iranian Law Enforcement's access to necessary equipment in the fight against armed drug traffickers and terrorist groups.

The Iranian judicial official further reminded Bachelet of the responsibility of other states and international organizations with regard to maintaining peace, stability and security of the people in the world.

Baku Friendly Relations With Tehran Further Developed

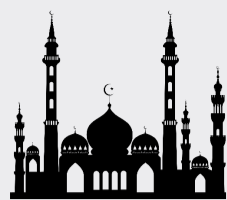
TEHRAN (MNA) - In a speech at the beginning of 2022, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said that Baku's relations with neighboring countries, including Iran, have been successfully developed.

"Friendly and partnership relations have been further developed during regular contacts and exchanges of views with other neighbors, Iran and Georgia. A platform for multilateral cooperation is already being formed in the region, and, of course,

this is in our interests," said Aliyev.

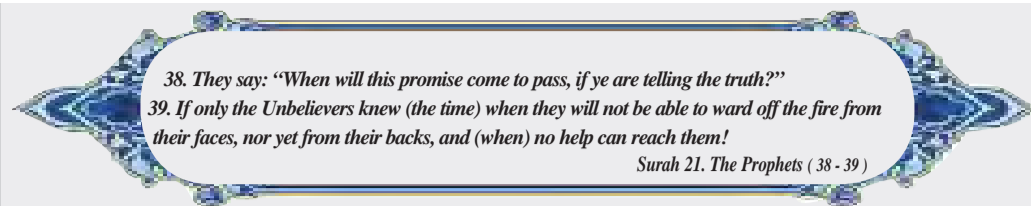
The remarks of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the relations between Baku and Tehran were made while he hosted the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Baku 10 days ago.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has said that during his trip to Azerbaijan, the two nations charted a roadmap to further enhance ties.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:08
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:22
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:44
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:14



China's Consulate Has Nothing to Do With Any Certain Trade

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran's former ambassador to China says Beijing's decision to open its consulate in Bandar Abbas has nothing to do with any certain trade between the two countries and it is aimed at giving consular services to Chinese nationals in Iran who are mostly living in southeastern Iran.

Speaking to ILNA, Mohammad Hossein Malaek said that according to the Vienna Convention which is on the diplomatic ties, countries are entitled to have equivalent offices in other countries, it means if one country opens its embassy in another country, the other side can have its own embassy or consulate. He noted that the number of Iran's consulates in China is three and China can have also three consulates in Iran according to the Vienna Convention.

He went on to say that since the ties between the two countries have grown and Iran has defined many projects for the Chinese and they are in Iran, the number of Chinese national in Iran is around 6,000 and in case of facing problems they may need consular services and probably China's embassy in Tehran has not been enough for serving them, they have asked for the launch of a consulate in Bandar Abbas.

Malaek added that Bandar Abbas is the most important hub for marine traverses and most of Iran or China-bound vessels harbor in Bandar Abbas and therefore the consulate has been decided to be set up in this port city. He reiterated that the Chinese have predicted they can have bigger share in developing Makran and for this reason several Chinese companies are to be deployed there, and they are also active in



Chahbahar and for this reason Bandar Abbas has been chosen for the consulate.

Meanwhile Head of Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce Majid Reza Hariri said that the consulate does not go through commercial issues and it is focused on the consular affairs, adding that Iran has three consulates in Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Hong Kong while China has only embassy in Iran and therefore it is natural for the country to set up consulate in any city of Iran based on the mutual agreement.

He said Iran has set up its consulates in China for over 20 years and it is because of the number of Iranians in China and now China has decide to set up consulate due to the rise in the number of its nationals in Iran which are busy in southeastern cities like Kerman, Sirjan, Rafsanjan and Bandar Abbas.

Hariri went on to say that Iran and China reached agreements during China President's visit to Tehran in 2016 and one of the agreements was to launch industrial parks in Iran and especially joint industrial parks in Jask and southeastern areas of Iran like Makran.

He said since Iran and China are to boost their cooperation based on their 25-year cooperation document, the Chinese government has decided to launch the consulate for serving their nationals which will increase because of the future projects which will be carried out in southeastern Iran.

MSC Wins Golden Statue in National Festival of Health Oriented Industry



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – Manager of Safety, Health and Environment of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) says MSC with scoring the highest points among 76 industrial companies won the golden statue in the national festival of health oriented industry.

Hossein Modarresi Far said that the fourth national festival of health oriented industry with an approach on improving health of service and production industries and introducing the responsible organization in the field of national health was held last week with presence of some senior statesmen and health officials at the conference center of Industrial Management Institute.

He added that the goal behind holding this festival was to monitor, to rank, to give credit and to encourage the committed organizations regarding the health issue.

Modarresi Far added that after identifying the top units in the country and passing some courses and monitoring and ranking, 76 committed organizations entered the second phase of the festival and in the second over 50 organizations began their activities and finally 32 organization reached the final stage to compete for the awards.

MSC scored highest points among 76 industrial companies, and won the top golden statue award.

Economy Minister Calls On People to Be Patient

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Economy minister said that the government has no immediate solution for the hardship families face, urging people to be patient.

"We have no immediate solution for the problems of families except compensation through adjusting the amount of cash handouts but there are efforts underway the results of which can be felt in a few months' time," Ehsan Khandouzi said at a meeting with economy professors.

The cash handouts referred to amount to \$3-4 dollars a month, for each person.

Khandouzi referred to a decision by President Ebrahim Raisi's government to eliminate a scheme that since 2018 provides cheap dollars to importers of food, medicine and animal feed as a way to keep prices low. In fact, providing dollars at a rate seven times lower than the market is a subsidy meant to help ordinary people against a high, double-digit inflation rate since 2018 when the United States imposed sanctions on Iran.

Concerns have recently been growing over the consequences of the plan which experts say will hit the lower-income families very hard as the "reform" is expected to affect the prices of staples such as bread, rice, dairy products, and protein foods several fold.

Car Manufacturing Rises 2.3%

TEHRAN (MNA) - Car manufacturing in Iran has risen 2.3 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 data released by Codal website show that Iranian carmakers manufactured 669,320 vehicles in the nine-month period of this year, while the figure was 653,761 in the same time span of the previous year.

During the said nine months, Iran Khodro Company (IKCO) manufactured 325,557 vehicles, which was six percent less than the output in the same time span of the previous year.

The IKCO's monthly production stood at 42,894 in the ninth month.

SAIPA manufactured 253,584 vehicles in the mentioned period. Production by this automaker rose 8.14 percent in comparison to the previous year's same time span.

SAIPA manufactured 31,131 vehicles in the ninth month.

HOSCO to Hold an Event on Data Science

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Hormozgan Steel Company in collaboration with Hormozgan Province Science and Technology Park will hold an event on data science in Bandar Abbas on January 18-19.

The company said the event will be held on the course of digital development and exploiting the capacities of data science and in collaboration with Hormozgan Province Science and Technology Park.

It also said that the event is aimed at presenting the roadmap of HOSCO on course of digital development and capacities of the company in using the data as well as making the participants acquainted with the latest scientific and practical achievements in the field of the data science and creating a climate for cooperation between industries, companies and executors of the data science services and universities in the provincial and national levels.

The event will include seminar, workshop and competition and it will be held both online and in-presence and enthusiasts can improve their knowledge in this field of science.



KSC Replaces Crane Magnet for the First Time

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – The project of replacing the permanent crane magnet system with a non-permanent system was carried out for the first time on the 24-ton roof-crane at Khorasan Steel Complex Company (KSC) by experts and capable staff of the company.



Manager of Technical Support and Energy and Fluid of the company said that the efforts of the staff and experts of the company finally bore fruit and for the first time they could replace the permanent crane magnet system with a non-permanent system.

Reza Ghorbani then highlighted the significance of this achievement and said it will accelerate the pace of loading and unloading. He added that due to cruel sanctions, the company had problem in providing crane magnets from other countries and it took too long and repair of the permanent crane magnet system cost high, and for this reason it was decided to replace the permanent crane magnet with the non-permanent which happened in the shortest time.

Then head of crane maintenance unit of the company Mr. Mohammad Reza Ghasemi pointed to the difference of these two systems and hailed the achievement which will accelerate production and activities of the company.

Protecting, Improving Quality of Drinking Water Is Main Task of ABFA Industry

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – The CEO of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company (ABFA of Isfahan) says the main task of water and wastewater (ABFA) industry is to protect and to improve the quality of drinking water in the country.

Speaking in the ceremony held for honoring the staff of the quality control units of the water testing laboratories of the company for getting the ISO/IEC 17025:2017 certificate this year, Mr. Hashem Amini said personnel of the monitoring center of water and wastewater quality should get advantage of the latest knowhow and modern equipment and technology, and the condition for precise supervision of the quality control process of water and wastewater as well as improving services to the public should be provided more than ever.

He added that in recent years, water testing laboratories of ABFA in Isfahan Province has improved the quality of its services in the province by using the best equipment and employing the specialized and efficient human resources.

Amini went on to say that quality control of ABFA's services continues sustainably and constantly, and drinking water after verification of the related authorities and with precise supervision is supplied to the public in the cities and villages and its health is verified in terms of quality. He went on to say that it is expected the staff of the laboratories to find easy and better access of the public to the services of the water and wastewater industry through conducting applied researches in order to satisfy its subscribers who are the first priority of the activities of this industry.

The central laboratories of Isfahan Province as well as the laboratories of towns of Samirom, Tiran and Kron, Najaf Abad and Shahreza succeeded in getting this important ISO certificate.



شناسه آگهی: ۱۲۴۹۱۷۱

First Announcement

TENDER NO.: 01-31-9150035

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

Items	Material Description	Quantity
19	PARTS FOR "AIR PACK " AIR COMPRESSOR TYPE HA-550-LT SERIAL NO.,T-995-00449-1 TO 00449/3	210 NO

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

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 2,555 EURO or 685,450,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

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

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P., NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI, IRAN

PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D., SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL

NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex,
Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran
Tel. No.: 061 34 12 3772 Fax No.: 061 34 45 74 37

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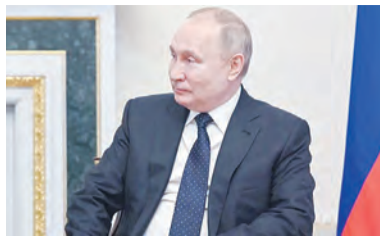
Russia Test-Fires New Hypersonic Tsirkon Missiles From Frigate, Submarine

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia test-fired around 10 new Tsirkon (Zircon) hypersonic cruise missiles from a frigate and two more from a submarine, Interfax news agency said on Friday citing northern fleet.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has lauded the weapon as part of a new generation of unrivalled arms systems.

Putin has called a missile test, conducted last week, "a big event in the country's life", adding that this was "a substantial step" in increasing Russia's defence capabilities.

Some Western experts have questioned how advanced Russia's new generation of weapons is, while recognising that the combination of speed, manoeuvrability and altitude of hypersonic missiles makes them difficult to track and intercept.



Egypt Releases Daughter of Exiled Islamist Preacher

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Egyptian authorities released the daughter of exiled Islamist preacher Yusuf al-Qaradawi after four and a half years of pre-trial detention, a judiciary source told AFP.

Ola al-Qaradawi, daughter of the Muslim Brotherhood spiritual leader, still faces charges including "joining an illegal organisation" and over alleged links to its funding.

She and her husband Hossam Khalaf, who remains in detention, were arrested on June 30, 2017.

Egypt branded the Muslim Brotherhood a "terrorist organisation" in 2013, months after late president Mohammed Morsi, who hailed from the Brotherhood, was ousted from power by the military.



Russia Calls on U.S. To Heed Demands



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia will move to "eliminate unacceptable threats" if the United States and NATO do not respond to the Kremlin's security demands, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has warned, following top-level talks between the rival powers.

Lavrov told Russia's state-run Ria Novosti news agency on Friday that the foreign ministry would not allow the proposals to be rolled up in "endless discussions" as tensions simmer between Moscow and Western powers over Ukraine, where fears of a possible Russian invasion have risen in recent months, increased by Moscow's deployment of tens of thousands of troops along the two countries shared border. Russian President Vladimir Putin and his US counterpart Joe Biden spoke by telephone for nearly an hour on Thursday, their second conversation this month, ahead of lower-level, face-to-face negotiations in Geneva in January between senior officials.

Among Russia's wish-list of requests, many of which are seen as non-starters in the West, is a demand that the US-headed NATO transatlantic security alliance promises to give up any military activity in Eastern Europe and Ukraine.

The Kremlin says NATO's expansion eastward and Kyiv's growing ties with the body have undermined security in the region. Moscow claims such developments threaten Russia, contravene assurances given to it as the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, and compares with the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis when the world came to the brink of nuclear war.

Lavrov said Moscow would take "all necessary measures to ensure a strategic balance" in the event its concerns were ignored.

During Thursday's discussions, which were requested by Russia, Biden and Putin exchanged warnings over Ukraine but shared hope that the January talks may ease tensions.

Biden said he needed to see Russia decrease its military build-up near Ukraine, while Putin warned the West against significant sanctions, saying such a move could break ties.

Russia denies it is planning to attack Ukraine and says it has the right to move troops on its soil.

Stricken Boat With Over 100 Rohingya Allowed to Dock in Indonesia

KRUENG GEUKUH (Dispatches) - More than 100 Rohingya refugees who had been adrift on a sinking boat off the western coast of Indonesia were allowed to disembark early on Friday, after authorities relented following international pressure to give them refuge.

In a video seen by Reuters, the group, consisting of mainly women and children, left the boat in heavy rain and boarded a bus, while authorities sprayed them with disinfectant.

The refugees had been packed into a wooden skiff, which appeared to have a makeshift sail.

Death Toll in Latest Day of Protests in Sudan Rises to Five

CAIRO (Dispatches) - The death toll from a police crackdown on the latest nationwide protests against military rule in Sudan rose to five on Friday, the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors said.

The group of medics, which is aligned with the protest movement, said the fifth person who had been killed was hit in the chest by a tear gas canister fired by security forces during the protests on Thursday.

The protests were the 11th round of major demonstrations in Sudan since an Oct. 25 coup that saw Abdallah Hamdok removed but then reinstated as prime minister.

The overall death toll since the security forces' crackdown began in October has now risen to 53, the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors said.

The demonstrators have demanded that the military play no role in government during a transition to free elections.

Security forces fired tear gas and stun grenades as protesters marched through Khartoum and the

neighboring cities of Omdurman and Bahri towards the presidential palace on Thursday, Reuters witnesses said.

Police had said in an earlier statement that four people had been killed in Omdurman, and 297 demonstrators and 49 police forces members were wounded nationwide during the protests, in which tens of thousands of people took part.

Al Hadath TV quoted an adviser to military leader Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan as saying the military would not allow anyone to pull the country into chaos and that continued protests were a "physical, psychological, and mental drain on the country" and "would not achieve a political solution".

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrote on Twitter that he was troubled by reports of lethal force and the United States "stands with the people of Sudan, as they demand freedom, peace, and justice".

The U.N. Special Representative to Sudan, Volker Perthes, said that he was "deeply disturbed" by the deaths.



Chinese Urged to Look to the Future and Stay Focused

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed the importance of maintaining a "strategic focus" in his 2022 New Year address and of being mindful of "potential risks" in the Communist Party's long-term vision to turn China into a global power.

Xi in 2021 declared that China had achieved its aim of building a so-called "moderately prosperous" society, a milestone on its road to becoming a global leader in 2049, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

"We must always keep a long-term perspective, remain mindful of potential risks, maintain strategic focus and determination, and 'attain the broad and great while addressing the delicate and minute'," Xi said in a televised speech.

China, where the coronavirus was first identified in late 2019, has placed a focus on its achievements

past and present, including quickly bringing COVID-19 under control as its economy lost steam after rebounding from a pandemic slump and as relations with the United States plumbed new lows.

Xi said the complete unification of "the motherland" was an aspiration shared by people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, referring to the self-ruled island of Taiwan which it considers "sacred" territory.

"I sincerely hope that all the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation will join forces to create a brighter future for our nation," he said.

Earlier this week, a Beijing official warned that China would take "drastic measures" if fiercely democratic Taiwan makes moves towards formal independence.

Xi also stressed the importance of stability in the former British colony of Hong Kong and the former Portuguese-run enclave of Macau, which returned to China in 1997 and 1999 respectively.

Under the handover deal, Hong Kong was promised that its wide-ranging individual freedoms, including freedom of speech, would be protected.



Philippine Death Toll From Its Strongest Typhoon of Year Tops 400

MANILA (Dispatches) - The Philippine death toll from Typhoon Rai has crossed the 400 mark, the disaster agency said on Friday, as officials in some hard-hit provinces appealed for more supplies of food, water and shelter materials about two weeks after the storm struck.

Rai was the 15th and deadliest typhoon to hit the Southeast Asian nation this year.

The Category 5 typhoon, which flooded towns and caused widespread destruction and nearly 400 deaths in the Philippines over the past week, was the deadliest tropical storm to develop near the country this year.

The Category 5 typhoon, which flooded towns and caused widespread destruction and nearly 400 deaths in the Philippines over the past week, was the deadliest tropical storm to develop near the country this year.

Reported deaths had reached 405, mostly due to drowning, fallen trees and landslides, Ricardo Jalad, chief of the national disaster agency, told a news conference. He said 82 were missing and 1,147 injured.

More than 530,000 houses were damaged, a third of which were totally wrecked, while damage to infrastructure and agriculture was estimated at 23.4 billion pesos (\$459 million), Jalad said.

The typhoon affected nearly 4.5 million people, including about 500,000 sheltering in evacuation centers, government data showed. It made landfall as a category 5 typhoon on Dec. 16, and left a trail of destruction in the provinces of Bohol, Cebu, and Surigao del Norte, including the holiday island of Siargao, and the Dinagat Islands.

The Category 5 tropical storm, the strongest to hit the Philippines this year, has caused a trail of destruction in central and southern regions of the country, leading to the death of more than 200 people.

The Category 5 tropical storm, the strongest to hit the Philippines this year, has caused a trail of destruction in central and southern regions of the country, leading to the death of more than 200 people.

Hundreds of Homes Feared Lost In Colorado Wildfires

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches)

- Hundreds of homes are feared lost in fast-moving wildfires in the U.S. state of Colorado, officials said, as flames tear through areas desiccated by a historic drought.

At least 1,600 acres have burned in Boulder County, much of it suburban, with warnings that deaths and injuries were likely as the blaze engulfs hotels and shopping centers.

"We know that approximately 370 homes in the Sagamore subdivision... have been lost. There's a potential of 210 homes lost in Old Town Superior," Boulder County Sheriff Joe Pelle told a news conference.

"I'd like to emphasize that due to the magnitude and intensity of this fire and its presence in such a heavily populated area, we would not be surprised if there are injuries or fatalities." Thousands of people have been told to flee the fast-moving fire, which is thought to have begun when powerlines were toppled by gusting winds. The 20,000-strong town of Louisville, along with the 13,000 residents of Superior, have been told to get out, with the National Weather Service describing the situation as "life-threatening."

Wind gusts of over 100 miles (160 kilometres) an hour have been reported in some places, fanning the flames and complicating firefighting efforts.

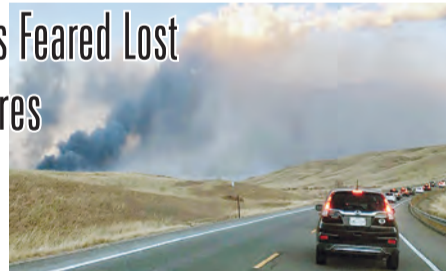
"Prayers for thousands of families evacuating from the fires in Superior and Boulder County," Colorado Governor Jared Polis tweeted.

"Fast winds are spreading flames quickly and all aircraft are grounded." Like much of the American West, Colorado is in the grip of a years-long drought that has left the area parched and vulnerable to wildfire.

Although fires are a natural part of the climate cycle, and help to clear dead brush and reduce disease in vegetation, their scale and intensity is increasing.

Scientists say a warming climate, chiefly caused by human activities like the unchecked burning of fossil fuels, is altering weather patterns.

This prolongs droughts in some areas and provokes unseasonably large storms in other places, phenomena that are expected to get worse as worldwide average temperatures continue to climb. Daniel Swain, a meteorologist at the University of California, tweeted that it was "hard to believe" these fires were taking hold in December, usually a quieter time for blazes.





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S, J, balcony
yard, & F.F

Parsian

Zaferanieh (\$3000) 400sq.m, 4bdrs, S/p, S, J, pkg, F.F
Gheitarieh (\$2200) 220sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, pkg, F.F
Sa`adat abad (\$1800) 180sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, pkg, F.F

Aghdasieh (\$2700) 220sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, pkg, F.F

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Gazprom Plans to Spend \$305m on Nord Stream 2 Pipeline in 2022

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's Gazprom plans to spend 22.8 billion roubles (\$305 million) on financing the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline in 2022, TASS news agency cited the gas giant as saying. Russia has said the Nord Stream 2 undersea pipeline would help to calm a surge in European gas prices and that it was ready to start exports now a second stretch of the pipeline has been filled.



Huawei Says Revenues Down 29% This Year

BEIJING (AFP) - Chinese telecom giant Huawei said on Friday its annual revenue had fallen by nearly a third from the previous year, as it continued to be weighed down by U.S. sanctions that have hit its smartphone sales.

Huawei has been caught in the crossfire of a US-China trade and technology rivalry after the administration of former president Donald Trump moved to cripple the company over concerns it could pose a cybersecurity and espionage threat.

The firm's revenue for this year fell by 29 percent year-on-year to 634 billion yuan (\$99.5 billion), said rotating chairman Guo Ping in an annual New Year message.

"In 2021, despite all the trials and tribulations, we worked hard to create tangible value for our customers and local communities," Guo said.

"We enhanced the quality and efficiency of our operations, and expect to round off the year with a total revenue of 634 billion yuan."

He added that the telecom carrier segment had "remained stable" and "overall performance was in line with our forecasts."

Huawei's revenue has fallen in 2021 due in part to the offloading of its budget phone brand Honor, which was sold late last year.

Huawei is not publicly listed, and the message did not give any other financial specifics.

Guo said the company was on a "bumpy, but rewarding" road, adding that 2022 will come with "its fair share of challenges."

Huawei's travails have forced it to quickly pivot into new business lines including enterprise computing, wearables and health tech, technology for intelligent vehicles, and software.

The United States has barred Huawei from acquiring crucial components such as microchips and forced it to create its own operating system by cutting it off from using Google's Android operating system.

This month, the company launched a new foldable phone and said 220 million Huawei devices were running its HarmonyOS system.

The group is the world's biggest supplier of telecoms network gear and was once a top-three smartphone producer along with Apple and Samsung. But it has fallen well down the smartphone ranks owing to U.S. pressure.

In October, the group said its January-September sales volume had fallen 32 percent.

But a major complication for the company was solved this year with the return to China of chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou, the daughter of Huawei founder Ren Zhengfei.

She spent nearly three years under house arrest in Canada on a US extradition warrant, which China said was motivated by politics.

Meng was released a month ago after US prosecutors announced an agreement under which fraud charges were to be suspended and eventually dropped.

OPEC+ Likely to Stick to Existing Policy

LONDON (Dispatches) - OPEC and its allies will probably stick to their existing policy of modest monthly increases in oil output at a meeting next week, four sources said, as demand concerns raised by the Omicron coronavirus variant ease and oil prices recover.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies, known as OPEC+, is set to decide on Jan. 4 whether to proceed with a 400,000 barrels per day output hike for February, the latest in a steady unwinding of record cuts made last year.

"At the moment, I have not heard of any moves to change course," said an OPEC+ source. A Russian oil source and two other OPEC+ sources also said no changes to the deal were expected next week.

At its last meeting on Dec. 2, OPEC+ stuck to the plan for a 400,000 bpd rise in January, despite fears that a U.S. release from crude reserves and Omicron would lead to an oil-price rout.

The benchmark oil price tumbled more than 10% on Nov. 26 towards \$72 a barrel when reports of the new variant first appeared, but has since recovered to almost \$80 and OPEC+ sources have said the December decision to go ahead with the supply boost was correct.

"Great outcome," a separate OPEC+ source said of the market's rally since the last meeting.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said on Wednesday OPEC+ has resisted calls from Washington to boost output further because it wants to provide the market with clear guidance and not deviate from policy.

Pakistan, China Resolve to Redouble Efforts to Tap Potential of Gwadar Port

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan and China have resolved to redouble efforts to tap full potential of the Gwadar port and free zone and to ensure that the local population fully benefits from the projects launched in various sectors, Dawn news reported.

Pakistani and Chinese officials held meetings of the two Joint Working Groups on Gwadar and Socio-Economic Development through video conferencing equipment, the Planning

Ministry in Islamabad said in a statement.

One of the meetings underlined the need for finalizing the Marketing and Investment Plan for Free Zone along with its implementation strategy. The meeting was informed that the plan would soon be submitted for consideration to the Cabinet Committee on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The sixth session of the Joint Working Group on Gwadar was co-chaired by Pakistan secretary for planning, development and special initiatives Abdul Aziz Uqaili and Ying Xiong, the director general of the National Development and Reforms Commission of China, the Dawn news report said.

The meeting reviewed the implementation of the CPEC projects in Gwadar and deliberated upon the future course of action with regard to development of the city, port and the free zone, said the Ministry statement.

Both the sides expressed satisfaction over steady progress made on various projects, including full operationalisation of the Gwadar port and its inclusion in the Afghan Transit Trade route; finalisation of the Smart Port City Master Plan; completion of the Pak-China Technical and Vocational Institute; substantial progress on Eastbay Expressway; commencement of work on New Gwadar International Airport and the Pakistan-China Friendship Hospital.

The meeting noted that the project called Gwadar Free Zone Phase-I had been successfully completed, while work on the bigger Phase-II, covering an area of 2,221 acres, had been started, the report added.

Representatives of several Chinese enterprises, including Zhejiang DRC, China Communication Construction Company, Zhejiang Seaport and Huazhang Technology, made presentations during the meeting on their planned investments in the Low Carbon Recycling Park, within the Gwadar Free Zone.

The Pakistani side assured the potential investors of full support and cooperation for their ventures.

Turkey to Maintain Historic Transformation In Economy in 2022

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey has started a historic transformation in the economy in 2021 based on growing the country by investment, employment, production and exports, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has said, vowing this trend will continue in 2022 with determination.

"We have started a historic transformation in the economy by launching a process of growth in our country on the basis of investment, employment, production, exporting and current account surplus. We determinedly maintain this economic transformation, for which we have laid the groundwork with our projects and services across Turkey over the past 19 years," Erdoğan said in his New Year message on Dec. 31.

Hoping that 2022 will be a more beautiful, more peaceful, more prosperous and a better year both for humanity and the Turkish nation, Erdoğan wished auspicious developments for the entire humanity.

Erdoğan recalled that just like 2020, 2021 was also overshadowed by the coronavirus pandemic and other troubles, such as disasters caused by climate change, tensions prompted by instabilities in various countries and bitter scenes brought about by perpetual migration waves. He also reminded that Turkey developed its own vaccine, Turkovac, in the fight against the pandemic.

"It became crystal clear in 2021 that the system of prosperity and security the developed countries established in the aftermath of the Second World War could no longer keep functioning in the face of the plight, misery, and the objection of the rest of the humanity," he said.

Against this global outlook, Turkey has positively distinguished itself with its successful performance in the face of security and health-related crises as well as political and social challenges, the president noted.

"No doubt new pains, troubles and costs have emerged in this process, too, as is the case with every historic transformation. However, we have already been prepared for such unexpected shocks because of the attacks the Turkish economy has long been coming under," he said.

Turkey has put an end to the exchange rate fluctuations that have been incompatible with Turkey's economic realities and growth, he stated, "Our goal is to make permanent the climate of stability and trust whereby our investors, manufacturers, businesses and citizens can see ahead and thus contribute the most to our economic thrust. We are determined to make sure that this climate of confidence and stability takes root despite all the malicious schemes hatched by some who have caused our citizens to lose significantly with the propaganda that the rise in exchange rates would not cease."

Turkey will also uninterruptedly continue its fight against exorbitant price schemes prompted by the unbalanced rise in exchange rates as well as by the rise in global commodity prices, President Erdoğan said, adding "We are determined to make sure that Turkey becomes one of the top 10 economies in the world and achieves its goals."

Indonesia Will Likely Ratify RCEP in Q1 2022



JAKARTA (Dispatches) - Indonesia, Southeast Asia's largest economy, will likely ratify its membership of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) early next year, its chief economic minister said on Friday.

The China-backed RCEP, the world's biggest trade bloc, is set to enter into force on Saturday, Jan. 1, 2022, after seven nations in Southeast Asia, as well as Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea ratified the pact earlier this year.

Details in the RCEP were agreed by leaders of 15 countries covering nearly a third of the global population and about 30% of its global gross domestic product (GDP) in November 2020.

Indonesia has been seeking parliamentary approval to ratify the agreement for months.

Chief economic minister Airlangga Hartarto said a parliamentary commission overseeing trade rules had approved the ratification and its endorsement will be brought to a wider parliamentary vote in the first quarter of 2022.

President Joko Widodo will sign off on the ratification after parliamentary approval, he added.

Indonesia will likely book a trade deficit with members of RCEP in the early period of its implementation, but by 2040, the pact could boost Jakarta's trade surplus to \$979.3 million, Airlangga said.

It will also increase the country's GDP growth by 0.07 percentage points and raise exports and imports by \$5 billion and \$4 billion respectively, he said, citing a government analysis.

Indonesian rubber, steel, chemical, food, wood and mineral product exports are expected to grow under the deal, the minister said.

Emirates Upbeat on Growth Despite Global Surge in Covid

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Aviation giant Emirates said yesterday it expects business to grow next year despite the surge in global coronavirus cases fuelled by the Omicron variant.

The Dubai-based carrier said in November it was already on the path to recovery as six-month losses dropped by more than half from a year earlier.

"Despite the recent rise of the Omicron variant and the slight slowdown it brought to our network, we are going into 2022 with optimism," said Emirates CEO Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum. "We've built up some great momentum this year and expect business growth to pick up speed in 2022," he said in a company statement.

"Aviation has always been resilient, and we will continue to work with our industry partners to build back better for our customers and communities."

Emirates President Tim Clark said in November that the carrier expects to return to profitability "in the next 18 months".

The carrier posted an April-September loss of US\$1.6 billion (RM6.67 billion), compared with losses of US\$3.4 billion during the same period in 2020. Emirates specialises in long-haul flights, with its fleet composed solely of large A380 and B777 aircraft, dozens of which it grounded amid a lack of passenger traffic.

According to the statement yesterday, its passenger network by December had reached 128 cities, adding all the carrier's 133 Boeing 777 aircraft and nearly 60 of its A380 fleet are in active service.

Earlier this month, Dubai international airport, one of the world's busiest travel hubs, announced it was fully operational for the first time since the pandemic erupted in March 2020.



According to Emirates, a peak in travel has begun ahead of the New Year, with nearly one million passengers expected to depart and arrive in Dubai between December 30 and January 10.

Dubai, which is heavily dependent on tourism, was one of the world's first destinations to welcome back visitors in July 2020.

The Covid spikes around the world have caused severe disruptions to travel over the end of year holidays, with thousands of flights cancelled worldwide.

The World Health Organization warned on Wednesday of a Covid "tsunami" that threatens to overwhelm healthcare systems. The United Arab Emirates, a seven-member federation which includes Dubai, has the world's highest vaccination rates.

U.S. Base in Syria Comes Under Mortar Fire

TEHRAN (MNA) - A military base housing US-led coalition forces in northeastern Syria came under mortar fire on Friday, an unidentified spokesperson with the US Central Command has detailed.

A statement released by the agency indicated that no service members were injured as a result of the incident but that rounds impacted civilian areas near the town of Al-Shaddadi. It was also

noted that no coalition area was damaged, Sputnik reported.

“All coalition personnel have been accounted for, and we continue to maintain all appropriate force protection measures,” the statement reads. “[The coalition] maintains the inherent right of self-defense and will respond to any attack at a time and place of our choosing.”



Germany to Close Nuclear Reactors Despite Energy Crisis

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany will shut down three nuclear power plants on Friday even as Europe faces one of its worst ever energy crises, following Angela Merkel’s timetable for phasing out atomic energy.

With energy prices already on the rise and tensions higher than ever between Europe and key gas supplier Russia, the closure of the plants in Brokdorf, Grohnde and Gundremmingen could well tighten the squeeze.

The move will halve remaining nuclear capacity in Germany and reduce energy output by around four gigawatts -- equivalent to the power produced by 1,000 wind turbines.

Protests over the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011 prompted former chancellor Merkel to set the wheels in motion for abandoning nuclear power just over 10 years ago.

Germany is planning to completely wind down atomic energy by the end of 2022, when it will shut its final three plants in Neckarwestheim, Essenbach and Emsland.

But with energy prices soaring across Europe, the timing of the plans coming to fruition could hardly be worse.

Europe’s reference gas price, Dutch TTF, hit 187.78 euros per megawatt hour in December -- 10 times higher than at the start of the year -- and electricity prices are also soaring.

The spike has been fuelled by geopolitical tensions with Russia, which supplies one third of Europe’s gas.

Western countries accuse Russia of limiting gas deliveries to put pressure on Europe amid tensions over the Ukraine conflict.

Moscow also wants to push through the controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline, set to ship still more Russian gas to Germany.

The end of nuclear power in Germany will likely push prices up even further, according to Sebastian Herold, a professor of energy policy at the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences.

“In the long term, the hope is that an increase in renewable energy will balance things out, but this will not be the case in the short term,” he told AFP.

Until Germany can really ramp up renewables, it will remain dependent on fossil fuels to plug the gap left by the nuclear exit.

“This will make Germany more dependent on natural gas overall, at least in the short term, and thus also a little more dependent on Russia,” Herold said.

The transition may also take longer than Germany would like, with progress on renewables slowed in recent years by opposition to energy infrastructure projects.

The proportion of energy generated by renewables is expected to fall in 2021 for the first time since 1997 -- to 42 percent, compared with 45.3 percent in 2020.

As well as driving up prices, the nuclear plant closures will also remove a key source of



low-carbon energy in a country that is already struggling to meet ambitious climate goals.

The new coalition government under Social Democrat Olaf Scholz has pledged to bring forward Germany’s planned coal exit to 2030 and wants Germany to generate 80 percent of its electricity from renewables by the same year.

But Robert Habeck, the co-leader of the Green party and head of a newly created super-ministry for the economy and climate, admitted this week that Germany is already on course to miss its climate targets for 2022 and probably also 2023.

Other EU countries, including France, are continuing to push nuclear energy and campaigning for it to be included on the EU’s list of sustainable energy sources eligible for investment.

Even in Germany, public opinion towards nuclear seems to be softening.

In a recent YouGov survey for the Welt am Sonntag newspaper, around 50 percent of Germans said they were in favour of reversing the planned nuclear shutdown due to the recent sharp rise in energy prices.

Monika Schnitzer, a member of the German Council of Economic Experts, told the Rheinische Post newspaper that it would make sense “economically and ecologically” to delay the shutdown.

But the government is sticking to Merkel’s plan, with Habeck this week defending the nuclear shutdown.

Any politician calling for the reintroduction of nuclear energy “would also have to say, I would like to have the nuclear waste in my constituency,” he said. “As soon as someone says that, I will revisit the issue.”

Sinovac COVID-19 Shot With Pfizer Booster Less Effective Against Omicron



LONDON (Dispatches) - Sinovac’s two-dose COVID-19 vaccine followed by a booster Pfizer-BioNTech shot showed a lower immune response against the Omicron variant compared with other strains, according to a study by researchers.

The study, which has not been peer-reviewed yet, was conducted by researchers from Yale University, the Dominican Republic’s Ministry of Health and other institutions.

The Sinovac (SVA.O) two-dose regimen along with the Pfizer (PFE.N) shot produced an antibody response similar to a two-dose mRNA vaccine, according to the study. Antibody levels against Omicron were 6.3-fold lower when compared with the ancestral variant and 2.7-fold lower when compared with Delta.

Akiko Iwasaki, one of the authors of the study, said on Twitter that CoronaVac recipients may need two additional booster doses to achieve protective levels needed against Omicron.

The two-dose Sinovac vaccine alone did not show any detectable neutralization against Omicron, according to the study that analysed plasma samples from 101 participants in the Dominican Republic.

A study from Hong Kong last week said that even three doses of the Sinovac vaccine did not produce enough antibody response against Omicron and that it had to be boosted by a Pfizer-BioNTech shot to achieve “protective levels.” read more

Sinovac’s CoronaVac and state-owned Sinopharm’s BBIBP-CorV vaccine are the two most-used vaccines in China and the leading COVID-19 shots exported by the country. Hong Kong has been using the Sinovac and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines.

Tesla Recalls Almost Half a Million Electric Cars Over Safety Issues

SAN FRANCISCO (Dispatches) - Tesla Inc is recalling more than 475,000 of its Model 3 and Model S electric cars to address rearview camera and trunk issues that increase the risk of crashing, the U.S. road safety regulator said.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has been discussing another camera issue with the automaker, while probing the company’s driver assistant system.

The model years affected in the recall range from 2014 to 2021, and the total number of recalled vehicles is almost equivalent to the half a million vehicles Tesla delivered last year.

Around 200,000 Tesla vehicles will be recalled in China, the country’s market regulator said on Friday.

The U.S. electric vehicle manufacturer is recalling 356,309 2017-2020 Model 3 vehicles to address rearview camera issues and 119,009 Model S vehicles due to front hood problems, the federal regulator said.

Tesla could not be reached for comment. For Model 3 sedans, “the rearview camera cable harness may be damaged by the opening and closing of the trunk lid, preventing the rearview camera image from displaying,” the NHTSA said.

Tesla identified 2,301 warranty claims and 601 field reports regarding the issue for U.S. vehicles.

For Model S vehicles, latch problems may lead a front trunk to open “without warning and obstruct the driver’s visibility, increasing the risk of a crash,” Tesla said. Tesla said it was not aware of any crashes, injuries or deaths related to the issues cited in the recall of Model 3 and Model S cars, the NHTSA said.

Tesla shares fell as much as 3% in the morning but rebounded and were last trading slightly higher around \$1,088.76. The world’s most valuable automaker is expected to report record quarterly vehicles deliveries as early as Saturday.

China’s market regulator said that Tesla will recall close to 200,000 vehicles in the country, including 19,697 imported model S, 35,836 imported model 3, and 144,208 China-made model 3.

Tesla is recalling these electric cars produced ranging from 2015 and 2020 due to possible security risks such as sudden opening of the trunk lid during movement, according to a post on the website of State Administration for Market Regulation.

This month, the NHTSA said it was talking with Tesla about sideview camera issues in some vehicles.

CNBC had reported that Tesla was replacing defective repeater cameras in the front fenders of some U.S.-made vehicles without recalling the parts.

The NHTSA has been investigating 580,000 Tesla vehicles over the automaker’s decision to allow games to be played on car screens while they are in motion. Tesla has subsequently agreed to remove such gaming features while its cars are moving, according to the NHTSA. Under pressure from NHTSA, Tesla in February agreed to recall 135,000 vehicles with touch-screen displays that could fail and raise the risk of a crash.

Costly Saudi...

FROM PAGE 1

Moreover, at least 22,615 Saudi-sponsored Takfiri militants loyal to Yemen’s former Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi have been killed and wounded in battles with Yemeni army troops and their allied fighters from Popular Committees.

Yemeni army soldiers and their allies have also managed to destroy more than 14,527 armored vehicles, tanks, personnel carriers and bulldozers belonging to the Saudi-led military coalition.

Yemeni forces have fired 1348 homegrown ballistic missiles at military sites and strategic facilities deep inside Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the report said, pointing to the attack on the kingdom’s major

production centers at Ras Tanoura, owned by state-controlled oil firm Saudi Aramco, in early March 2021.

While most of the Yemeni ballistic missiles have struck their designated targets inside Saudi Arabia, dozens have been intercepted and destroyed by Saudi defense systems. This means the Riyadh regime has had to spend huge sums of money to activate the systems for incoming missiles. Al-Mayadeen highlighted that Yemeni air defense units downed as many as 20 Saudi unmanned aerial vehicles in 2021.

Yemeni army soldiers and Popular Committees fighters also shot down 11 US-built Boeing Insitu ScanEagle spy drones, a US-made MQ-9 Reaper drone, four Chinese-made CH-4 combat drones, two Chinese-made Chengdu Wing Loong drones and two Turkish-made Karayel reconnaissance drones.

The Boeing Insitu ScanEagle is a small, long-endurance, low-altitude unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) built by Insitu, a subsidiary of Boeing, and is used for reconnaissance. Each ScanEagle system reportedly costs US\$3.2 million.

The General Atomics MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aerial vehicle is said to cost some \$11 million apiece.

Iran Progress...

FROM PAGE 1

This is not the first time that Iran sends satellite carrier rockets into the space as the country has sent some satellites into the orbit for civil use and as usual Americans and their allies have resorted to false claims, threats, and the UN Resolution while Iran’s sending satellite carrier is not any violation of any resolution and it is just source of the national pride that the U.S. does not like it to happen.

Iran’s space exploration program and success in this field shows that U.S. sanctions have not been able to hamper its progress and Iranians have proved the world that if there is a will there is a way and there is no bounty for Iran’s progress and success no matter how long the hostile countries continue their pressures.

This time Iran launched a satellite carrier rocket bearing three “research” devices into space which is a small sample of the country’s amazing achievements in different fronts.

In February 2013, Iran for the first time entered the field of sending rocket and satellite into space when the country sent a monkey. The primate travelled in a Pishgam rocket, which reached an altitude of some 120km (75 miles) for a sub-orbital flight before “returning its shipment intact.” And it was repeated by sending the second monkey into the space in the following year.

At that time Western media and countries turned this success into a laughing stuff but gradually they realized that Iran’s progress in the field of space is growing and they felt danger of a new rival for pioneer countries in this field.

But in 2015 when Iran sent its first satellite into the orbit, the Americans realized that what Iran had said in the past was not a bluff and it was a truth and now they should accept that Iran is becoming a world power in sending satellite into the orbit.

The recent achievement once again showed the great determination of Iranian scientists to conquer any field of science and they are not confined only to the military and defense achievements and they have tried to expand their success to any field to cut the dependence of the country to any foreign country.

So the country is waiting for more good news as the Islamic Revolution anniversary is approaching because in the past four decades Iranian officials have broken good news and reports about the achievements of the country during the festivities and this year announcement of any achievement will have its own taste because it happens under the most cruel sanctions and achievements will show the world that Iranians will not give in pressures because it has decided to determine its own fate by themselves and not for pleasing other countries.

No UNSC...

FROM PAGE 1

“As previously stated, the Islamic Republic of Iran has the right to use peaceful technologies in the path of its scientific-research development according to international standards, and in so doing, it will not await the opinions of some countries that seek to impose their dictates,” Khatibzadeh added.

He also paid tribute to young Iranian scientists for their remarkable achievements in the field of aerospace despite illegal and unjust sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic.

Iran on Thursday said it had launched a satellite carrier rocket bearing three research devices into space. The U.S., France and Germany criticized Iran over the rocket launch, claiming it’s a cover to develop ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

Second ITL...

FROM PAGE 1

He added that the ample proof of the efforts of the government is the departure of a cargo train from Azakhel Dry Port for Istanbul.

The Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul railway project, called the Eco Container Train, resumed on December 21st with the presence of Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Minister for Railways Azam Khan Swati, Adviser to Prime Minister of Pakistan for Commerce and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood and Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Mohammad Ali Hosseini.

The length of the ECO railway line is 6,500 km, out of which 2,570 km is in Iran, 2,000 km in Turkey and about 1,900 km in Pakistan.

Q2 Non-Oil...

FROM PAGE 1

Central Bank of Iran (CBI), in its latest report published in September, had put the country’s GDP growth in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21–June 21) at 6.2 percent.

According to the mentioned data, the figure was 4.7 percent with oil excluded.

Based on the mentioned data, the country’s GDP stood at 3.477 quadrillion rials (about \$11.7 billion) with oil, while the figure excluding oil was 3.148 quadrillion rials (about \$10.5 billion).

Ganguly Negative for Omicron, Discharged

KOLKATA (Dispatches) - Former Indian cricket captain Sourav Ganguly was on Friday discharged from hospital four days after being admitted with Covid-19, a senior doctor said.

The 49-year-old was admitted in Kolkata on Monday after he tested positive for the virus and was suffering from a mild fever.

“He expressed his desire to go home after he tested negative for the Omicron variant,” the doctor told AFP.

His brother Snehasish told AFP that Ganguly received an “antibody cocktail therapy” as part of his treatment.

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Australia's Head Positive for Covid

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Australia's Ashes campaign was thrown into chaos Friday with batsman Travis Head testing positive for Covid-19 and ruled out of next week's fourth Ashes Test against England.

The number five, who made a swashbuckling 152 in the first Test at Brisbane, will remain in Melbourne and isolate for seven days.

“Unfortunately, Travis returned a positive Covid-19 result earlier today,” Cricket Australia said.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

SUNDAY JANUARY 2, 2022

Embiid's 34 Points Help 76ers Rally Past Nets

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Joel Embiid scored 34 points and converted the tiebreaking three-point play with 3:14 remaining as the Philadelphia 76ers made all the plays down the stretch in a 110-102 victory over the Brooklyn Nets in New York.

Embiid shot 11 of 23 from the floor and notched at least 30 points for a seventh straight road game. His hoop and subsequent free throw started Philadelphia's game-ending 13-5 run.

Tyrese Maxey added 25 points and hit five of Philadelphia's 13-pointers. Seth Curry added 17 points for the Sixers, who shot 42 percent on a night when they were coached by assistant Dan Burke after head coach Doc Rivers was placed in COVID-19 protocol.

Kevin Durant returned from missing three games in the NBA's health and safety protocol and scored 33 points for the Nets. James Harden produced his second triple-double in three games since returning from the protocol with 33 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists.

Wizards 110, Cavaliers 93

Bradley Beal collected 29 points and a season high-tying 10 assists in his return from health and safety protocol to fuel host Washington to a win over Cleveland.

Beal made 13 of 23 shots from the floor for the Wizards, who also saw Kentavious Caldwell-Pope (four 3-pointers, 12 points) and Anthony Gill (eight points) return from protocol. Spencer Dinwiddie, however, entered health and safety protocol prior to the game.

Cleveland's Kevin Love collected 24 points and 11 rebounds and rookie Evan Mobley scored 14 of his 21 points in the first quarter. Lauri Markkanen and Isaac Okoro each added 11 points for the Cavaliers, who were playing their first game since Ricky Rubio sustained a torn ACL on Tuesday in a 108-104 setback at New Orleans.

Bucks 136, Magic 118

Giannis Antetokounmpo posted 33 points and 12 rebounds, helping Milwaukee complete a regular-season sweep of host Orlando with a victory.



Jrue Holiday put up 25 points and seven assists and Khris Middleton added 22 points and six assists as the Bucks ended December on a five-game winning streak. DeMarcus Cousins fueled a key run with 13 of his 15 points coming in the third quarter, and Bobby Portis and Donte DiVincenzo each had 11 points and nine rebounds.

Orlando has lost five consecutive home games for the first time this season. The Magic are 2-13 -- and 0-11 against Eastern Conference opponents -- at the Amway Center. All nine Magic players reached the scoring column, led by Franz Wagner's 20 points as he followed up a 38-point performance against Milwaukee on Tuesday. Wagner scored in double figures for the 18th consecutive game, giving the second-longest streak by a rookie in franchise history.

Meanwhile the Denver Nuggets' home game against the Golden State Warriors was postponed hours before the scheduled tipoff due to COVID-19 protocol.

“The Nuggets do not have the league-required eight available players to proceed with the game against the Warriors,” the NBA said in a statement.

The Nuggets made the announcement Thursday afternoon on social media but did not provide further details.

Earlier in the day, reports said that Denver coach Michael Malone had entered the protocol. The Nuggets began the day with three players on the COVID-19 list: Jeff Green, Bones Hyland and Zeke Nnaji.

Cancelo Assaulted During Robbery at Home

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City defender Joao Cancelo said he was assaulted during a robbery and posted a picture of himself on Instagram with a cut above his right eye.

Cancelo did not mention where the incident took place but the club later said it happened at the 27-year-old's home.

“Unfortunately today I was assaulted by four cowards who hurt me and tried to hurt my family,” Cancelo said. “When you show resistance this is what happens.”

“They managed to take all the jewellery and leave me with my face in this state.”

“The most important thing for me is my family and luckily they are all OK.”

City said in a statement they were giving support to the player and his family and that he is helping the police with their enquiries.

Vardy Out for Up to a Month Through Injury

LONDON (Dispatches) - Leicester City striker and club top scorer Jamie Vardy faces a spell on the sidelines after injuring his hamstring against Liverpool, manager Brendan Rodgers said on.

The 34-year-old Vardy, who has nine league goals this season, played the full 90 minutes in Tuesday's 1-0 win over Liverpool despite a hamstring issue that kept him out of the Boxing Day loss to Manchester City.

“Jamie will be out for the weekend and James Maddison should be fine. (For Vardy) it depends, it could be the next three to four weeks,” Rodgers told reporters ahead of Saturday's home game against bottom side Norwich City.

“He wasn't sure whether it was (in a challenge with Joel Matip) or he felt the pain then. He ran on and soldiered on, which he wanted to do. But the scan has shown up as that (a hamstring injury), so it could be three to four weeks.”

Rodgers was given a boost with winger Harvey Barnes back in training for the first time after missing the last three games in all competitions while Ryan Bertrand is due back next week.

Simeone Tests COVID Positive, Barca Have More Cases



MADRID (Dispatches) - Atletico Madrid have recorded five COVID-19 positives, including manager Diego Simeone, while Barcelona had three more cases among their players, the LaLiga clubs said.

Atleti said Simeone, captain Koke, midfielder Hector Herrera plus forwards Antoine Griezmann and Joao Felix all tested positive for the coronavirus.

“All of them are asymptomatic and isolating at their respective homes, in strict compliance with the health authorities' guidelines,” Atletico said in a statement.

Atleti, fifth in LaLiga on 29 points after 18 games, host Rayo Vallecano on Sunday.

Barcelona said midfielder Philippe Coutinho, defender Sergino Dest and winger Ez Abde were the latest players to return positive tests.

The Catalans had already been hit by a number of COVID-19 cases in their squad, with Ousmane Dembele, Samuel Umtiti and Gavi set to miss Sunday's LaLiga trip to

Real Mallorca after testing positive.

Clement Lenglet, Dani Alves, Jordi Alba and Alejandro Balde also returned positive tests this week.

“Footballers Sergino Dest, Coutinho and Ez Abde have tested positive for COVID-19. The players are in good health and self-isolating at home. The club has reported the cases to the relevant authorities,” Barcelona said in a statement.

Barca, who last played in the league in a 1-1 draw at Sevilla on Dec. 21, are seventh on 28 points from 18 games.

Real Madrid are also dealing with a COVID-19 outbreak with Serbia forward Luka Jovic testing positive on Thursday, a day after Thibaut Courtois, Federico Valverde, Eduardo Camavinga, Vinicius Jr returned positive tests.

Luka Modric, Rodrygo, Marco Asensio, Gareth Bale, Marcelo, Andriy Lunin, Isco and David Alaba also tested positive earlier this month.

Spain's 14-day infection rate hit a new record of 1,360 cases per 100,000 people on Tuesday, rising from 1,206 cases the previous day and marking a five-fold increase since the beginning of December.

Ronaldo Statue Kicks Up a Fuss In India's Goa

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - A statue of Portuguese footballer Cristiano Ronaldo has caused a stir in the southern Indian state of Goa, with locals accusing officials of insensitivity for honoring a sports star from the region's former colonial power.

Protesters with black flags gathered at the site after the statue was unveiled this week in the town of Calangute.

They expressed anger that authorities had shunned Indian sports stars and chosen a player from Portugal, which granted Goa independence in 1961.

Micky Fernandes, a former Indian international player who is from Goa, said the choice was “hurtful” and a “hangover” from Portuguese rule.

“Ronaldo is the best player in the world but still we should have a statue of a football player from Goa,” Fernandes told AFP.

Michael Lobo, a local minister with India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, told AFP the aim was to inspire young people to excel not just inside the country but internationally.

“All the boys and girls who want to make football a career will get inspired by people like Cristiano Ronaldo,” Lobo said.

“If you pursue your dream and you're passionate about it then you can reach a higher goal. This is what we have written on the plaque.”

Most of present-day India gained independence in 1947.



Tuchel Frustrated by Noise After Lukaku Voices Dissatisfaction

LONDON (Dispatches) - Thomas Tuchel admitted on Friday that he was frustrated with the “noise” around Romelu Lukaku's situation at Chelsea after the Belgium forward expressed his dissatisfaction with his role at the club.

The “surprised” Chelsea boss said he would sit down with the 28-year-old to discuss the issues but did not see any evidence that his player was unhappy.

Lukaku rejoined the Premier League side from Inter Milan for a club-record fee of £97.5 million (\$132 million) in August.

He has scored seven times in a season hampered by injury and coronavirus but Chelsea boss Tuchel has at times left him out of the starting XI even when he has been fit.

Lukaku told Sky Italy he was “not happy with the situation” at Stamford Bridge in an interview released on Thursday, but it was understood to have been conducted three weeks ago.

The player has since told ESPN Brazil he had “a couple of conversations” with Tuchel about what the German wanted from him, during which he told his boss he was “multidimensional”.

Tuchel, whose second-placed side face Liverpool this weekend, told his pre-match press conference that the situation was frustrating.

“We don't like it, of course, because it brings noise that we don't need and is not helpful,” said the Chelsea boss. “But on the other side, we don't want to make more out of it than it actually is.”

