

Health Ministry Announced on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemics In Iran Increased to 131,878 With 31 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Iranian Justice Minister Amin Hossein Rahimi Yesterday Underlined the Need for Pursuing The Material and Spiritual Rights of The Martyrs of a 2020 Crash of a Ukrainian Plane Near Tehran

VOL. XXVII, No. 7408 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

MONDAY JANUARY 10, 2022 - DEY 20, 1400

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Iran's Foreign Exchange Revenues on Rise

TEHRAN (IP) - The currency from exports is returning to foreign exchange resources and hence, the country's revenues are increasing, says Iran's president.

President Ebrahim Raisi attended parliament's open session to discuss the general points of the 2022 budget bill (starting on March 21).

He stated that the cooperation between the administration and the parliament is progressing, noting that the laws on lifting sanctions, housing, and boosting domestic production are being pursued.

He addressed the MPs, saying: "You are in touch with the people and there is hope that their livelihood problems will be solved. Measures have been taken in this regard and the administration is trying to fulfill its promises objectively and practically."

Raisi reiterated that his administration's goal is the objective and practical fulfillment of its promises regarding people's livelihood.

"Based on the statistics, inflation has started to decline and be controlled," President Ebrahim Raisi said in his speech at Parliament.

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Iran Ready for 10-Fold Increase in Gas Swap From Turkmenistan

TEHRAN (PressTV)- Iran's Oil Minister Javad Owji says natural gas swap from Turkmenistan can increase by up to 10 times in volume terms if Ashgabat agrees to further transfer deals with Tehran.

Owji said after a Saturday meeting with Turkmenistan's visiting Vice President Rashit Meredov that Iran has the infrastructure required for transferring up to 40 million cubic meters (mcm) per day of the equivalent of gas received from Turkmenistan to customers in Iran's neighborhood.

"Today we declared to the friendly and brotherly country (Turkmenistan) that we are ready for imports and swap of gas with neighboring countries to up to 40 mcm per day or 10-15 billion cubic meters per year," said Owji.

The announcement came days after Iran started transferring the equivalent of around 4 mcm of natural gas received from Turkmenistan, located to the east of the Caspian Sea, to Azerbaijan, on the western side of the Sea, based on a trilateral agreement reached in late November.

The swap operation has been hailed as a major success in the field of energy diplomacy for an Iranian administration that came to office in August.

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Iran Not to Submit To Any Bullying



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Leader has ruled out capitulating to the enemy's bullying, despite being engaged in talks with them.

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said "Sometimes we sit down for talks with the enemy and engage with it. "To negotiate, talk and interact with the enemy is another matter, but we have not and will not give in to the enemy's coercion and language of force. They want to undermine and undercut our salient principles. This is part of the vast and varied soft warfare of the enemy that it pursues. This desensitization must be stopped," he added. "This is another matter. But we should not submit to the enemy's bullying, as we haven't so far, and we won't, either, from now on," he said.

In a speech on the anniversary of the popular uprising in the holy city of Qom against the former U.S.-backed Pahlavi regime in 1978, the Supreme Leader said the U.S. viewed the martyrdom of legendary anti-terror commander Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani as a threat to Iran, but the Iranian people turned it into an opportunity with their religious zeal.

"The wrong calculations of the United States are still going on, and the example of this is the martyrdom of Martyr Soleimani," the Leader said.

"They thought that by eliminating this martyr, the great movement of the Iranian nation would be extinguished, but we saw the enormous movement that took place this year on the second anniversary of his martyrdom.

"Who was behind it? It was the work and hand of the divine power that created this huge movement and expression of devotion.

"The calculating system of the enemies is certainly lax and impaired, and they cannot have a correct assessment of the Islamic Republic and thus, they make wrong decisions and fail, and they will fail again from now on," the Leader added.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the deep animosity of the United States with the Islamic Republic stems from the Iranian people's religious zeal.

"Maintain this religious zeal. The factor of saving the country in different trying times is the religious zeal of the Iranian nation. It is the religious zeal that turns threats into opportunities.

"An example of this was the eight-year imposed war and defense, in which the religious zeal of the youth, fathers, mothers, sisters and wives led the youth to go to the front and win this international war, in which the enemies all worked together to defeat the Imam and the movement. The source was this religious zeal," the Leader said.

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Iran, Pakistan Committed to Enhance Trade Volume to Over \$5b

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Mohammad Ali Hosseini said Tehran and Islamabad are committed to enhance the existing trade volume of \$1.4 billion to over \$5 billion in the next couple of years.

Hosseini made the remarks in an interview with Radio Pakistan's Current Affairs program Diplomatic Session hosted by renowned journalist and columnist Javed Siddiq.

He said currently one border crossing at Taftan border is operational for trade while new border crossings are being established at Iran-Pakistan border in Pashin and Rimdan.

The Iranian Ambassador said both countries are working to establish six joint border markets and priority work is focused on three markets.

He said Pakistan and Iran have commonalities in all aspects, particularly religion, history and culture and frequent high level visits have increased cooperation in all sectors for mutual benefit and development.

The Iranian envoy expressed full confidence that both countries have the potential to increase trade and economic cooperation besides security collaboration.

He said fencing of over 900 kilometers long border will prevent the miscreants and smuggling of goods.

Ambassador Hosseini said Tehran is extending full cooperation to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regarding its peaceful nuclear program and is fully committed to international obligations.

On Afghanistan, the Iranian ambassador said the OIC Foreign Ministers' recent meeting in Islamabad was a good initiative of Pakistan in highlighting the humanitarian issue in the war-torn Afghanistan and currently over 5,000 refugees are daily entering Iran.

He further said European countries should extend help to avert the catastrophe in Afghanistan.

The ambassador said Iran is fully committed to peace and stability in Afghanistan as the instability in Kabul will directly affect all regional countries particularly Pakistan and Iran.

He said Pakistan and Iran have regular consultation and interaction for the security on the common border and in the region and institutional level mechanism exists to prevent miscreants.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

U.S. Continues Looting Nations

For years global arrogance and especially Western powers, above all the U.S., have been looting the wealth of the nations under different pretexts or even occupation and colonialism, and they have not left this habit and it seems it will continue until the nations wake up and give a proper response to this looting behavior of the arrogant powers.

The U.S. is a leading country in recent centuries in looting the nations either by sending troops or bringing to the powers its lackey governments in the countries to take advantage of the national wealth of these countries financially or geopolitically.

Syria is one of those countries which is suffering from this habit of the Americans as the Americans under pretext of fighting terrorist group are present in some areas of this country and continue stealing Syria's oil in different ways.

On Friday, it was reported that the U.S. military has deployed reinforcements to the bases its has occupied near the oil fields in Eastern Syria, days after they again came under rocket attacks.

"American forces based in Iraq sent military reinforcements consisting of 30 trucks carrying armored vehicles, tanks and bulldozers," the sources disclosed as quoted in a report by Turkey's Anadolu state news agency on Friday.

According to the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, further stated that two American helicopters escorted the military reinforcements overhead, along with U.S.-backed Kurdish militants affiliated with the PKK and YPG terrorist groups, the report added.

They further noted that the reinforcements included boxes believed to hold various munitions and rockets.

The military reinforcements, the report added, came from U.S. military bases in Iraq and entered Syria on Thursday, arriving in Al-Hasakah and then transported to Al-Omar oil field in Syria's eastern Dayr al-Zawr province.

According to the report, nearly 10 rockets targeted U.S. bases last week from the Syrian city of al-Mayadin, where local anti-terror resistance fighters are based.

The development also came a day after a military facility housing U.S. occupation forces in al-Omar oil fields in Dayr al-Zawr came under rocket attacks from nearby areas, according to a Sabereen News channel, associated with Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU).

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Iran, P4+1 Resolving Outstanding Issues in Vienna

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's chief negotiator to the Vienna talks says Iran and the five remaining signatories to the 2015 nuclear agreement are resolving the outstanding issues as diplomatic efforts are continuing in the Austrian capital to secure the removal of all sanctions that the United States has imposed on Tehran following its unilateral withdrawal from the deal three years after its conclusion.

Ali Bagheri Kani made the remarks while speaking to reporters on Saturday after meetings with representatives of the P4+1 group of countries -- Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China, IRNA reported.

He added that the talks aimed at removing the US sanctions are advancing and moving forward.

Following talks with the Iranian lead negotiator, diplomats of the P4+1 countries reportedly held a meeting with the U.S. representative and discussed the latest developments pertaining to the Vienna talks.

During the previous round of the talks, the first under Iran's new President Ebrahim Raisi, Iran presented new proposals at the negotiating table to help the talks move forward and later criticized the European signatories of the JCPOA for failing to follow suit and remaining passive.

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Pursuing Ukrainian Plane Crash, Mandatory

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's parliament speaker said that pursuing the Ukrainian plane crash is necessary.

In his pre-agenda speech, Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf commemorated the anniversary of the Ukrainian plane crash, saying: "I offer my deepest condolences to the entire noble Iranian nation especially the bereaved families who lost their loved ones and insist on pursuing the case." He expressed gratitude for the epic turnout in the second martyrdom anniversary of Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani across Iran.

A Ukrainian airliner was shot down shortly after taking off from Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport on January 8, 2020, and all of its 167 passengers and nine crew members were killed.

On January 11, 2020, the Armed Forces General Staff released a statement saying the plane was mistakenly downed near the airport. The incident happened a few hours after Iran fired dozens of ballistic missiles at a US airbase inside Iraq in retaliation for the assassination of Lieutenant-General Qassem Soleimani.

Development of Economic Cooperation on Agenda of Tehran, Ashgabat

TEHRAN (MNA) - Expressing that Tehran attaches special importance to the development of relations with neighboring countries, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi said that the development of economic and transit cooperation is on the agenda of Tehran and Ashgabat.

Speaking on Sunday in a meeting with the Special Envoy of the President of Turkmenistan and the Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan Raşit Meredow, President Raisi stated that Tehran-Ashgabat relations are on the path to development, adding, "We are determined to take effective and useful steps in political, economic, cultural and social relations for the benefit of our nations."

Raisi called the bilateral meeting with the President of Turkmenistan in Ashgabat and the telephone calls between the two sides the beginning of a new chapter in the development of relations between the two countries and said, "In these talks, proper decisions were made to remove the existing obstacles on the path of the development of cooperation, including in the field of transportation and energy, and the ground for expanding and deepening relations between the two countries has been facilitated."

"Tehran welcomes the proposals of the other side in the field of strengthening and promoting cooperation in various sectors, especially in the field of energy, trade and commerce, and there are no obstacles and restrictions in this regard," Raisi noted.

Expressing that Tehran attaches special importance to the development of relations



with neighboring countries, the President said, "Iran and Turkmenistan are not just two neighboring countries, but also have kinship relations with each other and the two nations have deep-rooted and deep cultural and historical ties."

The Special Envoy of the President of Turkmenistan, for his part, presented the written message from Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow and appreciated the Iranian government's efforts to expand and strengthen relations with Turkmenistan over the past few months, saying, "We are determined to increase the level of our relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran in various fields, especially in the field of gas, transportation, economy, trade and culture."

"Turkmenistan seeks to open a new historical page in relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and numerous proposals have been prepared to expand comprehensive cooperation, especially to increase and facilitate trade and transit at border terminals," said Sardar Berdimuhamedow.

Iran, Turkmenistan Call for Inclusive Gov't In Afghanistan

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran and Turkmenistan call for the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan, with the participation of all ethnicities.

The issue was raised on a Saturday meeting between Serdar Berdimuhamedov Vice President of Turkmenistan and Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Iran's Foreign Minister in Tehran.

Serdar Berdimuhamedov has traveled to Tehran as a special envoy heading a preparatory delegation ahead of the upcoming visit of the Turkmen president.

During the meeting, the two officials discussed joint cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, energy, transportation and transit.

Also, given the imminent visit of the president of Turkmenistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran, during this meeting, Amir Abdollahian and Berdimuhamedov exchanged views over the documents to be signed during the Turkmen president's visit.

Regional issues and the situation in Afghanistan were other topics discussed by the Iranian foreign minister and the Turkmen vice president. The two sides underlined the need for the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan.

During the meeting, the vice president of Turkmenistan underscored the importance of bilateral relations with Iran and the role of the Joint Economic Commission in the development of relations between the two countries.

He also stressed that there are very good capacities for cooperation between the two countries in the fields of transportation, technical and engineering services, electricity, oil and gas.

Given the many historical and cultural commonalities between Iran and Turkmenistan, the two sides stressed the importance of developing economic and cultural relations and described cooperation between the provinces of the two countries as important in this regard.

It should be noted that Turkmen Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov also attended the meeting and outlined bilateral cooperation and joint projects and programs.

Oil Money Collected

TEHRAN (Shana) - The CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company said: "Sales of Iranian oil and gas condensate have increased well and export oil money is collected. We plan to return oil production capacity to pre-sanctions levels by the end of the current calendar year, which began on March 21."

According to Fars News Agency, Mohsen Khojastehmehr, referring to the company's plan to increase Iran's oil production capacity, said: "One of the serious plans of the National Iranian Oil Company is to return crude oil production capacity to the pre-sanctions period by the end of 1400 (to March 20). The country's oil production capacity decreased under the preceding administration."

He added: "Of course, when we talk about production capacity, we do not mean only the production capacity of wells, but also a set of influential factors, including the capacity of pipelines, processing units, oil transmission lines to consumption bases and even manpower. As a result, several projects must be defined and implemented to restore oil production capacity to before the embargo."

The Deputy Minister of Petroleum added: "This means that one of our wells may be able to produce high figures, but there is no processing unit for it, in this case it cannot be said that production capacity has increased, because not all defined packages to increase capacity have been achieved."

"Unfortunately, we have lost a part of our oil production capacity in the past years and the production capacity figure has decreased," Khojastehmehr added.

He said: "During this period, with the efforts that have been made, the production capacity has almost reached the figure before the sanctions, and God willing, this goal will be achieved by late March."

The CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company said under the 13th administration, both the export of crude oil and gas condensate have increased well. "Pardon me for not disclosing export figures, I can only say that things have improved. Monthly reports on Iran's oil and gas condensate exports are sent to senior officials, and they are aware of the details."

Khojastehmehr emphasized: "The revenues from oil exports also return to the country, that is, the receivables are collected. At the National Iranian Oil Company, we have a duty to sell oil and deliver the money to the Central Bank. It is the central bank that decides what to use the money for and what goods to import."

The Deputy Minister of Petroleum further said: "The accumulation of gas condensate in Iran has decreased due to two reasons: increased exports and increased consumption in the country. Thank God, there have been positive developments in the sale of oil and gas condensate to Iran."

In response to a question about Iran-Latin America oil interactions, Khojastehmehr said: "We are ready to cooperate with any country that wants to buy oil and gas condensate from Iran. There are different buyers for Iranian oil now and we also have various solutions on the table for selling Iranian oil."

Good Agreement Possible If West Shows Goodwill

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says reaching a good agreement is possible in the ongoing sanctions removal talks in Vienna, if the Western side possesses the required goodwill.

The talks are on the right track, the top diplomat said, speaking to his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on Saturday.

"Iran possesses the required will for reaching a good agreement," he added.

"We can [therefore] reach a good agreement if the Western side is likewise in possession of such a good faith and will," Amir-Abdollahian noted.

The remarks concerned the talks in Vienna that are examining the prospect of the removal of the United States' inhumane sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

The two sides were resolving outstanding issues and differences among the negotiating parties were narrowing, he noted. Speaking on Friday, France's foreign minister struck a positive tone concerning the talks, saying progress had been made in the negotiations.

Jean-Yves Le Drian said he remained convinced that the parties to the talks could reach a deal. Together with the UK and Germany, France began abiding by the American sanctions once Washington re-introduced the bans.

Palestine New Envoy To Iran Appointed

TEHRAN (IFP) - Salam Al-Zawawi was sworn in before President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, as Palestine's new ambassador to Iran.

President's Adviser for Diplomatic Affairs Majdi Al-Khalidi and Director General of the Palestinian National Fund, Minister Ramzi Khoury, were present at the swearing-in event, which took place at the President's residence in the Jordanian capital, Amman.

Salam is daughter of Salah Al-Zawawi, the former Palestinian ambassador to Tehran.

Al-Zawawi is one of the founding members of the Fatah movement and was the second Palestinian ambassador to Tehran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. He had served as the Palestinian ambassador to Algeria, Brazil, and Kenya before being appointed to Iran in 1980.

Iran to Vaccinate Students

TEHRAN (IP) - Secretary of Iran's national scientific committee in charge of the COVID-19 epidemic said that children 5 to 11 are vaccinated due to the omicron variant.

At the end of the meeting of the National Scientific Committee against coronavirus, which was held this morning (Sunday) in Tehran, Hamidreza Jamaati, in an exclusive interview with Iran Press, added: "The omicron variant is more common in children, with one in three children going to the ICU."

"Therefore, vaccination of this age group should be taken seriously as a way to prevent new variant spread," the secretary said.

Jamaati added: "Iran-made vaccine for children is now available, and it also can be imported."

He said that Iran would probably face the peak of the Omicron variant in the next few weeks, and the compatriots would have to inject the third dose of the vaccine.

Hamidreza Jamaati added: "Nine million people in Iran have been vaccinated with the third dose of the vaccine so far, and the age group of 12 to 18 years old should also be vaccinated with the third dose."

Iran Facing No Vaccine Shortages

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi has said the Islamic Republic is facing no Covid vaccine shortages, urging all citizens to get their boosters.

Raisi added that this will be conducive to protect public health in Iran. The president also urged all Iranian to observe health protocols despite the downward trend in deaths and infections so as to cut off the chain of the new Coronavirus strain known as Omicron.

Iran's Health Ministry announced on Saturday the number of triple-vaxxed people in the country is inching toward the 10 million mark. Officials say around 500 Omicron cases have been registered throughout Iran so far.

Raisi also thanked all people involved in the healthcare sector for their efforts to help contain the Covid pandemic in Iran.

Raisi noted that the decision on restrictions imposed on arrivals from countries where Omicron has spread is left to the Ministry of Interior and relevant organizations, so that appropriate decisions can be made regarding the continuation or removal of these restrictions, depending on the situation.

The president, however, said given the reduction in the number of cases and deaths due to widespread vaccination, the National Headquarters Against Coronavirus, as a decision-making authority, has decided that schools and universities can reopen.

Afghanistan Embassy in Tehran Operating as Per Vienna Convention

TEHRAN (MNA) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said that the Afghanistan embassy in Tehran is operating in accordance with the 1961 Vienna convention as the other embassies in Tehran do.

"The diplomatic activities of the Afghan Embassy in Tehran, like all foreign embassies, are going on in accordance with principles and rules stipulated by the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, and no change has been made beyond the convention," said Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Sunday.

Some media outlets reported on the situation of the Afghan embassy in Tehran as the Taliban acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Mottaqi visits Iran. The media claimed that the Iranian government was handing over the Afghan embassy in Tehran to the Taliban and that the former Afghan ambassador to Tehran had left Iran for a European country.

Heading a delegation of the Taliban government authorities, acting foreign minister Amir Khan Mottaqi arrived in the Iranian capital of Tehran on Saturday night.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said that the country has always stressed the need to maintain economic and trade relations with Afghanistan. A spokesman for the Taliban government's Foreign Ministry Abdul Qahar Balkhi in a tweet on Saturday wrote that Amir Khan Mottaqi would discuss political, economic, transit, and Afghan issues with Iranian officials on the Tehran visit.

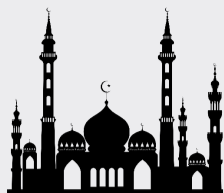
General Soleimani Never Let ISIS Dreams to Come True

ISFAHAN (IRNA) - The head of Iran's Civil Defense Organization said that Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani and his companions' timely wisdom and selfless braveries prevented the ISIS dreams for invading Iran from becoming true.

Brigadier General Gholamreza Jalali who was speaking in Najafabad Congregational Prayers Mosque on the anniversary of a Hajj pilgrimage martyr Haj Ahmad Kazemi and the 2nd anniversary of Haj Qassem Soleimani said that relying on the support of the United States and some regional Arab countries, the ISIS intended to inflict heavy attacks against the Shi'a society and particularly Iran, but the timely wise decisions on and selfless braveries of Lieutenant General Soleimani and his companions turned the enemies' satanic dreams to ashes.

He said that the various dimensions of that prominent military commander of the country need to be elaborated for the Iranian youth in details, as many of his characteristics and those of some other martyrs have still remained unexplored.

Najafabad township is at a 30km distance to the west of Isfahan.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:11
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:29
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:45
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:14

50. And this is a blessed Message which We have sent down: will ye then reject it?
51. We bestowed aforetime on Abraham his rectitude of conduct,
and well were We acquainted with him.

Surah 21, The Prophets (50 - 51)

Iran-Russia 25-Year Cooperation Document Needs Public Approval

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Managing Director of Iran-Russia Friendship Association (IRRUFA) says Iran-Russia 25-year cooperation document should not be a document between the two states and it is an operational document that people should accept this 25-year cooperation document with Russia.

Speaking in a press conference on the occasion of the upcoming visit of President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Moscow, Mr. Amir Mahmoudzadeh said this association has been launched and registered with the approval of the Iran Foreign Ministry and one of the goals of the association is to change the view and approach of the Russian and Iranian nations to each other.

He said in ties with Russia, Tehran is facing four challenges of illusion, ignorance, rent-seeking and contradiction of interests, adding that some people are trying to tarnish the ties between Tehran and Russia and some of the statesmen have admitted that they are facing the mentioned challenges.

Mahmoudzadeh noted that Russians have been Iran's strategic friends adding that although they are Iran's rivals in some fields like energy, they are at the same time strategic friends of Iran in some other fields. He emphasized that Iran's need to Russia is not a one-way road and Russia needs Iran as much as Iran needs this country.

He went on to say that one of the missions of Russia in its foreign policy document is to progress in India, adding that to get to India, Russia needs Iran's Chabahar Port and today the corridor of Chabahar-Rasht-Anzali-Astara-Moscow is considered the most important corridor and some major important events will take place in the North-South corridor that they can increase the transit rights of Iran considerably.

Mahmoudzadeh said that he believes the Iran-Russia cooperation document should



be given to experts to study it and no government document should be prepared and this document should be an operational one and people should accept the 25-year cooperation document between Iran and Russia.

On return of Iran's exported bell pepper to Russia, he said Russia in a letter had warned about the quality of this agro product and we should see who in the country has ignored this warning.

On President Raisi's visit to Moscow which will happen at the invitation of Russian President, he said this can be decisive for the region and it is a very important event for the country. He added that one of the issues to be discussed during the visit is the Vienna talks and one should not forget this fact that Iran is a powerful regional state and any country wants to have active transit in the field of energy needs Iran.

On the proposals of the association for reinforcing Iran-Russia ties, he said the association has presented its proposals on four axes, adding that first, the SWIFT of Iran and Russia should be based on the Russian currency roubles, adding that both countries need a joint bank in their countries.

Mahmoudzadeh added that the next axis is the issue of promoting tourism in the Caspian Sea and both sides should not remain negligent on this issue, adding that the other important axis which is important in the ties of Russia and Iran is border economy that unfortunately Iran has been negligent in the border economy with its 15 neighbor states. He stated that the fourth axis is the issue of using the North-South corridor.

On teaching Russian language to enthusiasts in Iran, adding that 1500 people have been taught Russian, adding that he believes Russian language is considered a tool for development and progress.

IME Posts Higher Records in Value and Volume of Trades

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 2,115,000 tons of commodities with a total trading value of almost \$772m, posting growths of 33% in volume and 77% in value of trades compared to the figures of the previous week.



According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange traded on its metals and minerals trading floor 1,706,000 tons of commodities valued at more than \$552m.

Commodities sold on this floor included 904,186 tons of cement, 570,290 tons of steel, 147,000 tons of iron ore, 36,500 tons of zinc dust, 33,300 tons of sponge iron, 9,090 tons of copper, 8,400 tons of aluminum, 765 tons of zinc ingots, 180 tons of molybdenum sulfur and 21 tons of precious metals concentrate.

Furthermore, the IME saw on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 399,000 tons of commodities worth more than \$212m.

The exchange customers purchased on this floor 141,548 tons of bitumen, 85,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 74,728 tons of polymeric products, 64,000 tons of lube cut, 17,936 tons of chemicals, 12,100 tons of sulfur, 3,717 tons of base oil and 50 tons of argon.

Based on this report, IME enjoyed, on its agricultural trading floor, trade of 50 kg of saffron.

Last but not least was the IME's side market with 9,570 tons of commodities traded on it.

Tehran, Ashgabat Trade Volume Exchange Up 84% in 2021



TEHRAN (MNA) - The trade volume exchanged between Islamic Republic of Iran and Republic of Turkmenistan in 2021 registered a 84 percent growth.

Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Rostam Ghasemi and Turkmen Vice-President Serdar Berdimuhamedow in a meeting on Saturday referred to an 84 percent increase of trade between Iran and Turkmenistan in 2021 and evermore expansion of bilateral relations.

During the meeting, Ghasemi and Berdimuhamedow discussed intelligent management in the transportation field by utilizing drones and unprecedented levels of bilateral trade.

Ghasemi expressed hope in the meeting that the outcome of his meeting with top Turkmen officials will materialize objectives of both countries, and argued that Iran-Turkmenistan agreements can secure both countries' interests, and "we hope these meetings in Iran and Turkmenistan need to continue to ensure the continuation of this favorable trend."

He focused on transiting Turkmenistan's goods to India and other countries in the south, too, and said that this will be beneficial for both countries economically.

Serdar Berdimuhamedow, for his part, said that one of the best means for boosting bilateral cooperation is the activities of the Joint Iran-Turkmenistan Economic Commission.

Turkmen vice-president agreed with the Iranian minister on the point that transportation and transit fields are two major fields of cooperation between Iran and Turkmenistan, reiterating that the Iranian road and urban development minister had a good proposal on problem resolving in Sarakhs Border.

He evaluated the Iranian minister's proposal on the transit of goods, too, as a very brilliant one, saying that in Turkmenistan "we have many projects underway for the expansion of the transportation network."

IRISL Ranks 14th Among World's Top 100 Shipping Lines

TEHRAN (MNA) - Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) is ranked 14th in Alphaliner's latest list of the world's top 100 shipping lines published on January 7.

Based on the provided data, IRISL has climbed one place from 15th in the entity's list for the previous year. The IRISL's capacity now takes up 0.6 percent of the world's total shipping capacity.

The Alphaliner Top 100 is the ranking of the largest container or liner operators in terms of global capacity, taking into account the fleets of virtually all of the container operators worldwide.

In 2018, IRISL stood at the 19th place in Alphaliner's Top 100 ranking, while the company held 22nd place in its preceding year.

According to IRISL Head Mohammadreza Modares Khiabani, IRISL currently has 150 active vessels, of which 32 are bulk carriers, 30 are container vessels, 22 are cargo carriers of general goods, 18 are service and passenger vessels, two are roll-on/roll-off, and three barges.

This year, the world's largest container shipping company, the Danish Maersk has slid to the second place in the list of the world's top 100 container/liner operators giving the first place to Swiss-Italian Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC).

Geneva-based MSC held second place in the previous year's ranking. Based on Alphaliner's latest data, the company now owns 645 ships with a total container capacity of 4,284,728 TEU.

French container transportation and shipping company CMA CGM S.A. is ranked third with a total capacity of 3,182,157 TEU.

With 479 vessels and a total capacity of 2,932,779 TEU, the Chinese state-owned China Ocean Shipping Company, known as COSCO or COSCO Group is ranked as the world's fourth-biggest shipping company.

Iran, Syria Mull Over Boosting Economic Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian ambassador to Damascus and the Syrian minister of economy discussed different ways of developing cooperation between the two countries.

Iranian ambassador to Damascus Mehdi Sobhani met and held talks with the Syrian Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade Mohammad Samer al-Khalil.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed different approaches to develop economic, trade, industrial, and agricultural cooperation between the two neighboring countries.

Expanding relations between the two countries in trade and economic sectors, removing the obstacles of economic development, economic activities, and exchanging economic delegations were among the issues discussed in the meeting.



Chabahar, a Good Opportunity for Travel and Sea Tourism

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Director General of Sistan and Baluchestan Ports and Maritime announced the establishment of a committee for organizing sea voyages in upcoming Noruz (New Year) holidays in March.

Mr. Behrouz Aqaei said that the organization has set up the committee which is preparing new plan for organizing cruises for Nowruz and it is waiting the decision of the National Anti-Corona Headquarters to advance its plans for activities in the field of sea tourism.

He then pointed to the annual passengers and tourists' visits to the coasts of Makran and Chabahar and said the organization in line with its social responsibility commitments decided to launch this committee for organizing sea voyages in the New Year holidays.

He went on to say that the committee will be comprised of all state organs and institutes of the town of Chabahar.

He then said that three workgroups have been set up to focus on issues like training sailors and safety of passengers who uses those boats.

Aqaei went on to say that the committee is aimed to boost quality of serving the tourists and sea passengers and Chabahar Port is a good opportunity for sea trips and marine recreational funs which are very attractive for any passenger.



Biden Nominates Iraq Veteran To Head U.S. Operations in ME

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Joe Biden is nominating Army Lt. Gen. Michael Kurilla to lead the U.S. Central Command, which oversees military operations in the Middle East, the Pentagon announced.

If confirmed by the Senate, General Kurilla will succeed Marine General Kenneth McKenzie at the head of Centcom, which oversees military operations in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Yemen.

According to his official biography, Kurilla, 55, currently leads the 18th Airborne Corps, which groups the majority of the United States Army's response forces at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.



UNSC to Meet Wednesday on Sudan

UNITED NATIONS (Dispatches) - The UN Security Council will meet next Wednesday in an informal session to address the latest developments in Sudan as demonstrations against military rule in the African nation continue, diplomatic sources said.

The session will be behind closed doors, the sources said Friday, adding that the meeting was requested by six of the council's 15 members: the United States, Britain, France, Norway, Ireland and Albania.

A common position of the Security Council "is not expected, as China and Russia would oppose it," a diplomat said on condition of anonymity.



Anti-Vax French Protesters Warn Macrone



PARIS (Dispatches) - Anti-vaccine protesters rallied in cities across France on Saturday, denouncing President Emmanuel Macron's intent to "piss off" people refusing COVID-19 shots by tightening curbs on their civil liberties.

Macron said this week he wanted to irritate unvaccinated people by making their lives so complicated they would end up getting jabbed. Unvaccinated people were irresponsible and unworthy of being considered citizens, he added.

In Paris, protesters retorted by adopting his slangy wording, chanting "We'll piss you off".

Others carried signs saying "No to the vaccine pass", a reference to Macron's legislative push to require proof of vaccination to enter venues such as cafes, bars and museums.

TV images showed skirmishes between protesters and police at one site. Protesters also rallied through the streets in Marseille, Nantes and Le Mans among other cities.

"(Macron's remarks) were the last straw. We are not irresponsible," said hospital administrator Virginie Houget, who has avoided a mandatory vaccine order for health workers because she caught COVID-19 late last year.

The protesters accuse Macron of trampling on their freedoms and treating citizens unequally. He says freedoms carry responsibilities that include protecting the health of others.

France recorded more than 300,000 new coronavirus infections for the second time in a week on Friday. Hospitalizations, including COVID-19 patients in intensive care (ICU), are rising steadily, putting the healthcare system under strain.

Some hospitals have reported that some 85% of ICU patients are not vaccinated against COVID-19. Data shows that 90% of over-12s eligible for the COVID shot are fully vaccinated.

People in France already have to show either proof of vaccination or a negative test to enter restaurants and bars and use inter-regional trains. But with Omicron infections surging, the government wants to drop the test option.

Three months before a presidential election, Macron's blunt language appeared to be calculated, tapping into a mounting frustration against the unvaccinated.

Conservative challenger Valerie Pécresse said Macron was driving a wedge through the country. Far-right candidate Eric Zemmour denounced what he called the president's puerile remarks.

On the capital's streets, protesters accused Macron of politicising the pandemic ahead of the election.

"I want him to piss off drug dealers and criminals, not the average person," said one 55-year-old protester who requested anonymity because he runs a business.

Kazakh Forces Arrest Ex-Security Chief

ALMATY (Dispatches) - Kazakhstan's former intelligence chief has been arrested on suspicion of treason, the state security agency said on Saturday, as the former Soviet republic cracks down on a wave of unrest and starts to assign blame.

The detention of Karim Massimov was announced by the National Security Committee which he headed until he was fired by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Wednesday after violent protests swept across the Central Asian nation.

Tokayev's office said he had told Russian President Vladimir Putin in a phone call that the situation was stabilizing. "At the same time, hotbeds of terrorist attacks persist. Therefore, the fight against terrorism will continue with full determination," it quoted him as saying.

The Kremlin said Putin backed Tokayev's idea to convene a video call of leaders from the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), under whose umbrella Russia and four other former Soviet republics have sent troops into Kazakhstan to help restore order. It was not clear when this would take place.



At Least 16 Stranded Snow-Tourists Die at Pakistan Hill Station

KARACHI (Dispatches) - At least 16 tourists died in freezing temperatures after being stranded in their vehicles in northern Pakistan, where thousands had flocked to enjoy the snow, officials said on Saturday.

With some 1,000 vehicles still stranded, the government has declared Murree, 64 km (40 miles) northeast of the capital Islamabad, a calamity hit area. "For the first time in 15 to 20 years such large number of tourists flocked to Murree, which created a big crisis," Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, Pakistan's interior minister said a video message.

The minister said that around 1,000 cars were stuck in the hill station, a town elevated from the nearby area, confirming that "16 to 19 deaths have occurred in their cars."

Army platoons and paramilitary forces have been deployed to help the civil administration in rescue operations, he said.

Late on Friday the government announced the closure of all roads leading to the station to stop any further influx of the tourists.

Prime Minister Imran Khan expressed shock over the "tragic deaths" of the tourists. "Have ordered inquiry and putting in place strong regulations to ensure prevention of such tragedies," Khan said in a tweet. Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry appealed to people to not visit the hill station.

Snowfall, which began on Tuesday night, continued at regular intervals, attracting thousands of tourists. Due to huge numbers of visitors, many families ended up getting stranded on roads.

Local media reported that over 100,000 vehicles entered the hill station.

Videos shared on social media showed entire families, including children, lying dead in their snow covered vehicles. "Were the deaths caused by cold or carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning?," Dr. Faheem Yonus, chief of infectious diseases at the University of Maryland UCH, said in a tweet. "CO is odorless, lethal if an idling car is buried in snow, the blocked exhaust (silencer) can quickly kill the passengers as they breathe CO."

Officials have given no word on the causes of the deaths.

Dozens of people have been killed, thousands have been detained and public buildings across Kazakhstan have been torched over the past week in the worst violence experienced in the oil and uranium producer since it became independent in the early 1990s as the Soviet Union collapsed.

Tokayev has ordered his troops to shoot to kill to end what he has called attacks by bandits and terrorists.

He said on Friday the state had "slept through" instigators' preparations to launch attacks on the biggest city, Almaty, and across the country. Massimov's arrest indicated moves were under way against those deemed responsible.

Apart from heading the intelligence agency that replaced the Soviet-era KGB, Massimov was twice prime minister and worked closely with former President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the country's ruler for three decades until he turned over the presidency to Tokayev in 2019.

There were no details of the treason allegations. The security service said other officials were also detained, but did not name them.

Chileans Protest Lithium Contract Sale

SANTIAGO (AFP) - Chileans took to the streets to protest a government plan to sell a lithium extraction contract, reviving debate about nationalization of the resource as a new leftist president prepares to take over.

Protests were called by the opposition under the banner: "To reclaim our resource."

Opposition lawmakers launched a court action -- rejected Friday because the clock on the process had run out -- earlier this week to stop the bidding process for a 20-year contract to extract 400,000 tons of lithium in the world's second-largest producer of the metal, which notably is used in electric car batteries.

The tender process, which opened last October, will close this month, just two months before center-right president Sebastian Pinera is replaced by leftist Gabriel Boric.

In Santiago Friday evening, marchers chanted, "Pinera, understand that lithium is not for sale."

Boric, Chile's youngest-ever leader, was elected last month on a promise of installing a "social welfare" state and has said Chile cannot repeat the "historical error of privatizing resources" such as lithium.

Boric has proposed creating a "national lithium company" similar to the national Copper Corporation (Codelco) -- the world's biggest copper company formed in the 1970s out of nationalized mining firms.

Copper mining was nationalized by the government of Marxist ex-president Salvador Allende, ousted by

dictator Augusto Pinochet who introduced a neoliberal, free market-friendly constitution that is now being rewritten in response to a mass uprising in 2019 against deep social inequality.

"We have two options: either we leave lithium in the ground or we use lithium for the benefit of all Chileans," President Pinera told reporters.

"After seeing that lithium production had stagnated in Chile... and that countries such as Argentina and Bolivia were threatening to overtake Chile, we decided to launch a strategic plan to use lithium," he added.

But lawmaker Raul Soto of the center-left Party for Democracy, who submitted court papers Tuesday to stop the tender process, said Pinera's government was "putting the general interest of the nation at risk."

The government argues the sale is needed to return Chile to the position of the world's largest lithium producer, which it was until 2016.

It is currently number two, after Australia.

Five companies, including Chilean mining giant SQM and American Albemarle, have submitted tenders worth tens of millions of dollars for the license.

The government says the contract will cover no more than four percent of Chile's known lithium reserves -- it holds 57 percent of the world total -- and insists the winning bidder will have to comply with strict environmental regulations.



Albanian Police Fire Tear Gas at Protesters

TIRANA (Dispatches) - Police fired tear gas and water cannon in Tirana on Saturday as stone-throwing protesters stormed into the headquarters of Albania's opposition Democratic Party in a deepening power struggle between party rivals.

At least one police officer and one protester were injured and dozens of protesters were arrested, police said. The protests were dispersed in the afternoon.

The protesters were supporters of former president and Prime Minister Sali Berisha, who was thrown out of the party last year after Washington banned him from entering the United States over alleged corruption.

Berisha, who denies wrongdoing, has since mounted a leadership challenge against party leader Lulzim Basha. Last month, Berisha called a party assembly and announced himself as leader.

During Saturday's unrest, Berisha supporters used hammers to smash open newly installed metal security doors at the offices and threw up ladders in a bid to reach the second floor.

Police said in a statement they were forced to intervene after "a group of lawmakers inside the Democratic Party requested police help because lives were in danger".

Local media said people inside the building had sought to keep the protesters out by spraying fire extinguishers before police arrived.

"The battle will continue ... we consider the party building as our home and we will liberate our home," said Berisha, speaking just after he was stopped from approaching the building again by police using paper spray against him and his supporters.

The EU office in Tirana called for calm and restraint: "There must be no room for violence in politics," it said.

The U.S. ambassador in Albania, Yuri Kim, said Washington was deeply concerned about recent tension surrounding the Democratic Party.

"Those inciting violence or undermining the rule of law will be held accountable," Kim said in a tweet.



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J, balcony
fireplace
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Darrous Villa (\$5000)
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S/pool, S, J
L.balcony
marble floor
Fully Furn

Parsian

Farmanieh (\$2200) 200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, balcony, & F.F
Zaferanieh (\$2600) 260sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, balcony, & F.F

Darrous (\$1800) 180sq.m, 3bdrs, balcony, pkg, & F.F
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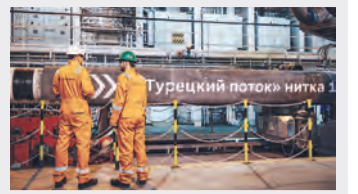
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Gazprom Signs 4-Year Gas Deal With Turkey's BOTAS

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian energy giant Gazprom signed a new, four-year gas supply agreement with Turkey's Petroleum Pipeline Corporation (BOTAS), the Russian gas producer's export arm announced on Thursday.

Gazprom Export will supply up to 5.75 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas to the state-owned Turkish company a year under the deal, it said in a statement.

The Russian gas flows to Turkey via a joint energy pipeline project, TurkStream pipeline, which has an annual capacity of 31.5 bcm and was commissioned in early 2020.



German Inflation Hits 30-Year High in December

BERLIN (Dispatches) - German annual inflation grew in December at its fastest pace in almost 30 years, official data showed last week, pushed up by rising energy costs and supply bottlenecks.

The consumer price index (CPI) rose by 5.3% year-over-year, the highest reading since June 1992, and marked a further acceleration in price pressures after 5.2% in November, the German Federal Statistics Office said in preliminary figures.

Over the whole of 2021, inflation came in at 3.1%, the highest year-end figure since 1993. It was up from 0.5% in 2020.

The reading from Germany, the biggest eurozone economy, may indicate that inflation across the bloc peaked in November at a record 4.9%. The first estimate of December eurozone inflation is due for release on Friday.

The central bank last month raised its 2022 inflation forecast for Germany to 3.6% from 1.8% seen last June and predicted a rate of 2.2% for both 2023 and 2024 - all rates above the European Central Bank's (ECB) inflation target of 2%.

The acceleration had a "number of reasons," the statistics office said, including higher costs for energy, supply chain disruptions due to the pandemic and a temporary value-added tax (VAT) cut in 2020, which lowers the base against which current price rises are measured.

The December inflation reading was the last to factor in the tax holiday, introduced to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns on the economy. The question that arose was whether inflation had reached its "summit" or if there would be a "further, hitherto unexpected rise," said Fritz Koehler-Geib, chief economist at the public lender KfW.

"Both are conceivable. There is much to suggest that price growth will cool off as a result of the elimination of base effects," while it remains "uncertain" how quickly bottlenecks or energy price rises would ease.

Gas prices have surged in Europe in recent months as demand has soared with economies emerging from their COVID-19-induced restrictions.

The spike has been further fueled by geopolitical tensions surrounding 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 to push through regulatory approval for the controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline set to ship gas to Germany.

German government officials and policymakers at the central bank expect inflation to ease in the coming months as transitory effects, such as the temporary VAT cut, should wane from January onwards.

"It is true that inflation should fall after the turn of the year, partly due to special factors," Commerzbank analyst Joerg Kraemer said.

"But the inflation risks are clearly pointing upward - not only for Germany but also for the eurozone. It's time for the ECB to take its foot off the gas."

The ECB expects inflation to peak around the turn of the year. Preliminary inflation data for the eurozone is due on Friday at 10:00 a.m. GMT, with a Reuters poll of analysts expecting a slowdown to 4.7% in December from November's record 4.9%. The ECB raised its inflation projections last month. It now sees consumer prices rising 3.2% in 2022, well above the 1.7% projected in September, but forecasts inflation will slow to 1.8% in 2023 against an earlier projection of 1.5%.

Pakistan Denies Reports of Canceling Turkish Chopper Deal

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan denied media reports that the country had canceled a deal to buy dozens of attack helicopters from Turkey amid long-lasting limbo with the United States over its refusal to issue an export license for engines that power the choppers.

In a statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the Pakistan Army, clarified that speculations over the cancellation of Pakistan's deal for acquiring T129 Tactical Reconnaissance and Attack Helicopters (ATAK) from Turkey are "baseless."

Other reports, citing Pakistani military and diplomatic sources, said remarks by Director-General of ISPR, Maj. Gen. Babar Iftikhar, this week were misconstrued and that the country did not give up on the deal.

Answering a question regarding the helicopters during a press conference on Wednesday, Iftikhar was cited as saying that "as far as the Turkish deal is concerned, we have moved on."

He was also said to have confirmed that Pakistan was also in negotiations with China for attack helicopters, and "hopefully, we will be getting some gunships (from them)."

Explaining the country's defense procurement needs, Iftikhar said Pakistan's armed forces are continuously enhancing their capacity and upgrading technology while remaining cognizant of the threat and operational requirements.

"While answering a question related to Pakistan's deal with Turkey for acquiring T-129 ATAK helicopters, the statement made by DG ISPR was misconstrued on some digital media platforms," said ISPR.

"It is clarified that Pakistan has never ruled out an acquisition of military helicopters from Turkey. All speculations in this regard are baseless."

Pakistan in 2018 agreed to buy 30 T129 ATAK choppers built by Turkish Aerospace Industry (TAI), powered by engines made by LHTEC, a joint venture of British Rolls Royce and Honeywell, a U.S. company. Foreign companies are obligated to obtain export permits for U.S. military-grade commercial sales.

Though it recently greenlighted exports of the same aircraft to the Philippines, Washington has never approved the sale to Pakistan, with some linking it to Turkey's acquiring the Russian-made S-400 air defense system, a major driver of tensions between Ankara and Washington over the recent years.

TAI's engine manufacturing subsidiary, TUSAŞ Engine Industries (TEI), embarked on a project to develop a domestic engine for the helicopter, the turboshaft TEI-TS1400, which will also power the country's first indigenous T625 multirole helicopter named Gökbey.



Global Copper Smelting Steady in December

LONDON (Dispatches) - Global copper smelting activity was steady in December as a slowdown in China was offset by gains elsewhere, including other parts of Asia and North America, data from satellite surveillance of copper plants showed.

Reduced activity in the southwest of China dragged down the overall performance in the world's top refined copper producer, commodities broker Marex and SAVANT, a satellite analytics service it launched with Earth-i in 2019, said in a statement.

But a rebound in other major producers of refined copper helped to steady global activity, they said.

Power rationing in China last year led to a decline in the smelting activity, although this has since eased.

Earth-i, which specializes in geospatial data, tracks more than 100 smelters representing 80% to 90% of global production. It sells data to fund managers, traders and miners and publishes a free monthly index of global copper smelter activity.

Its global dispersion index was barely changed at an average of 51.6 in December compared with 51.7 in November. SAVANT launched the dispersion index in June, with 50 points indicating smelters are operating at the average level of the last 12 months. It also has a second index showing the percentage of active smelters.

The China dispersion index fell to 53.5 in December from 57.4 in November, while a reading of the rest of world's activity rose to 50.3 from 47.8 a month earlier. For 2021, global copper smelting activity in all measured regions recorded dispersion indices that were below 50.

Venezuela's Inflation Hit 686.4% in 2021

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuela's annual inflation rate hit 686.4% in 2021, demonstrating a deceleration of consumer price growth versus the previous year when inflation was 2,959.8%, the country's central bank said on Saturday.

Monthly inflation in December rose 7.6% and, since September, the inflation rate has remained in the single digits.

The deceleration in prices follows government measures which include the restriction of credit and lower spending in bolivars to maintain the stability of the exchange rate.

As a result of this strategy, government entities and state-owned oil company PDVSA now pay suppliers in cash with foreign currency.

During an interview broadcast on state television at the start of this month, Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro said hyperinflation - which ran for four years - had been left behind.

Despite measures to improve supplies and control inflation, prices remain high and continue to hit the earnings of Venezuelan families, limiting their ability to buy goods like food and medicine. A minimum monthly salary is equivalent to \$1.50.

In 2019, amid hyperinflation and economic collapse, Venezuela's government relaxed economic controls, allowing greater quantities of foreign currency to circulate, which provided some sectors with breathing space.

The central bank has yet to publish data regarding the country's economic growth.

Global Food Prices Jump to Decade High With Slim Hopes for 2022

ROME (Dispatches) - Food prices around the world jumped 28% in 2021 to their highest level in a decade, the United Nations' food agency said Thursday, with a slim hope of a return to more stable market conditions this year.

The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) food price index, which tracks the most globally traded food commodities, averaged 125.7 points in 2021, the highest since 131.9 in 2011.

The monthly index eased slightly in December but had climbed for the previous four months in a row, reflecting harvest setbacks and strong demand over the past year.

Higher food prices have contributed to a broader surge in inflation as economies recover from the coronavirus crisis and the FAO has warned that the higher costs are putting poorer populations at risk in countries reliant on imports.

In its latest update, the food agency was cautious about whether price pressures might abate this year.

"While normally high prices are expected to give way to increased production, the high cost of inputs, ongoing global pandemic and ever more uncertain climatic conditions leave little room for optimism

about a return to more stable market conditions even in 2022," FAO senior economist Abdolreza Abbassian said in a statement.

A surge in the price of fertilizers, linked to spiraling energy prices, has ramped up the cost of so-called inputs used by farmers to produce crops, raising doubts over yield prospects for next year's harvests.



In December, prices for all categories in the food price index bar fell, with vegetable oils, dairy products and sugar falling significantly, the agency said in its monthly update.

It cited a lull in demand during the month, concerns about the impact of the omicron coronavirus variant, and supplies from Southern Hemisphere wheat harvests for the declines.

However, all categories in the index showed sharp increases during 2021 as a whole and the FAO's vegetable oil price index hit a record high.

Crop futures have seen volatile trading at the start of 2022, with oilseed markets stirred by drought in South America and floods in Malaysia.

Dairy prices maintained their recent strength in December, helped by lower milk production in Western Europe and Oceania, the FAO said.

India to Overtake Japan as Asia's 2nd Largest Economy by 2030



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India is likely to overtake Japan as Asia's second-largest economy by 2030 when its GDP is also projected to surpass that of Germany and the UK to rank as world's No.3, IHS Markit said in a report.

Currently, India is the sixth-largest economy in the world, behind the US, China, Japan, Germany and the United Kingdom.

"India's nominal GDP measured in dollar terms is forecast to rise from \$2.7 trillion in 2021 to \$8.4 trillion by 2030," IHS Markit Ltd said. "This rapid pace of economic expansion would result in the size of Indian GDP exceeding Japanese GDP by 2030, making India the second-largest economy in the Asia-Pacific region."

By 2030, the Indian economy would also be larger in size than the largest Western European economies of Germany, France and the UK.

"Overall, India is expected to continue to be one of the world's fastest-growing economies over the next decade," it said.

The long-term outlook for the Indian economy is supported by a number of key growth drivers.

"An important positive factor for India is its large and fast-growing middle class, which is helping to drive consumer spending," IHS Markit said, forecasting that the country's consumption expenditure will double from \$1.5 trillion in 2020 to \$3 trillion by 2030.

For the full fiscal year 2021-22 (April 2021 to March 2022), India's real GDP growth rate is projected to be 8.2 per cent, rebounding from the severe contraction of 7.3 per cent year-on-year in 2020-21, IHS Markit said.

The Indian economy is forecast to continue growing strongly in the 2022-23 fiscal year, at a pace of 6.7 per cent.

Iranian Source Rejects Arab Newspaper Claim

TEHRAN (IRNA) - An informed source close to the Iranian negotiating team said that the news released by an Arabic-language newspaper about the interim agreement in Vienna is completely false and fabricated.

A source close to the negotiating team told IRNA that the news released by Al-Rai Al-Youm newspaper that a two-year

interim agreement had been reached in Vienna is completely false and fabricated.

Al-Rai Al-Youm newspaper claimed that the agreement in Vienna has been completed and the obstacles that existed in the course of the negotiations during the previous rounds have been removed.



Turkey Overhauls Citizenship Conditions in Effort to Support Lira

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The Turkish government has made updates to its regulation that grants citizenship to foreigners in return for a certain amount of investment or acquisition of a real estate property, in the latest step in the authorities' efforts to support the Turkish lira.

Foreigners can become citizens if they own property worth at least \$250,000 for three years or if they make an investment of at least \$500,000 or hold Turkish debt of an equivalent amount for three years.

The foreign currency obtained from the sale of the property to foreigners will now be sold to the central bank through a local bank and converted into the lira, according to the new regulation, published in the Official Gazette on Thursday.

The amount that foreigners keep in a local bank for investment will also be converted into the local currency, it said. The regulation mandates that the money be kept in the lira deposits or government debt instruments and must remain in the country for a minimum of three years.

Also, the minimum amount of investment required to acquire citizenship has been defined as the dollar equivalent of another foreign currency.

The update in the regulation comes after a slide in the lira after the central bank slashed its policy rate by 500 basis points to 14% from 19% since September.

The currency fell to a record low of 18.4 to the dollar last month, before seeing a massive rebound after President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan unveiled a deposit scheme that offers to compensate savers for losses incurred due to depreciation during the deposit term.

The latest application aims to prevent and reverse the dollarization trend in the country, said Ömer Faruk Akbal, the chairperson of the Real Estate International Promotion Association (GIGDER).

"It is the right decision in terms of strengthening the Turkish lira, Akbal told the business daily Dünya.

Yet, he said serious preparations need to be made regarding the application principles. "We expect that foreign investors who have Turkish lira in their hands will not have an obstacle to taking advantage of the relevant law and that the issue of how they should make their investments will be clarified with circulars or guidelines to be prepared by the relevant institutions."

"We export \$19 million worth of real estate every day. Therefore, there should be no gaps in the process," he noted.

Those eligible for citizenship include foreigners who the Industry and Technology Ministry determines have made at least a \$500,000 investment in the country or have spent at least \$250,000 on the property and kept that property for at least three years.

It also includes foreigners determined by the Labor and Social Security Ministry to employ at least 50 people, those who have deposited at least \$500,000 into Turkish banks and kept it there for at least three years, those who have purchased and kept



for three years at least \$500,000 in government debt, or those who have made a venture capital or property fund purchase of at least \$500,000.

Ankara adopted the citizenship-for-homes scheme in 2017. A year later it cut the minimum price to \$250,000, from \$1 million, to attract foreign buyers.

Some 7,000 foreigners received citizenship via home purchases between 2017 and 2020, the government said last year.

Foreign home sales - mainly to Iranians, Iraqis, Russians and Afghans - reached an all-time monthly high in November, official data showed, also taking the 11-month sales to their highest level ever, as a depreciation in the lira made Turkish property more attractive to foreign buyers.

Sales to foreign buyers jumped 48.4% year-over-year in November and the 7,363 properties sold marked the highest monthly level since the data series began in 2013. Sales to foreigners were strong throughout the year, rising 39.4% in the first 11 months to 50,735 units, exceeding the annual threshold of 50,000 for the first time ever.

The industry is estimated to have ended 2021 at a level of up to 57,000 units. The previous annual record was set in 2019 when 45,483 houses were sold to foreigners.

Last year net foreign investment in real estate was \$5.7 billion, central bank data shows.

They had purchased around 40,812 houses throughout 2020, a 10.3% year-over-year decrease from 45,483 units in 2019. It still marked the second-highest annual figure ever.

Chinese Filmmaker To Direct Olympic Ceremony Again

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Acclaimed Chinese film director Zhang Yimou, who masterminded the spectacular opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, will reprise that role for next month's Winter Games in the capital, organizers have announced.

Zhang, 71, promised a "totally innovative" unveiling, while conceding that the global pandemic and colder weather will limit its scale compared to 14 years ago, when 15,000 performers took part.

"Being simple, just as in martial arts films, is like a master's sword," Zhang told state-run Xinhua news agency in an interview released.

"It looks like a very simple stab, but with fateful power." The director of Chinese classics such as "Red Sorghum", "Raise the Red Lantern" and martial-arts epics like "Hero" and "House of Flying Daggers" said around 3,000 performers would take part.

Zhang said it would feature "a bold idea" for the lighting of the Olympic torch that will take in concepts such as "environmental protection and low carbon emission."

He gave no other clues, but state broadcaster CGTN separately quoted Zhang saying that Chinese Lunar New Year elements also would feature in the theme.

The February 4-20 Olympics coincide roughly with China's extended Lunar New Year holiday.

"I'm very nervous. I think it's totally innovative and people will be surprised," Xinhua quoted Zhang as saying.

The stunning 2008 version featured 2,008 musicians beating ancient Chinese drums in perfect timing, along with thousands of others - martial artists, dancers, opera singers, acrobats, and trapeze artists - in lavish costumes. The 2008 ceremony focused on China's rich history and civilization but also was widely seen as an exclamation point underlining the country's re-emergence as a global force.

"It's different now," Xinhua quoted Zhang as saying.

Iran Ready for...

FROM PAGE 1

It has also triggered a restart in political and economic relations between Iran and Turkmenistan as the two countries have had disputes over price issues in a previous gas swap agreement.

Owji said that Iran and Turkmenistan will sign a series of new documents to further expand energy ties during the two-day trip by Meredov and his accompanying delegation to Tehran.

He said the two sides had held fruitful talks earlier on Saturday about future gas and fuel swap deals as well as on cooperation in technical and engineering projects in their petroleum industries.

Iran Not to...

FROM PAGE 1

Ayatollah Khamenei was referring to the war of the 1980s by former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein who invaded Iran with support from the US and other countries in a bid to stamp out Iran's nascent revolution led by the late founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini.

"At the present time, no one thought that - and even our friends did not think that - the martyrdom of Martyr Soleimani which was really a historical and unusual event would assume this much magnificence and that God Almighty would give it glory and exhibit the real identity of the Iranian people and their unity under the coffin of Martyr Soleimani to everyone," the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei said, "The martyrdom of a great figure like Martyr Soleimani was a threat from the enemy's point of view, but the zeal of the Muslim nation of Iran turned this threat into an opportunity that everyone saw."

One of the enemy's agenda, Ayatollah Khamenei said, is to desensitize the Iranian people to the principles of the Islamic Revolution.

"The people are sensitive to the fundamental issues of the revolution, and if someone attacks these principles, the people will take a stand," he said.

"The enemies also want to gradually reduce this sensitivity in the people. This is done through the extensive propaganda which is being carried out these days in cyberspace and other foreign mass media," Ayatollah Khamenei added.

The Islamic Republic and the Islamic Revolution were formed for the rule of God, Ayatollah Khamenei said.

"In order for the rule of society to be adjusted for religious form and geometry and move forward, the people gave their lives and sacrificed their blood to make this happen; this is one of the principles of the revolution and the enemies want to weaken it," the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei also said the issue of maintaining unity in the country is important.

"We must reduce the causes of division. There are differences of taste, opinion, method and character, but we should not let them lead to confrontation and the general cohesion of the people should not be destroyed.

"There are enemies whose specialty is to create differences ... We should not let differences between Shias and Sunnis and religious differences escalate in the country," the Leader said, adding Shias and Sunnis in Iran have lived together for centuries and have not had any problems with each other.

The Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Khamenei said, is the manifestation of Islam and the rule of the Islamic Ummah in the world.

"On the anniversary of the martyrdom of Martyr Soleimani, huge demonstrations were held in Sunni countries. We should not think that we have the right to ignore the issue of national cohesion."

The Leader also called for strengthening hope in the society, describing it as one of "our most important issues".

"There are those who try to destroy hope in young people and make them hopeless about the future. It is our duty to strengthen this hope in our hearts, and this cannot be achieved by talking alone. Efforts must be made and many positive things can fill the hearts of young people with hope."

Ayatollah Khamenei said while Iran has problems in certain regards, "some express these problems as if there had been no achievements" under the Islamic Republic.

"There have been many successes in the establishment, and we must tell these successes to the people and remind those who have overlooked them."

The Leader also said the capacity of the people for public oversight must be used in order to stem certain cases of corruption and greed which are seen in some corners of the country.

Iran, P4+1...

FROM PAGE 1

Tehran's chief negotiator told reporters on Wednesday that the Vienna talks are "positive and forward-moving" and emphasized that efforts were underway to achieve results from the talks.

He added, "We also want guarantees that no new sanctions are imposed and that the existing sanctions

Meanwhile, the Russian chief negotiator to the Vienna negotiations, Mikhail Ulyanov, said in a tweet that the talks between Iran and the five countries are

moving forward not fast but incrementally.

"I would say that the atmosphere at the Vienna Talks is positive and businesslike. Judging by my contacts with other counterparts, they share this assessment," Ulyanov tweeted on Saturday.

In another tweet, the Russian diplomat said the working group on sanctions lifting also held talks earlier in the day to assess the current state of affairs in the Vienna talks.

U.S. Continues...

FROM PAGE 1

The U.S. military has illegally stationed forces and equipment in eastern and northeastern Syria, with the Pentagon claiming that the deployment is aimed at preventing the oil fields in the area from falling into the hands of Daesh terrorists.



The Syrian government, however, insists the unlawful deployment is intended to plunder the country's resources.

Former U.S. president Donald Trump admitted on several occasions that American forces were in Syria for its oil.

Washington has stepped up its economic war against the Arab country after failing to topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad with massive assistance from its Western European, NATO and Arab allies, along with their proxy forces, including Daesh and various other terrorist groups.

It seems that the U.S. does not want to quit this habit and it needs a proper response from the Syrian nation like what Iraqis are doing or Taliban forces did in Afghanistan. As long as nations seat and watch, the global arrogance will continue plundering of their wealth each time under different pretext once under the claim of fighting Daesh, once under claim of fighting Al-Qaeda and once under claim of the human rights and supporting nations.

In January 2021, J. Michael Springmann, the former U.S. diplomat in Saudi Arabia, said the U.S. is looting oil from the Syrian people and sending it to somewhere else presumably to the Apartheid entity of Israel. "The United States of America is moving soldiers from Iraq, which it is occupying, to Syria, which it continues to occupy, in order to steal Syrian oil from the Syrian people and to send the oil to somewhere else, presumably to Israel and other places that will benefit from American theft of Syrian oil," he said.

Springmann, who was head of the American visa bureau in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, during the administrations of former presidents Reagan and Bush from September 1987 through March 1989, underscored: "This is typical of the U.S. and should be shown in contrast to 25,000 soldiers that were surrounding Joe Biden when he was being inaugurated, just a few days ago."

In August 2021, and according to Syrian sources, the U.S. occupiers transported Syrian oil with 80 tankers and trucks through the illegal Al-Walid crossing into northern Iraq.

A convoy of the U.S. occupation's tankers laden with stolen Syrian has left the Syrian territory heading for the Iraqi territory via al-Walid illegitimate crossing, Syrian news agency SANA reported.

Local sources from Rmelan area told SANA reporter that 80 of the U.S. occupation oil vehicles that include tankers laden with oil, trailers, and refrigerated tankers, accompanied by armored vehicles headed for Iraq via al-Walid illegitimate border crossing.

As long as Syrians do not take serious action against the Americans, this country will continue looting its oil and wealth and Syrians should be united in expelling Americans out of their territories otherwise the occupiers will continue habit of sucking blood of them and plundering their oil. What the American forces are doing in Syria is nothing but piracy and it has nothing with fighting terrorist groups or restoring peace and security in the region and unfortunately international bodies are just lookers-on and they let the U.S. forces do whatever they wish and now it is up to the nations to stand against this wrong and criminal act of any global arrogance.

Iran's Foreign...

FROM PAGE 1

Speaking At Majlis, Raisi said: "My today's presence in the parliament is due to respect for the law and regulations of the parliament and to explain the 1401 budget bill, because in the last session and on the day the bill was submitted, I talked about the dimensions and indices of the 1401 budget."

The President added: "Today, convergence between the parliament and the government is necessary, and in order to solve the problems of the people, those who care about the revolution expect that this convergence and overlap takes place."

Regarding housing construction, Raisi said: "The government seeks to implement the housing construction law, and this is both our promise and the resolution of the parliament and what people want."

Referring to the support for production, Ayatollah Raisi said: "What was approved in the parliament and what the government is pursuing are all on the same side. This convergence and support is what the people want in order to solve their problems."

Regarding the control of inflation in the thirteenth government, the President said: "Based on the statistics, inflation has started to decline and be controlled."

Later the general budget bill for the next Iranian year (starting on March 21, 2022) was passed by the Parliament with 174 votes in favor, 76 against and six abstentions.

Smith Stretches Lead in Tournament of Champions

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Cameron Smith shook off two early bogeys to card a nine-under par 64 and push his lead at the US PGA Tour Tournament of Champions to three strokes over top-ranked Jon Rahm and Daniel Berger. Smith's 17-under par total of 129 on the par-73 Plantation Course at Kapalua, Hawaii, matched the tournament's 36-hole record set by Ernie Els in 2003. Spain's Rahm carded a second straight bogey-free 66 for 132 and shared second on 14-under with Berger, who also posted a bogey-free 66.

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E-Mail Address:
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ISSN 1024-6053
P.O. Box: 15875-8551
Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St., Golestan II St, Golestan St. Marzadaran Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Printed by: Honar Sarzmin Sabz
Distributed by:
Cities of Iran Cultural and Artistic Institute
Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

Vardy Out for Up to Two Months

LONDON (Dispatches) - Leicester City striker and club top scorer Jamie Vardy has been ruled out for up to eight weeks due to a hamstring injury, manager Brendan Rodgers said. The 34-year-old, who has nine goals in the Premier League this season, played the full 90 minutes in last week's 1-0 home win over Liverpool despite a hamstring issue that kept him out of the Boxing Day loss to Manchester City. Rodgers said Vardy does not need an operation, but the injury was worse than first feared.

Bulls Take Down Wizards For 9th Straight Win

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Zach LaVine's game-high 27 points led six Chicago Bulls in double figures Friday night as they stretched their winning streak to nine games with a 130-122 defeat of the visiting Washington Wizards. Coby White came off the bench to score 21, while Lonzo Ball and Ayo Dosunmu each added 18 points. Nikola Vucevic stuffed the stat sheet with 16 points, 14 rebounds and seven assists, and DeMar DeRozan contributed 15 points and eight assists. All five starters scored in double figures for Washington, led by Bradley Beal's 26 points. Kyle Kuzma added a 21-point, 11-rebound double-double, while Spencer Dinwiddie chipped in 18 points. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope and Daniel Gaffard each scored 14 points. The difference in a game where both teams hit better than 50 percent of their shots came at the 3-point line. While the Bulls made 15 of 33 from distance, the Wizards were only 7 of 24, a 24-point difference that was too great to overcome.

76ers 119, Spurs 100

Joel Embiid had 31 points, 12 rebounds and seven assists to lift host Philadelphia past depleted San Antonio.

Embiid, who went to the locker room before the game went final, reached at least 30 points for the sixth consecutive game. Seth Curry and Tobias Harris contributed 23 points apiece for the Sixers, who matched a season best with their sixth win in a row.

The Spurs were quite short-handed without Keldon Johnson, Derrick White, Doug McDermott, Thaddeus Young, Devin Vassell and Tre Jones in health and safety protocol. Dejounte Murray led the Spurs with 27 points and nine assists. Jakob Poeltl added 17 points and Lonnie Walker IV had 13 for San Antonio, which has lost five of its last six games.

Bucks 121, Nets 109

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 31 points, nine assists and seven rebounds as Milwaukee cruised to a wire-to-wire victory over slumping Brooklyn in New York.

Antetokounmpo returned from missing Wednesday's loss to Toronto due to an illness and helped Milwaukee win for the seventh time in nine games. Bobby Portis helped Milwaukee establish the tone for its dominating showing by adding 20 of his 25 points in the first half. Khris Middleton contributed 15 of his 20 in the third quarter when the Bucks opened a 24-point lead. Kevin Durant totaled 29 points, nine



rebounds and seven assists, but it was not enough as the Nets dropped their fifth straight home game and lost for the fourth time in five games. James Harden added 16, nine rebounds and seven assists.

Timberwolves 135, Thunder 105

D'Angelo Russell had 27 points and 12 assists to lead Minnesota to a win over host Oklahoma City.

The Timberwolves extended their winning streak to three while the Thunder have lost three in a row and five of six. Anthony Edwards set the tone early, scoring 17 first-quarter points, making all six of his shots including five 3-pointers.

Lakers 134, Hawks 118

LeBron James scored 32 points with nine assists and Malik Monk added a season-high 29 points as Los Angeles increased its winning streak to four games with a victory over visiting Atlanta.

Avery Bradley and Talen Horton-Tucker each had 21 points for the Lakers, who have won five of their last six games following a five-game losing streak that came immediately after Anthony Davis was lost for a month with a knee injury.

Trae Young scored 25 points with 14 assists and nine rebounds as the Hawks fell to 2-3 on a six-game road trip that concludes Sunday in Los Angeles against the Clippers. Young had his 17th consecutive game of 25 or more points to break Dominique Wilkins' franchise record.

Nuggets 121, Kings 111

Nikola Jokic had 33 points and 10 rebounds, Jeff Green scored 18 points after missing three games while on the COVID-19 list and host Denver beat Sacramento.

Bones Hyland, Monte Morris and JaMychal Green scored 13 apiece and Aaron Gordon and Will Barton each had 10 points for the Nuggets.

Australian Tennis Boss Rejects Blame for Djokovic Drama

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Australia's tennis chief boasted in an internal video leaked Saturday of his team's "unbelievable job" despite a visa crisis engulfing the men's world number one, Novak Djokovic.

Three days after Australian border agents tore up Djokovic's visa over his Covid-19 vaccination status and placed him in a Melbourne detention center, Tennis Australia boss Craig Tiley addressed the widespread criticism of his organization's role.

"There is a lot of finger pointing going on... but I can assure you our team has done an unbelievable job," he said in a video published by the Sunday Herald Sun newspaper.

Although Djokovic won a legal reprieve from deportation until Monday, when his attempt to overturn his visa cancellation will be heard in court, it is unclear whether he will play in the January 17-30 Australian Open.

A second tennis player who was headed to the tournament -- Czech doubles specialist Renata Voracova -- had her visa cancelled after initially being allowed into the country, her government has confirmed.

She also was placed in the Melbourne centre, and said she was "waiting for a permit (to leave), on Saturday perhaps."

"They bring me food and there's a guard in the corridor... I feel a bit like in prison," 38-year-old Voracova told Czech media.

The Tennis Australia boss said his organisation had chosen not to address the issue in public because of Djokovic's lawsuit, but his team had done "everything they possibly could".

Lewandowski, Messi, Salah Short-Listed for Best Player Award

ZURICH (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich striker Robert Lewandowski, Paris St Germain forward Lionel Messi and Liverpool's Mohamed Salah have been short-listed for The Best FIFA Men's Player award, football's world governing body said yesterday.

Lewandowski, who won the award in 2020, scored a Bundesliga record 41 goals in the 2020-21 season to eclipse the previous best set by Gerd Muller in the 1971-72 campaign.

Messi ended his wait for a major international trophy in 2021 when he helped Argentina win the Copa America. The 34-year-old also bagged his seventh Ballon d'Or trophy last month.

Egypt striker Salah is the Premier League's top scorer this season with 16 goals.

Australia forward Sam Kerr of Chelsea along with Barcelona's Jennifer Hermoso and Alexia Putellas made the three-player shortlist for the women's award.

Kerr helped Chelsea retain the Women's Super League title in 2021, while Hermoso and Putellas were part of the Barcelona team that won the Champions League and Spanish top-flight title last season. The winners will be announced on January 17.

Anisimova Into Melbourne Final

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - American Amanda Anisimova crushed 26th-ranked Russian Daria Kasatkina to zero in on her second WTA title, racing through their semi-final showdown at the Melbourne Summer Set 6-2, 6-0.

The 56-minute thrashing at Rod Laver Arena set up a final against either fellow American young gun Ann Li or Belarus' Aliaksandra Sasnovich, who play later.

Anisimova, 20, had lost her last 14 matches against top-30 players, but was too hot for third seed Kasatkina, converting seven of 11 break points while dominating on her serve.

The unseeded world number 78 has one previous WTA crown to her name, winning at Bogota in 2019 as a 17-year-old, the youngest American to clinch a title since Serena Williams at Indian Wells in 1999.

Odermatt Wins at Home in Adelboden Giant Slalom



this season's big crystal globe, coped best with the icy conditions and poor light, topping the first run and finishing second in the second run to become the first Swiss skier to

notch up a win in the discipline in Adelboden since 2008.

Austria's Manuel Feller took second at 0.48 sec with France's overall World Cup champion Alexis Pinturault third at 0.54sec in the final giant slalom event before the Winter Olympics next month in Beijing.

The Swiss skier's fourth win out of five giant slaloms this season extends his lead in the overall standings to 376 points on Norwegian Aleksander Aamodt Kilde.

France's giant slalom world champion Mathieu Faivre finished fourth.

Hector Sweeps To Giant Slalom Win in Slovenia

KRANJSKA GORA (Dispatches) - Swede Sara Hector claimed her second win of the season in the World Cup giant slalom in the Slovenian ski resort of Kranjska Gora.

Hector posted the fastest time in both runs to finish 0.96sec ahead of France's Tessa Worley with Italy's Marta Bassino third at 1.32 sec.

US star Mikaela Shiffrin holds the overall lead in the women's alpine skiing World Cup rankings despite finishing seventh, 2.05sec off the pace in the event which replaced the one cancelled in Maribor because of lack of snow.

The 29-year-old Hector claimed her fourth consecutive podium and moves ahead of Shiffrin in the World Cup giant slalom standings.

Shiffrin, who missed the race in Linz, Austria after testing positive for coronavirus, has a 135-point advantage in the overall standings on Slovak Petra Vlhova, who trailed in 15th at 2.55sec.

Switzerland's Lara Gut-Behrami, in action after recovering from Covid-19, posted the fifth best time in both runs.

Olympic downhill champion Sofia Goggia failed to earn any points on the day after the Italian missed the cut for the second run and is third in the overall standings, 209 points behind Shiffrin.

Two-time world champion in the discipline Worley claimed her second consecutive podium less than a month before she bids for her first Olympic medal in Beijing from February 4-20.



Canada Stun Russia to Reach ATP Cup Final

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Denis Shapovalov and Felix Auger-Aliassime rallied to victory in the deciding doubles rubber against defending champions Russia to fire Canada into their first ATP Cup final on Saturday.

The Canadians beat the Russian pair of Daniil Medvedev and Roman Safiullin 4-6 7-5 10-7 in a final set super tiebreaker to seal the tie 2-1 and set up a final in the \$10 million team event against Spain.

After Shapovalov and Medvedev won their respective singles matches, all four players were back at the Ken Rosewall Arena for the doubles.

The Russians appeared to have the upper hand before Canada levelled the match with a late break of serve in the second set and then carried the momentum in the super tiebreaker, which is played to 10 points instead of seven.

"Felix played unbelievable in the game to break and then in the tie-break as well, just making them play so much. It was awesome," Shapovalov said. "We kept fighting. We have great team chemistry, team spirit, so it helped us a lot."

Earlier, world number two Medvedev strolled past Auger-Aliassime 6-4 6-0 to keep alive Russia's hopes of defending their ATP Cup title, sending the semi-final tie into the deciding doubles.

Denis Shapovalov had put Canada within one win of reaching the final with a battling 6-4 5-7 6-4 victory over Roman Safiullin in the first singles, putting Medvedev in a must-win situation in the second rubber.

