

Health Ministry Announced on Monday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 131,915 With 37 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Head of the Foundation for the Preservation of Sacred Defense Values of IRGC and Basij Has Said That the Narrators of the Holy Defense Will Explain the School of Martyr Qasem Soleimani for the First Time

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2 DOMESTIC

President Calls For Implementing Chain Financing



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

Iran Opens Five Trade Centers Abroad



> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

Russia Rules out Any Concession at Talks With U.S.



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

Canada Sweep Past Spain to Win Maiden ATP Cup Title



> SEE PAGE 8

Remaining Part of Revenge Awaiting U.S. Officials

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Referring to the IRGC attack on Ain al-Assad base in response to the U.S. assassination of General Soleimani, the IRGC Commander-in-Chief vowed that other part of the hard revenge still remains. Speaking in a ceremony on Monday, Major General Hossein Salami spoke about the conspiracies of the Americans in imposing all-out pressure and sanctions against the Iranian nation to defeat the Islamic Revolution of Iran. But under the wise guidelines of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the Iranians managed to resist the economic siege and sanctions for many years, Salami said. According to him, during the years of economic pressure, Iranians relied on domestic potentials, preventing the enemies to advance military options against the country. Salami also spoke about IRGC's retaliatory operation of the Ain al-Assad base in western Iraq in response to the U.S. assassination of Major General Qasem Soleimani in January 2020.

See Page 7

Tehran, Moscow Ties Evolve Into Strategic Partnership



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran in the south and Russia in the north of the Caspian Sea have strategic access to the world's free zones and open seas. Iran's exports to Russia in the first nine months of the current Persian year which ends on March 20 increased by 58%, including 62% in agricultural and food products, a review of trade between the two countries shows. Iran has a maritime border with Russia, which is the largest country in the world in terms of size, through the Caspian Sea. Iran in the south and Russia in the north of the Caspian Sea - each with strategic access to the world's free zones and open seas - have extended neighbors. According to statistics, Iran exported 828,602 tonnes of goods worth \$432 million to Russia in the first nine months of the current Persian year. It also imported 2.7 million tonnes of goods worth \$ 1.2 billion from Russia in the period. That compares with 548,577 tonnes of goods worth \$275 million which Iran exported to Russia during the same period in 2020 against 2.4 tonnes worth about \$802 million which it imported from the country. This translates to a 58% growth in value year on year and 51% in weight of Iranian exports as well as 53% in value and 11% in weight of Iranian imports in trade with Russia. Surveys also show agricultural and food products, including seafood and dairy products, accounted for 62% of Iran's exports. They included more than 441 tonnes of agricultural products worth \$255 million, which accounts for about 59% of the total exports. Iran also exported 4,054 tonnes of seafood, including 3,171 tonnes worth \$9.6 million of shrimp. It sold more than 2,000 tonnes of dairy products worth \$2.7 million in the period. Other Iranian exports to Russia include a variety of minerals such as salt and zinc sulfate which is used as a dietary supplement to treat zinc deficiency. Russia also imports polyethylene, activated carbon, cement, building materials, medicine, paint, shampoo, plastic sheets, clothing, leather bags, kitchen appliances, flooring, car accessories, fibers, carpets, building stones, industrial stones, all kinds of glass, tiles and ceramics, heaters, doors and windows, home appliances, ironware, gas and water tanks, industrial and bakery machines, radiators, sofas, clocks, watches, medical and laboratory equipment from Iran. A brief hiccup in trade came in November when Russia sent back Iran's shipment of bell pepper on the grounds that four types of unregistered pesticides had been used in their cultivation. While the case received so much publicity in the media, the rejected freight of 1,200 tonnes was a fraction of 47,405 tonnes of bell pepper worth more than \$20 million which Iran has exported to Russia in the nine months of the current Persian year. According to official figures, the trade balance of \$791 million is tilted in favor of Russia. However, trade between the two countries has grown almost identically. In other words, both Iran's exports to Russia and Russia's exports to Iran have grown by 58%, which shows the improvement of trade processes between the two countries. "Although the trade balance is in favor of Russia, statistics show that the two countries have had the same trade growth," Mohammad Akbari, an economist, told Mehr news agency. "Iran and Russia are both under sanctions; they are almost in the same neighborhood. If the two countries expand trade relations, not only will they make sanctions ineffective, they will also build a business relationship that benefits both sides because of their proximity." Akbari said Iran used to import livestock inputs only from Brazil, but it is now sourcing some of the feed from Russia.

Iran Non-Oil Trade Rises 25% Year on Year

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The value of Iran's non-oil trade rose 25 percent during the third quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (September 23-December 21, 2021) as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced. According to Ruhollah Latifi, Iran traded 43.318 million tons of commodities worth \$27.156 billion in the mentioned three months, IRICA reported. The official noted that the weight of the traded goods in the mentioned period declined nine percent year on year. As reported, the country exported 32.337 million tons of non-oil goods valued at \$13.335 during autumn, registering a 17-percent rise compared to the figure for the previous year's same time span. The Islamic Republic also imported 10.981 million tons of commodities worth \$13.821 billion in the said three months, to register a 37-percent rise in terms of value year on year.

See Page 7

Iran Seeking Stable, Reliable Agreement in Vienna

TEHRAN (MNA) - Foreign Ministry Spokesman said that Iran is seeking a stable and reliable agreement, and no agreement that does not have these two components is on the negotiating team's agenda. Speaking in his weekly press conference on Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh briefed on the latest Iranian foreign policy developments and answered a number of questions put forward by the journalists. "All sides [in Vienna talks] are striving to reach a lasting understanding. The focus of the talks is on the removal of sanctions in a verifiable way, as well as nuclear issues, and in some cases, it has progressed," said Khatibzadeh referring to the ongoing round of Vienna talks between Iran and the remaining parties to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), namely Russia, China, Britain, France, Germany and the EU. "The Vienna talks are to ensure a responsible return of the United States to the JCPOA, and we do not discuss or accept anything beyond the deal," he added. Answering a question about an interim agreement in the Vienna talks, Khatibzadeh said, "We are seeking a stable and reliable agreement, and no agreement that does not have these two components is on our agenda. We should all try to ensure that the US return to the JCPOA to be accompanied by the necessary guarantees and verification and that the lifting sanctions must take place. This is not achieved by any temporary agreement." The spokesman also pointed to the fifth round of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia, saying, "The next round of talks with Saudi Arabia, hosted by Iraq, is on the agenda." Iran, despite all disputes and due to mutual interest, will continue the talks and try to establish stable relations between the two countries, he added. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian is scheduled to visit China this week at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart, said the FM spokesman, adding that during the visit, various issues including the 25-year roadmap between the two countries will be discussed. He also spoke about Iran's position on the Beijing Winter Olympics, saying that Iran condemns any political view about sports events. "Unfortunately, some Western and North American states are trying to politicize the Olympics, which is a manifestation of the closeness of the people through sports." "Iran will be present at the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics with a full sports delegation," he added.

See Page 7

Taliban FM Describes Iran Visit as Positive

KABUL (Dispatches) - Taliban's acting foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said Sunday that he has held positive talks with Iranian officials during his visit to Iran. Muttaqi, who arrived in Iran Saturday evening at the head of a high-ranking delegation, said on Sunday that his meetings with Iranian officials were focused on trade, oil, transit and security. He noted that the Taliban seeks to establish good relations with all the countries in the region, particularly with Afghanistan's neighbors. He met with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and Hassan Kazemi Qami, the Iranian president's special envoy to Afghanistan. Tehran says some agreements were reached on banking cooperation, cross-border markets, mining, and sports during the meetings. Afghanistan International quoted unnamed sources as saying that during his stay in Tehran, Muttaqi also held meetings with some opposition figures including former Herat governor Mohammad Ismail Khan and Mawlawi Habibullah Hesam, the head of Afghanistan's Islamic Brotherhood.

See Page 7

Yemen Warns Saudi-Led Coalition Against Any Stupidity

SANAA (Dispatches) - A top Yemeni army official has warned that any attack by the Saudi Arabia against the ports of Hudaydah would have serious consequences in the region as it would push Sana'a to adopt a new military strategy that would target the aggressors and their supporters. The Saudi-led coalition has claimed that Yemeni forces are using the ports of Hudaydah and Salif as military bases, alleging that the ports are military targets. The Yemeni government has categorically denied the claims, saying a United Nations mission has been carrying out daily and weekly visits to the ports since the 2018 Stockholm agreement between the warring parties. Abed Mohammed al-Thor, deputy head of the Moral Guidance Department in the Yemeni Army, said any military action on the two ports "would aggravate the Yemeni crisis and multiply the suffering of Yemenis, as Hudaydah port is the sole vital artery for the besieged Yemeni people." "Thus, any military action against Hudaydah port means an uncalculated stupidity from the Saudi regime and would have dire consequences firstly for this regime and secondly for the Emirati regime."

See Page 7

Kazakhstan Embassy in Tehran Reacts to Recent Events in Kazakhstan

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Embassy of Kazakhstan yesterday issued a press release yesterday on recent events in Kazakhstan. **The full text of the press release as follows:**

1. On January 2, 2022, demonstrations against the increase in retail prices for liquefied petroleum gas began in the Mangystau region in western Kazakhstan. The protesters demanded price reduction to the previous level and the solution of some other socio-economic issues.
2. Upon instruction of the President, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan promptly responded to the demands of citizens and took measures to reduce gas prices, as well as imposed a moratorium on price increases for socially important food products, fuels and utilities.
3. All persons previously detained during unauthorized actions were released.

See Page 7

FM to Visit China in Coming Days

TEHRAN (IP) - The Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran will visit China in the next few days, an informed source said.

A spokesman for the National Security Commission of the Islamic Consultative Assembly said that Hossein Amirabdollahian would visit China at the head of a high-level delegation.

China has urged the United States to overhaul its failed maximum pressure policy on Iran and remove all illegal sanctions it has imposed against Tehran after its unilateral withdrawal from the agreement.

President Calls For Implementing Chain Financing

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi said, “The full implementation of the chain financing plan will definitely have very good effects”.

At the meeting of the Cabinet’s Economic Coordination Board, which was held on Sunday night, chaired by Raisi, a report was presented on the implementation of chain financing.

After the report, the President called the pilot implementation of the chain financing as a good example of the unity of opinion, interaction and coordination of the various economic organs of the government and said, “The full implementation of this plan will definitely have very good effects on production”.

Raisi reiterated the need for mobilization and cooperation of all government agencies to supply goods, especially food items at a fair and stable price.

Meanwhile earlier in the cabinet meeting, the President stated that some of the damages caused by the floods are such that if they are not repaired quickly, they will cause secondary and heavier damages, adding, “The damages caused by the floods out to be presented to the cabinet in the next meeting, or maximum in a week, so that the necessary decisions can be made about them”.

Speaking in the cabinet meeting, which was fully dedicated to reporting and



deciding to solve the problem of flood-hit areas in the country, the President appreciated the efforts of all those who tried to alleviate the suffering of the flood-hit people in these few days, and said, “Cooperation and synergy of government agencies, revolutionary and public institutions, Basij forces and armed forces and popular forces are commendable”.

The President added, “It should be planned and acted in such a way that the damages to the people in the field of housing, jobs and essentials are compensated and provided quickly”.

Raisi added, “The important lesson of the recent floods in the four southern and eastern provinces of the country was that more serious action should be taken to implement the law to deal with crises”.

In another part of his speech, referring to the anniversary of the martyrdom of Iranians in the Ukrainian plane crash of Flight 752, the President called on the relevant government officials to follow up on the legal rights of their families and their requests.

U.S. Seeks to Sow Discord Between Afghanistan, Its Neighbors

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says the United States seeks to create rifts between Afghanistan and its neighboring countries now that its 20-year occupation of the country has failed.

Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in a Sunday meeting with the visiting Taliban acting foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, in Tehran.

Muttaqi arrived in Tehran on Saturday at the head of a high-ranking delegation to hold talks with Iranian officials in a first such trip since the group seized power.

During the meeting, Amir-Abdollahian condemned the wrong policies of the United States and its allies in Afghanistan over the past 20 years, saying one of the main policies of the US in the region has been driving a wedge between Afghanistan and its neighbors.

“Afghanistan’s funds that have been blocked by the US must be released for humanitarian reasons to help improve the economic situation of the Afghan people,” the Iranian foreign minister said.

Amir-Abdollahian also welcomed remarks made by the Taliban leaders on the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan.

The Taliban took control of the Afghan government in mid-August last year, in the midst of the United States’ hasty, reckless withdrawal of its forces from the country. Since the takeover, Iran has repeatedly highlighted the importance of the establishment of peace and stability in Afghanistan through the formation of an inclusive government in the war-ravaged country.

Pointing to the Islamic Republic’s humanitarian aid to the innocent people of Afghanistan, Amir-Abdollahian said in addition to continuing the flow of such aid, Iran will also make use of regional capacities to provide the Afghan people with more assistance to alleviate their problems.

For his part, Muttaqi appreciated the hospitality that Iran has offered the Afghan refugees in the past 43 years, emphasizing that the Islamic Republic of Iran has always stood by Afghanistan.

The new Afghan government, according to the Taliban acting foreign minister, stresses that it is not against any of the neighboring countries.

The visiting Taliban delegation also enumerated the United States’ acts of cruelty against the Afghan people, saying that although the US left Afghanistan in a disgraceful defeat, it continues to target the Afghan people with its policies. As a result of these policies, eighty percent of the Afghan people have fallen below the poverty line, the delegation said.

The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, twenty years after it invaded the country, was followed by Washington’s imposition of cruel sanctions and cessation of humanitarian aid, leaving millions of Afghans on the verge of starvation, including women and children who are particularly at risk. The US also froze nearly \$10 billion of Afghanistan’s funds after the Taliban’s takeover, dismissing the Taliban’s call to release the funds in spite of public demonstrations by Afghans.



Exports of Technical and Engineering Services Declined to \$200m

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce Masoud Khansari said that in recent years exports of Iranian technical and engineering services have dropped sharply and “once we had \$5-6 billion in exports of technical and engineering services in the country, but today this amount is less than \$200-300 million.”

He criticized the government’s foreign exchange policies, saying that the Turkish government has increased its exports to \$220b when it faces 20 percent inflation, but in Iran, exporters are treated in a “catch-and-close” manner, and these attitudes reduce exports.

Referring to crises such as budget deficits, inflation, devaluation of the national currency and poverty, khansari said, “When the government does not have currency, it prints money, which increases inflation. When the currency is starting to exchange, it leads to inflation.”

Iran’s exporters of technical and engineering services, in addition to government policies on receiving money for their services in other countries, have also faced numerous problems.

Iran to Boost Environmental Cooperation With Int’l Bodies

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The head of Department of Environment of Iran in a meeting with the UN Resident Coordinator for Iran Stefan Priesner stressed developing environmental cooperation with the international community.

Both sides emphasized reinforcing international and UN-backed cooperation in line with solving regional and international environmental issues.

Ali Salajegheh referred to unilateral and cruel sanctions and called on the UN to play an effective and professional role in this regard.

He also described Iran’s capacities as valuable and exemplary.

Meanwhile, Priesner offered interest for UN active role and hoped for increasing UN cooperation.

Conference on Perspective of Iran-Tajikistan Ties Held

TEHRAN (IP) - On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between Iran and Tajikistan, a conference on the perspective of relations between the two countries was held in Tehran.

The conference was held on Monday, January 10, 2022, at the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Cultural Institute (ECI).

Former and current ambassadors and some senior researchers delivered speeches.

The conference is organized by the International Research Institute Abrar Moaser Tehran in cooperation with the Tajik Embassy.

Westerners Seeking Temporary Agreement

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The westerners are after achieving a temporary agreement in order to ease their own worries, but Iran’s efforts are aimed at reaching a good agreement, Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said.

Rapporteur of the Iranian Parliament’s National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Mahmoud Abbaszadeh-Meshkini cited Amirabdollahian in a meeting with the commission’s members as elaborating on details of the Vienna negotiations.

His argument in proof of that claim was that the Iranian Parliament’s Strategic Law Aimed at removal of sanctions and safeguarding Iranian Nation’s Rights and the precious achievements in nuclear industry have filled the atmosphere of the negotiations.

The rapporteur of Parliament’s National Security and Foreign Policy Commission added that Amirabdollahian emphasized that Iran’s red lines in the negotiations are quite clear.

The lawmaker said his interpretation of the foreign minister’s comments is that the negotiations are proceeding quite professionally amid the strong performance of the Iranian delegation, who have thus far had control over the negotiations, and expressed hope that this process will continue till the end and reaching a good agreement, on condition that the westerners will not be after returning to their colonialist era attitude.

Tehran-Muscat Relations Long-Standing, Stable

TEHRAN (MNA) – Stating that Tehran-Muscat relations are long-standing and stable, the Iranian Foreign Minister said that Iran is seeking to strengthen relations with the Persian Gulf states considering the new administration’s policy.

Upon his arrival at the Omani capital of Muscat on Monday, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian described Tehran and Muscat relations as long-standing and stable.

Iran is willing to promote political and cultural cooperation with Oman to a higher level of economic and trade cooperation, said the Iranian Foreign Minister.

“During the visit, we will have talks with high-ranking Omani officials and the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the development of bilateral relations and some regional and international issues,” he added.

Referring to the quadripartite agreement on the revival of the transit line, Amir-Abdollahian said that the agreement was signed by four countries: Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Given the 13th government’s view on neighborhood policy and the good changes that have happened in recent months in Iran’s relations with its northern neighbors, the country seeks to further strengthen and develop cooperation with the Persian Gulf countries, the Iranian senior diplomat noted.

Heading a political delegation, Amir-Abdollahian left for the Omani capital of Muscat on Monday morning to hold talks with the country’s official on the expansion of relations between the two countries in various political, economic, and cultural fields, as well as consulting on important issues in the region.

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

شناسه آگهی: ۱۲۵۴۸۴۱

TENDER NO.: 08-21-9540001



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

Items	Material Description	Quantity
01	CASING, API GRADE P-110, SEAMLESS 7 IN. 35 PPF, DRIFT:5.879 IN.	500 LE

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

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 27,904 EURO or 7,616,134,820 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

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

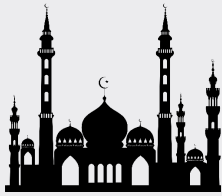
ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P., NISOC’S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI, IRAN

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

NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

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

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PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:12
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:30
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:45
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:14

52. Behold! he said to his father and his people,
"What are these images, to which ye are (so assiduously) devoted?"
53. They said, "We found our fathers worshipping them."

Surah 21, The Prophets (52 - 53)

Iran Opens Five Trade Centers Abroad

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) says Iran has opened five trade centers abroad to boost its foreign trade, adding that the country intends to increase its commercial attaches to 30.

Speaking in a ceremony honoring the exemplary exporters of Tehran Province, Alireza Payman Pak said that the organization has turned to expansion of commercial attaches that currently the amount of them has increased to 30, admitting that it was around 60 in the past that due to some restrictions it had fallen sharply but it will slightly increase to 30 next year.

He went on to say that the country should prepare sustainable mechanisms for exports in order to have permanent effectiveness, adding that this year there was a brainstorming meeting between President and the private sector wherein the President had good orders like lifting restriction on exports of medical equipment and there is a strong determination for exports in mid-term in the government.

Payman Pak noted that there is a provision chain which includes raw material, production, export, sales and return of its forex, adding that if we see this chain as an integrated chain, being accompanied with the supportive policies, then exports will definitely increase.

He then pointed to the measures of the organization for boosting export and foreign trade, adding that expansion of commercial attaches is one of the measures demanded by the organization which helps developing the market and currently after increasing the budget, it is expected the number of commercial attaches to hit 30 next year, admitting that it was once 60 that due to the existing restrictions it has almost been halved.



He noted that due to the government restrictions, the embassies cannot choose their commercial attaches from the private sector but the foreign ministry can choose them from other ministries and government bodies.

Payman Pak then pointed to the launch of the trade centers. He noted that the organization has special bylaws for the launch of the trade centers, adding that the organization has launched five trade centers in Armenia, Turkey, Kazakhstan and the UAE. He added that the launch of the trade center in Kazakhstan was pursued by the chambers of commerce of the two states in order to cover the weaknesses and lack of information of traders with the laws of the target country.

He went on to say that 40 groups are keen to be active in Syria and 8 of them have signed agreements with Syrians for economic cooperation. He reiterated that the organization has activated some of free trade agreements and signed some preferential trade agreements with Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as free trade with Syria.

He also reiterated that forex policies of the country should be coordinated with the trade policies otherwise it will lead to the slump in the exports and rise in the forex rate in the market. He noted that if the country can revive exports fund and sign agreements with other countries, it can act like opening the LC.

Development of South Pars Phase 11 Accelerating

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The managing director of Petropars Company, which is in charge of developing phase 11 of Iran's South Pars gas field in the Persian Gulf, announced the implementation of two new contracts as of December 22, 2021, to accelerate the development of the mentioned phase.



According to Hamid-Reza Masoudi, the mentioned deals are concerned with the construction of an off-shore pipeline as well as the installation of the phase's SDP11B platform.

"The engineering, procurement and implementation activities corresponding to these two contracts have officially started since the beginning of the current [Iranian calendar] month [December 22, 2021]," Masoudi said.

In order to transfer and install the mentioned platform to position 11B in the shortest possible time, after the necessary studies we awarded the project to an Iranian company in the form of an Engineering, Procurement, Construction and Installation (EPCI) contract, he said.

The required items and equipment for the project have been ordered or purchased by Petropars based on the Long Lead Items (LLI) procurement method so that the project can be completed as scheduled, the official added.

Mentioning the offshore pipeline project, Masoudi said: "The gas and gas condensate produced in the first phase of the project which is expected to be about 11 million cubic meters per day will be sent to onshore processing facilities in Pars 2 region through this pipeline."

When fully developed, the South Pars phase 11 project will have a production capacity of two billion cubic feet per day or 370,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day. The produced gas will be fed into Iran's gas network.

Iran had previously awarded the development of phase 11 project to a consortium comprised of France's Total, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), and Petropars which is a subsidiary of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), however Total and CNPC pulled out of the project in 2019 due to the U.S. sanctions.

Currently, Petropars is developing the phase 11 project after its partners left the contract.

South Pars is the world's largest gas field, covering an area of 3,700 square kilometers of Iran's territorial waters.

The giant field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate. The field is divided into 24 standard phases.

Iran's Free Trade Zones Export \$20b

TEHRAN (IP) - Deputy Chairman of the Industries and Mines Commission of Iran's parliament said: the free trade zones have exported \$ 20 billion in the current year.

Javad Hosseini-Kia, in a meeting between the commission members with the Secretary of the Supreme Council of Free Trade-Industrial and Special Economic Zones Saeed Mohammad, said: "The country's free zones have exported \$ 20 billion since the beginning of the current Iranian year (starting March 20 in the Persian calendar).

Hosseini Kia added: the country needs incentives for investment stability in these areas.

Saeed Mohammad, the Secretary of the Supreme Council of Free Trade-Industrial and Special Economic Zones, called for unified management for free zones.

Gov't Expands Contract Farming of Wheat

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's agriculture ministry says contract farming for wheat has expanded to cover nearly 150,000 hectares of lands in the country amid efforts by the government to promote the method to both boost agriculture production and to protect farmers against price fluctuations and other risks in the market.

A senior official in Iran's Government Trading Corporation (GTC), the body responsible for supply of staples in the country, said on Sunday that contract farming had been implemented in seven out of 31 provinces in the country.

Morteza Saadati Kia, who serves as GTC's head of domestic purchase operations, said that the contracts are expected to guarantee wheat supplies of over 434,000 metric tons in the next harvesting seasons starting in May.

Saadati Kia added that nearly 11,500 farmers had contributed to the contract farming scheme, a first in Iran where farmers normally prefer to sell their produce to middlemen in wholesale markets.

He said the GTC had supplied nearly 60,000 tons of agricultural inputs under contracts signed with wheat farmers, adding that the inputs will diversify in the near future to cover seeds, pesticides and fungicides.

For years, Iran has covered wheat and several other crops in its guaranteed purchase price scheme. However, purchases have declined in recent years because of price issues causing some farmers to switch to other crops or to sell their produce to the middlemen.

A new administrative government that took office in August has vowed it would expand contract farming to major crops to prevent price fluctuations in the market that are caused by lack of balance in supply and demand.

Experts believe the new policy could encourage more growth in the Iranian agriculture sector where output has increased to nearly 130 million tons per year from just above 90 million tons less than a decade ago.

Official Denies Shortage of Ship for Exports to India

TEHRAN – Director of East Hormozgan Maritime and Ports Organization refuted reports that due to lack of ships, exports of agro products have been disrupted and called it a fake and baseless claim.

Touching upon the complaints of some of exporters regarding the shortage of ship and vessel in the southern ports of Iran, Hamid Reza Mohammad Hosseini told ILNA that there were no shortage of ship in the ports of Hormozgan for transporting agro products and currently there are enough ships for transporting agro products to India.

According to reports, exporters have complained against the shortage of ships for transporting goods to some destinations like India and the rise in the cost of transporting the goods to Dubai and then from Dubai to India or other destinations.

He said the important point is that the UAE has turned into a hub for trade of vegetables in the region and a place for collecting agro products of the regional states and exporting them to other countries, reiterating

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



that transportation of these items are not done merely by sea and it is carried out daily by air.

Mohammad Hosseini pointed to the effects of ties of India and the UAE in the agro products trade, and emphasized that Indians have more concentration on the UAE and the UAE has been able to cover all of the Indian market needs.

He said of course it is not logical for exporters to send their products to the UAE and then from this country to India and the cost of transportation is crucial in the exports and such way of export is economically wise because the profit of agro products is limited and this way of export is in vain.

He reiterated that there are ships in the ports but exporters cannot fully load the ships and therefore they have to send their cargo via smaller ships to Dubai and then to other destinations.

He noted that the UAE transports these agro products to even further destinations like Kenya and Somalia by daily flights and some of their exports are Iranian products.

Tehran, Baku Cooperate on Joint Use of Border Rivers

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran and Azerbaijan have great cooperation on joint use of border rivers, Adviser on International Affairs to the Iranian Energy Minister Mohammad Ali Farahnakian said.

The official noted that joint cooperation between Iran and Azerbaijan on the use of border rivers has been going on for more than 50 years with the construction of the Araz and Mil-Mughan water reservoirs on the Araz River.

Farahnakian also added that the two countries have joint plans to make maximum use of the potential of the Araz River. According to the memorandum approved between the two countries, Khudafarin and Giz Galasi hydro junctions were built.

"Along with regulating the water of the Araz River, these hydro junctions created an opportunity to build hydroelectric power plants. On this basis, two HPPs will be built by the Iranian company and needed funds will be provided by both countries," he said.

Iranian officials recalled that Iranian Energy Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian recently announced that Iran was ready to build a thermal power plant in Azerbaijan. In this regard, research will be conducted on the construction of the power plant in Azerbaijan.

The electricity generated by this power plant will be used jointly. Iran has international potential for the construction of power plants.

The Giz Galasi and Khudafarin hydro junctions have a capacity of more than 1.6 billion cubic meters. Also, the hydroelectric power plants of the same name will have a capacity to generate 280 megawatt-hours of electricity in total. These hydro junctions and hydroelectric power plants will allow both sides to share the water and energy resources of the Araz River.

Tehran to Host AGRICULTECH exhibition

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The 8th edition of Tehran's Specialized Exhibition of Agricultural Inputs dubbed in short as "AGRICULTECH" shall be held on January 18 - 21 at Tehran International Exhibition Center.

The motto of the exhibition is "Agricultural Prosperity, Sustainable Development."

The 8th edition of the exhibition will be held after a year of hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. AGRICULTECH is a specialized exhibition focused on agricultural inputs such as pesticides, fertilizer, seeds, and biological control agents.

The exhibition will be held after almost one year hiatus because of the COVID pandemic and restrictions because of the pandemic. It is aimed at making familiar Iranian farmers with the latest development in this field.

FDI at 13% Growth in Markazi Province in Nine Months

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Deputy Head of Markazi province Economic Affairs and Finance for Economic Affairs said that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in this province increased 130 percent in nine months of current year (from March 21 to Dec. 22).

49.607 million worth of Foreign Direct Investment (FD) was attracted in Markazi province, Abbas Nouri said in an interview with IRNA.

He put the Foreign Direct Investment attracted in this province in nine months of the previous year (from March 21 to Dec. 22, 2022) at \$4.182 billion.

Nouri went on to say that \$42.153 million worth of foreign investment was approved in this province in the current year, showing a 101 percent hike as compared to the same period of last year.

He put the foreign investment value approved in this province in the nine months of the previous year at \$20.009 million.

Taliban Arrest Afghan Professor After Criticism

KABUL (Dispatches) - A prominent Afghan university professor and open critic of the Taliban's hardline regime has been arrested in Kabul, with his daughter on Sunday saying she now fears for his safety.

Professor Faizullah Jalal was arrested by the Taliban on Saturday after repeatedly speaking out on television against the country's new rulers, who stormed back to power in August.

The hardline Islamists have since cracked down on dissent, forcefully dispersing women's rights protests and briefly detaining several Afghan journalists. Government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid tweeted that Jalal had made statements on social media in which he was "trying to instigate people against the system".



164 People Killed in Kazakhstan Unrest

ALMATY (Dispatches) - More than a hundred people have died in Kazakhstan in the wake of violent riots that have shaken Central Asia's largest country this week, media reported Sunday citing the health ministry.

The energy-rich nation of 19 million people has been rocked by a week of upheaval with nearly 6,000 -- including a number of foreigners -- detained over the unrest.

At least 164 people were killed in the riots, including 103 in the largest city Almaty, which saw some of the fiercest clashes between protesters and police.



Russia Rules out Any Concession at Talks With U.S.



GENEVA (Dispatches) - Russia ruled out Sunday any concession at talks with the United States on soaring tensions over Ukraine as Moscow seeks a wide-ranging new security arrangement with the West but faces strong pressure to pull back troops.

Russia's deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov told Russian news agencies ahead of his talks in Geneva the Kremlin was also "disappointed" with signals coming from both Washington and Brussels, where NATO and the European Union are based.

The high-level discussions start a week of diplomacy in which Russia will meet with NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), with the US trying to assure European allies they will not be sidelined.

Russia since late last year has amassed tens of thousands of troops at the Ukrainian border and demanded guarantees that NATO will not expand further eastward.

The Kremlin is insisting NATO must never grant membership to ex-Soviet Ukraine, which is pushing to join.

The United States, to be represented by Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, agreed to talks even though it made plain that many of Moscow's proposals are non-starters.

Originally scheduled to start on Monday, Sherman is now due to have a working dinner with Ryabkov on Sunday evening, said a State Department spokesperson.

"We will not agree to any concession. That is completely excluded," Ryabkov said. "We are disappointed with the signals coming in the last few days from Washington but also from Brussels."

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, dismissing Moscow's demands as "gaslighting", has insisted that talks will yield no progress so long as Russia has a "gun to Ukraine's head".

"We're prepared to respond forcefully to further Russian aggression. But a diplomatic solution is still possible and preferable if Russia chooses it," Blinken said Friday.

Russian President Vladimir Putin met his US counterpart Joe Biden in Geneva in June and agreed on regular "stability" talks between Sherman and Ryabkov, who will again lead the Russian delegation.

In two phone calls to Putin, Biden has warned of severe consequences if Russia invades Ukraine.

Measures under consideration include sanctions on Putin's inner circle, cancelling Russia's controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline to Germany or, in the most drastic scenario, severing Russia's links to the world's banking system.

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, warned that Washington would also send more troops to eastern NATO members such as Poland and the Baltics if Russia invaded.

Chaotic Scenes as Iraq's New Parliament Holds First Session

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraq's new parliament has re-elected its speaker for a second term, the first step towards forming a new government after a general election whose results have been contested by powerful factions.

In a reflection of the tensions, the new parliament's first session on Sunday was marked by disarray, with the eldest member, Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, being evacuated to the hospital after falling ill.

The chaotic meeting ushers in what is likely to be a lengthy period of political wrangling among rival groups to choose a new president and a prime minister. As the leader of the biggest bloc, Shia leader Moqtada al-Sadr has the upper hand in forming a new government. But he will have to manage tensions with rival Shia groups that continue to reject the election results and are demanding to have a say in the government formation process.

According to Iraq's constitution, the largest bloc in parliament has the right to choose the new prime minister.

But as the meeting got under way on Sunday, a coalition known as the Shia Coordination Framework, an alliance

of Shia factions which object to the vote results, submitted a list of lawmakers' names it claimed now hold the biggest parliamentary bloc with 88 seats, rather than al-Sadr.

Chaos erupted briefly in the chamber, during which legislators crowded around al-Mashhadani, who was leading the session.

Within minutes, the 73-year-old legislator was carried out of the room by security forces and bundled in an ambulance that took him to hospital, where he was visited by some of the heads of political and militia factions. He appeared to be in good condition, according to people who later saw him there.

Following the disruption, the parliament session resumed, although the issue of the majority was not immediately resolved.

Later, 200 legislators picked incumbent Speaker Mohamed al-Halbousi for a second term, while 14 voted for al-Mashhadani.

Al-Halbousi, whose Sunni party came in second with 37 seats, is the former governor of Anbar province and was supported by al-Sadr, Kurdish and Sunni groups.



Bangladesh Rohingya Refugee Camp Fire Leaves Thousands Homeless

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Thousands of Rohingya have been left homeless after a fire gutted parts of their refugee camp in southeastern Bangladesh, police said.

About 850,000 of the persecuted mostly Muslim minority, many of whom escaped a 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar that the United Nations investigators concluded was executed with "genocidal intent", live in a network of camps in Bangladesh's border district of Cox's Bazar.

"About 1,200 houses were burnt in the fire," said Kamran Hossain, a spokesman for the Armed Police Battalion, which heads security in the camp, on Sunday.

The fire started at Camp 16 and raced through shelters made of bamboo and tarpaulin, leaving more than 5,000 people homeless, he said.

"The fire started at 4:40pm [10:40 GMT] and was brought under control at around 6:30 pm," he told the AFP news agency.

Mohammed Shamsud Douza, a Bangladesh government official in charge of refugees, said emergency workers had brought the fire under control. The cause of the blaze has not been established, he added.

Abdur Rashid, 22, said the fire was so big that he ran for safety as his house and furniture were engulfed in flames. "Everything in my house was burned. My baby and wife were out. There were a lot of things in the house," he told AFP. "I saved 30,000 taka [350 dollars] from working as a day labourer. The money was burned in the fire."

"I am now under open sky. I lost my dream."

In March last year, 15 people died and about 50,000 were left homeless in Bangladesh after a huge fire destroyed Rohingya homes in the world's biggest refugee settlement.

Mohammad Yasin, 29, bemoaned the lack of fire safety equipment in the camps.

"Fire occurs here frequently. There was no way we could put out the fire. There was no water. My home is burned. Many documents, which I brought from Myanmar, are also burned. And it is cold here," he said. Another blaze tore through a COVID-19 treatment centre for refugees in another refugee camp in the district last Sunday, causing no casualties.

Sudan Security Forces Fire Tear Gas at Protesters

KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - Security forces fired tear gas Sunday as thousands rallied in Sudan's capital Khartoum and a neighbouring city, witnesses said, keeping up pressure on the military following a coup 11 weeks ago.

The coup, led by army chief General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan on October 25, derailed a power-sharing transition between the military and civilians that had been painstakingly established in the wake of longtime autocrat Omar-al-Bashir's ouster in 2019.

Security forces fired tear gas as pro-democracy protesters headed towards the presidential palace, witnesses said, amid roadblocks seeking to prevent people converging there and at army headquarters -- the epicentre of mass demonstrations that forced Bashir out.

Protesters also rallied in Omdurman, Khartoum's twin city, as well as northern Khartoum.

"No, no to military rule," the demonstrators chanted as they waved the national flag.

The protests since the coup -- one of several power grabs in Sudan's post-independence history -- has been met with a crackdown that has killed at least 60 people, according to medics.

Authorities have repeatedly denied using live ammunition in confronting protesters and insist scores of

security forces have been wounded during demonstrations that have often "deviated from peacefulness".

Medics in white coats were seen joining Sunday's rallies to protest the security forces' storming of hospitals and medical facilities during previous demonstrations.

The Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors, affiliated with the protest movement, said Saturday that medics will deliver a memorandum to UN officials listing and complaining about "assaults" against such facilities.

Last week, Sudan's civilian prime minister Abdalla Hamdok resigned saying the country was at a "dangerous crossroads threatening its very survival".

He had only taken his position back up on November 21, having originally been ousted along with his government in the October coup.

On Saturday, the United Nations said it would facilitate talks between key Sudanese stakeholders in a bid to resolve the crisis.

But the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), the civilian alliance which spearheaded the protests against Bashir and became integral to the transition government, said it had not received "any details" about the UN initiative.



Thousands Protest Covid-19 Rules in Belgium

BRUSSELS (Dispatches)

- Several thousand protesters marched in Brussels on Sunday to

oppose anti-coronavirus regulations, as European governments mull tighter rules in the face of the omicron wave.

There was no repeat of the violence that had marred previous, larger demonstrations in the Belgian capital, although police intervened to surround a small group that approached the EU headquarters. As it marched through the city the crowd -- 5,000-strong according to the police -- chanted "freedom, freedom!" and brandished banners denouncing what they called a "vaccine dictatorship".

Before the march began, police detained 11 suspects found to be carrying fireworks. Thirty more arrests were made at the end after a small group threw "projectiles" at riot officers, the force said.

Belgium requires residents to show a Covid certificate to enter bars, restaurants and cultural events, and there have been several recent street protests.

On Sunday, health minister Frank Vandenbroucke called, in a television interview, for a parliamentary debate on tighter rules as Belgium see Covid cases soar as the omicron variant takes hold.

"People's minds are changing," he said. "A year ago, I was saying: compulsory vaccination is not a good idea, we need to convince people."

"Now, knowing that we really need to vaccinate 100 percent of the population -- which was not our idea a year ago, we thought that 70 was enough -- we still need some sort of generalized take up." This is not an idea that is likely to find much support among the protesters, who carried the flags of a diverse array of political groups, but were united in opposition to compulsory measures.

"It's a completely absurd crisis management which affects freedoms enormously and which will lead to a Chinese-style system if we let it happen," said one, who gave her name as Danielle. Previous marches developed into running street battles with police, who have deployed tear gas and water cannon in recent weeks, but Sunday's ended in relatively orderly fashion amid tight security.



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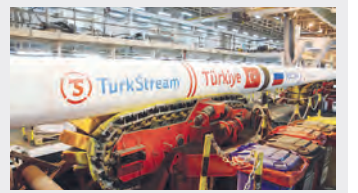
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34.8 bcm of Russian Gas Supplied Through TurkStream in 2 Years

ANKARA (Dispatches) - A total of 34.8 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas was transported to Turkey and Europe in two years via the TurkStream pipeline.

The pipeline was inaugurated on Jan. 8, 2020, by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

Around 18 bcm of gas flowed to Turkey and 16.8 bcm to Europe via the TurkStream Natural Gas Pipeline, between Jan. 1, 2020, to Dec. 31, 2021.



Sri Lanka Seeks Chinese Debt Restructuring Amid Crisis

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - The president of debt-ridden Sri Lanka asked China for the restructuring of its loans and access to preferential credit for imports of essential goods, as the island nation struggles in the throes of its worst economic crisis, partly due to Beijing-financed projects that don't generate revenue.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa told visiting Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi that it would be "a great relief to the country if attention could be paid on restructuring the debt repayments as a solution to the economic crisis that has arisen in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic," according to a statement from his office.

Rajapaksa asked Wang for a concessionary credit facility for imports so that industries can run without disruption, the statement said. He also requested assistance to enable Chinese tourists to travel to Sri Lanka within a secure bubble.

Wang and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, the president's brother, later visited Colombo's Port City, a reclaimed island developed with Chinese investment, where they opened a promenade and inaugurated the sailing of 65 boats to commemorate the 65 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Wang arrived in Sri Lanka on Saturday from the Maldives on the last leg of a multinational trip that also took him to Eritrea, Kenya and the Comoros in East Africa.

Sri Lanka faces one of its worst economic crises, with foreign reserves down to around \$1.6 billion, barely enough for a few weeks of imports. It also has foreign debt obligations exceeding \$7 billion in 2022, including repayment of bonds worth \$500 million in January and \$1 billion in July.

The declining foreign reserves are partly blamed on infrastructure projects built with Chinese loans that don't make money. China loaned money to build a seaport and airport in the southern Hambantota district, in addition to a wide network of roads.

Central Bank figures show that current Chinese loans to Sri Lanka total around \$3.38 billion, not including loans to state-owned businesses, which are accounted for separately and thought to be substantial.

"Technically we can claim we are bankrupt now," said Muttukrishna Sarvananthan, principal researcher at the Point Pedro Institute of Development. "When you have foreign reserves in the red, that means you are technically bankrupt."

The situation has left households grappling with severe shortages. People wait in long lines to buy essential goods like milk powder, cooking gas and kerosene. Prices have increased sharply, and the Central Bank says the inflation rate rose to 12.1% by the end of December from 9.9% in November. Food inflation increased to over 22% in the same period.

Because of a currency shortage, importers are unable to clear their cargo containing essentials and manufactures are not able to buy raw materials from overseas.

Expatriate remittances have also fallen after the government ordered the mandatory conversion of foreign currency and exchange rate controls.

Ratings agency downgrades have resulted in Sri Lanka losing much of its borrowing power. In December, Fitch Ratings noted an increased probability of credit default.

S. Korean Economy Faces Heightened Downside Risks

SEOUL (Dispatches) - The South Korean economy faces heightened downside risks, as the country has tightened antivirus measures to curb the spread of COVID-19 cases and the global economic recovery has slowed down, a state-run think tank said Sunday.

Since December, the recovery of private spending has been constrained by tighter social distancing measures to tackle the spike in COVID-19 infections, the Korea Development Institute (KDI) said in a monthly economic assessment report.

"On the external side, global supply chain disruptions and monetary policy shifts by major economies are expected to work as downside risks for the South Korean economy," the report said.

The upsurge in virus cases and the fast spread of the omicron variant are upping the economic uncertainty of Asia's fourth-largest economy.

South Korea relaxed virus curbs in November under the "living with COVID-19" scheme in an effort to gradually return to pre-pandemic life.

But it tightened virus curbs on Dec. 18, including lowering the cap of private gatherings to four people and restoring the 9 p.m. curfews on business hours at restaurants and cafes. The government extended the social distancing rules for two weeks through Jan. 16.

Private spending gained ground amid the vaccine rollout and the economic recovery, but its recovery appears to be hampered by the virus situation.

Private spending contracted 0.2 percent in the third quarter, compared with a 3.6 percent on-quarter gain three months earlier, according to central bank data.

Uncertainty about monetary policy normalization by the Federal Reserve is also serving as a major risk for the Korean economy. The Korean currency fell to the 1,200-won level per the U.S. dollar Thursday for the first time since July 24, 2020, due to the prospect for the Fed's faster monetary policy tightening.

Minutes of the Fed's rate-setting meeting in December signaled the U.S. central bank may hike its policy rate at an earlier and faster-than-expected pace amid a strong economic recovery and high inflation.

The Bank of Korea expects the South Korean economy to increase 3 percent this year after the estimated 4 percent growth last year. The finance ministry puts its 2022 economic growth outlook at 3.1 percent.



China Leads Global Economic Development, Pandemic Control

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China reached a milestone in 2021 with major achievements made in foreign trade, technological breakthroughs and industrial chain resilience, according to a senior official.

"China has taken a leading position in both economic development and pandemic control worldwide in 2021," Han Wenxiu, an official with the Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs, said in a recent article, highlighting the country's progress in coordinating pandemic control and economic development.

According to World Bank projections, China's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth will reach 8 percent in 2021, and its "momentum is expected to pick up, aided by a more supportive fiscal stance." Experts also projected that the per capita GDP of China will exceed \$12,000, close to the measure of a high-income country as classified by the World Bank.

The world's second-biggest economy has staged an impressive rebound from the pandemic-induced slump. The growth rate of major economic indicators stayed within a reasonable range in the past year, as the consumer price index growth and surveyed urban unemployment rate stood at relatively low levels, and more than 12 million new urban jobs were created.

Han stressed that China's foreign trade gained strong momentum over the past year, as the world's largest exporter posted a record-high share of global trade, pointing to the strong resilience of the country's economy.

The latest data from the commerce ministry showed that China's total imports and exports of goods are expected to reach \$6 trillion in 2021, with the year-on-year growth amounting to approximately \$1.3 trillion.

As a pillar for the global supply chain, China-Europe freight trains emerged as another highlight considering their crucial role in enhancing global supply chains, stabilizing consumer prices and helping countries combat COVID-19 outbreaks.

China's stringent pandemic control measures have also laid a solid foundation for protecting people's lives while guaranteeing the normal functioning of economic activities. By stringently curbing imported cases and preventing any resurgence of local cases, China has successfully controlled the pandemic, according to Han.

Through efforts to promote widespread vaccination, nearly 2.89 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered on the Chinese mainland and over 1.21 billion people have been fully vaccinated as of Jan 7, data from the country's health authority showed. However, amid volatile domestic and international environments, the Chinese economy is still facing uncertainties such as weakening investment, slower consumption growth, supply chain congestion and shortages of key production factors.

U.S. Facing Early Interest Rate Hike

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. inflation probably hit the fastest in four decades, helping explain a shift in the Federal Reserve's approach to monetary policy as well as more consumer anxiety about the economy.

The widely followed consumer price index on Wednesday is forecast to rise 7 percent for the year through December and climb 0.4 per cent from a month earlier. The following day, another Labour Department report is projected to show prices paid to producers surged nearly 10 per cent in 2021. Reports on December retail sales and industrial production arrive Friday. The inflation surge underscores why US officials are preparing for a quicker normalization of monetary policy than previously anticipated. Adding to the case is evidence of a tight labor market, including a jump in wages and falling unemployment in data.

Fed watchers may get more clarity in the coming week on whether the interest-rate liftoff may come as soon as March, and when the central bank will begin shrinking its \$8.8 trillion balance sheet.

Chair Jerome Powell testifies Tuesday before the Senate Banking Committee on his nomination to a second four-year term. Two days later, Fed Governor Lael Brainard appears before the same panel at a confirmation hearing on her elevation to vice chair. Other Fed officials set to speak include Loretta Mester, Esther George, Charles Evans and James Bullard. "With the unemployment rate dropping below the median Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) participant's estimate of the long-run neutral rate and wages growing briskly, this jobs report likely will alleviate any lingering doubts on the part of more-dovish FOMC members," said Anna Wong and Andrew Husby of Bloomberg Economics.

UAE GDP Growth Expected to Be 4.2% in 2022

DUBAI (Dispatches) - The UAE's gross domestic product (GDP) is projected to grow 4.2 per cent in 2022 and non-hydrocarbon real GDP to increase by 3.9 per cent, according to the Central Bank of UAE.

The Quarterly Economic Review of the CBUAE for Q3, 2021 has forecast a 2.1 per cent GDP growth in 2021 with the real non-hydrocarbon GDP projected to increase by 3.8 per cent.

According to central bank data, the UAE's oil production increased by 9.3 per cent year

on year and by 4.3 per cent quarter on at the close of the third quarter in line with the agreement by OPEC+.

CBUAE expects continued increase in public spending, positive outlook for credit growth, higher employment and better business sentiment, as Dubai

World EXPO continues to take place in Q1 2022. Furthermore, being a major tourism, transit and trade hub in the region, the UAE is expected to benefit from the removal of travel restrictions and events such as the FIFA World Cup which is planned to take place in Qatar in Q4 2022.

Real oil GDP growth projection for 2022 has not been changed and remains at 5 per cent, reflecting the expected increase in demand with majority of the world economies being vaccinated.

"Both, non-oil and oil GDP projections for 2022 are subject to upside risks, if global economies, trade and travel reach the full recovery point faster than expected, while downside risks are related to uncertainties around new variants and vaccination rates globally," the CBUAE said.

CPI inflation rate in the UAE turned positive during the third quarter of 2021, for the first time since Q4 2018, at 0.6 per cent year on year. Inflation for the year is expected to remain roughly flat.

Rising inflation is expected to result in an increase in the Federal Funds Rate which would lead to an increase in CBUAE's Base Rate applicable to the Overnight Deposit Facility (ODF), which provides an effective interest rate floor for overnight money market rates in the UAE. The central bank said it will be monitoring economic and financial developments and the liquidity situation of banks operating in the UAE to support the financing needs of the private sector.

CBUAE reaffirmed in Q3 2021 its continued commitment to supporting the economic recovery through the Targeted Economic Support Scheme (TESS) and confirmed that withdrawal of emergency measures introduced in response to the pandemic will be gradual and appropriately timed.

Pakistan Economy Shows Resilience



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Despite several challenges on the internal and external fronts, the Pakistan government has successfully managed to bring sustainability to macroeconomics as it was indicated by the unprecedented resilience of economy during the last couple of years.

Experts believe that the economy of Pakistan is resilient despite the economic shocks caused due to COVID-19 and the recent multi-decade high-price commodity shock.

"At a time when the economy of the whole world witnessed negative growth, the Pakistan economy performed well owing to prudent policies introduced by the government," President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Shakeel Munir told APP.

Finance Ministry in a recently published report said that Pakistan boom-bust life cycle appeared cyclical than sustainable in past as has been reflected from past global commodity, political or economic shocks of 1998, 2009, & 2018, where economy got busted in very short interval of time. However, the incumbent government put the economy on right path to ensure sustainable growth.

The ICCI President attributed the good economic performance to the excellent management by the government during the pandemic period, which is leading the economy to grow at around 5 percent of GDP during the current fiscal year. Last year, the economy performed above expectations as the GDP growth was witnessed at four percent, tax collection exceeded targets, reserves improved, current account reported lowest since 2011.

This growth was achieved when rest of the world was encountering massive output contractions. The growth in India during that period contracted by eight percent, in United Kingdom by 10 percent, United States of America by 3.7 percent and in Iran 6.5 percent.

Era of Humiliation, Blockade, Invasion of Nations Has Come to an End

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Vice President for Economic Affairs Mohsen Rezaei said on Monday that the era of humiliation, blockade, and invasion of nations has come to an end and the victory is for the nations and governments who fight against humiliation and invasion of their countries. Speaking in the meeting with the Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Denis Moncada, Rezaei said that the Islamic Republic of Iran has a good

relationship with Latin American countries and is seeking to expand relations with Nicaragua in different areas.

Rezaei slammed the United States' bullying and its intervention in internal affairs of other countries and said that the U.S.' bullying and economic blockade has absolutely no impact on the resistance of the free nations around the globe, Iran, and Nicaragua in particular.



Green Financing Becomes Popular MENA Firms

DUBAI (Dispatches) - The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region's syndicated market for green and sustainability-linked bonds and loans continued to deepen and mature in 2021 as total issuance reached \$18.64 billion, compared with \$4.5 billion in 2020, according to data from Bloomberg's Capital Markets League Tables.

After a strong first half (\$6.9 billion), total issuance surged by 70 per cent in the second half of 2021 (\$11.74 billion) to complete a record year.

The MENA region outpaced global growth in 2021, although the market still only accounts for a small fraction of international volumes. Total global issuance of green and sustainability-linked bonds and loans in 2021 increased to \$1.62 trillion, compared with \$765 billion in 2020.

The size, quantity and transparency of MENA issuance increased in 2021 as more participants entered the market and implemented dedicated sustainable finance frameworks. Riyad Bank, National Bank of Kuwait and Qatar National Bank were among the regional participating banks that joined First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB), Emirates NBD and Saudi National Bank in committing towards ESG debt financing in 2021.

Last year also saw a number of landmark transactions, including a first green loan by Egypt of \$3 billion, following a green bond issuance by the country in October 2020; Masdar Abu Dhabi Future Energy Co. signing a \$100 million revolving green loan in December 2021, having signed their first green loan in September 2018; and Etihad Airways raising a \$1.2 billion sustainability-linked loan in October 2021, the first in global aviation.

In a reversal of previous years, more green loans were issued than green bonds in 2021 in the MENA region. Syndicated green loans totaling \$6.95 billion were issued in the MENA region in 2021, compared with \$1.6 billion of green bonds.

Notable green loans included Masdar (\$100 million), Saudi Electricity (\$500 million), the Government of Egypt (\$1.5 billion) and the Red Sea Development (approximately \$3.8 billion). In the green bond space, 2021 saw FAB issue a series of six multi-currency green bonds totaling \$605 million.

Contrastingly, syndicated sustainability-linked loans totaled \$5.08 billion in 2021, with deals exceeding \$500 million or above including Gulf International Bank (\$625 million), Etihad (\$1.2 billion), Majid al Futtaim (\$1.5 billion) and Emirates NBD (\$1.75 billion).



Sustainability-linked bonds totaled \$5.01 billion in 2021.

A variety of international banks participated in green bonds in 2021, with Credit Suisse, Barclays and Citi the top managers. The region's top bookrunners for green and sustainability-linked loans in 2021 were FAB, HSBC and Mizuho Bank.

The region's Islamic finance sector was increasingly prominent in the green finance space in 2021. March saw the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) issue a \$2.5 billion sustainability sukuk committed towards financing and refinancing green and social development projects eligible under its Sustainable Finance Framework.

Remaining Part of...

FROM PAGE 1

He described IRGC's measure to attack the US base as Iran's hard slap on Americans, stressing, "We have taken some part of the hard revenge and some other part of it still remains."

Americans must know that they cannot invade a nation and be safe from retaliatory revenge of this nation, he also warned.

022 7:09 AM [Last Update: Monday, 10 January 2022 9:35 AM]

US Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) (L) talks with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) during a rally with fellow Democrats before voting on H.R. 1, or the People Act, on the East Steps of the US Capitol on March 08, 2019 in Washington, DC. (AFP photo)

Earlier on Sunday evening, Salami said there is no safe territory for the enemies, as "they have been defeated in all their conspiracies and have been rendered helpless, tired, and disappointed."

He made the remarks while addressing a ceremony in Tehran on Sunday evening, saying, "We are victorious today and this is what the facts of the field say."

"Today, the swords of the Muslims to fight the enemies have been unsheathed, and [therefore], there is no safe territory for the enemies," Salami said.

He also said Iran's missile strikes against US military bases in Iraq in retaliation for the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani, commander of the IRGC Quds Force, was a "slap on the face" of the US, which saw itself as the world emperor.

"Whose face was this slap delivered on?" he asked, rhetorically. "It was a stinging slap on the face to the United States, which considered itself the emperor of the world and did not stop making threats of tit-for-tat retaliations."

General Salami further said that unlike the Americans, "we did not assassinate a defenseless and unarmed commander, who was fighting terrorism across the Muslim world and had traveled to Iraq at an official invitation, with a drone and in the dead of the night."

Iran Seeking Stable...

FROM PAGE 1

The Foreign Ministry spokesperson also announced that President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and President of Venezuela Nicolas Maduro will visit Iran soon.

The date of Maduro's visit to Tehran will be announced soon, Khatibzadeh said.

Referring to the visit of the South Korean Deputy Foreign Minister to Vienna, Khatibzadeh said, "The visit of the South Korean Deputy Foreign Minister was on their own initiative, and some countries and delegations traveled to Vienna on their own initiative, and the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister met with his counterparts t their request."

During the meeting with the South Korean Deputy Foreign Minister, it was stressed that South Korea is obliged to pay its debts, he added.

Iran Non-Oil...

FROM PAGE 1

According to Latifi, the value of Iran's non-oil trade also rose 25 percent during the ninth month of the current Iranian calendar year (November 22-December 21, 2021), as compared to the same month in the past year.

As previously announced by the acting head of IRICA, the value of Iran's non-oil trade rose 38 percent during the first nine months of the current year (March 21-December 21, 2021), as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

Alireza Moghadasi said that Iran has traded over 122.5 million tons of non-oil products worth \$72.1 billion with other countries in the mentioned period.

According to Moghadasi, the weight of trade in the mentioned period also grew by 11 percent in comparison to the figure for the previous fiscal year.

The official put the nine-month non-oil exports at 92.3 million tons valued at \$35.1 billion, with a 40-percent rise in value and eight percent growth in weight.

He noted that the value of the country's non-oil exports in the first nine months of the current year has exceeded the total value of exports in the previous year and the figure is expected to reach \$47 billion by the end of the current calendar year (March 20, 2022).

Moghadasi said the value of Iran's non-oil trade with foreign partners is expected to reach \$98 billion by the yearend.

Taliban FM...

FROM PAGE 1

It added Muttaqi was also scheduled to meet Ahmad Massoud, the leader of the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan, but representatives of the front said the meeting did not happen, although Massoud had traveled to Tehran from Mashhad on Saturday.

Earlier on Sunday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman rejected reports about Tehran's decision to hand over the Afghan embassy in Tehran to the Taliban.

Kazakhstan...

FROM PAGE 1

4. After meeting the demands of the protesters in the Mangystau region, demonstrations with similar demands began in all major cities of the country.

5. On January 4, 2022, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev urged citizens not to succumb to provocations against the background of rallies against the increase in gas prices, to strive for mutual trust and dialogue. The President instructed the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and local authorities to find peaceful solutions to problems through dialogue with all interested parties based on respect for the rights and freedoms of citizens.

6. These actions demonstrated a clear political will and a desire to resolve disputes through dialogue, confirming the commitment of the authorities to the concept of a "Listening State".

7. Unfortunately, the protests in a number of major cities were used by terrorist, extremist and criminal groups to escalate the situation and violent actions. In this regard, the President ordered to take urgent measures to prevent riots and introduced a state of emergency throughout the country.

8. Despite the undertaken measures, further escalation of violence was caused by massive armed attacks on administrative institutions, police stations, military bases, civilians, including medical workers, firefighters and journalists.

9. The most difficult situation has developed in the city of Almaty, where terrorists seized the Mayor's office, the local residence of the President of Kazakhstan, city police departments, the National Security Committee and the Prosecutor's Offices, some TV and radio stations. Terrorists have also seized the Almaty International Airport with local and foreign aircraft with passengers on board.

10. The analysis of the situation showed that Kazakhstan was subjected to armed aggression by well-coordinated terrorist groups trained abroad. According to preliminary data, there are persons among the attackers who have experience of combat participation in "hot spots" on the side of radical Islamist groups. Terrorist groups appeared due to the activation of the

so-called "sleeping cells". Unfortunately, the law enforcement agencies of Kazakhstan were not ready for such massive and coordinated attacks in the different regions of the country simultaneously.

11. While the initial rallies in Western Kazakhstan were peaceful and accompanied by demands of a socio-economic nature, the participants in the subsequent mass riots did not put forward any specific economic or even political demands. They had no intention to negotiate with the authorities, but were aimed at violent overthrow of the constitutional order.

12. Due to the sharp aggravation of the situation in the country, the President Tokayev assumed the post of Chairman of the Security Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan. On January 6, he ordered the launch of a counter-terrorism operation in the country aimed at eliminating threats to national security and protecting the lives and property of citizens of Kazakhstan.

13. Objectively assessing the situation, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan had to appeal to the member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) with a request to send peacekeeping forces to help stabilize the country.

14. The legal basis for the deployment of Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the CSTO in Kazakhstan are Articles 2 and 4 of the Collective Security Treaty, the Agreement on Peacekeeping Activities and the request of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the provision of necessary assistance.

15. The mandate of the peacekeeping forces includes protection of strategic facilities and helping Kazakhstan law enforcement services. The main actions against terrorist groups are carried out by law enforcement agencies and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

16. Currently, peacekeepers from all CSTO member states, totaling about 2,500 people, are arriving in Kazakhstan.

17. The collective peacekeeping forces of the CSTO remain on the territory of Kazakhstan temporarily and will leave the country after the stabilization of the situation at the first request of the Kazakh side.

18. President Tokayev instructed law enforcement agencies to form an investigative group to conduct a large-scale investigation and bring all those responsible to justice. The results of the investigation upon its completion will be presented to the international community.

19. Kazakhstan ensures the security and protection of foreign diplomatic missions in the country, as well as personnel and property of foreign companies and investors. The situation will soon be stabilized and there will be no changes in the economic policy and investment climate of the country, all our obligations remain in full.

20. The temporary restriction of Internet access in the country is caused by a counter-terrorist operation to block communication between members of terrorist groups.

21. On January 7, 2022, in his address to the people of Kazakhstan, President Tokayev stated that a counter-terrorism operation was continuing in the country. The police, the National Guard and the Armed Forces are carrying out large-scale and coordinated actions to neutralize terrorist and criminal groups.

22. It is important to note that peaceful protesters are not subjected to any persecution.

23. It is important to emphasize the unity of the people of Kazakhstan at this difficult time. Citizens support the measures taken by President Tokayev to restore peaceful life and initiate creation of people's squads to protect social facilities.

24. We are defending our democracy and Constitution from Islamist radicals and terrorists!

25. Unfortunately, there are human casualties, both among law enforcement officers and military personnel, as well as the civilian population. This is a huge tragedy for us, the relatives of the victims and the entire Kazakh people.

26. Due to a large number of casualties and losses of lives as a result of tragic events in a number of the regions of the country, President Tokayev Kazakhstan declared January 10, 2022 a day of national mourning.

Yemen Warns...

FROM PAGE 1

He stressed that any targeting of the port of Hudaydah "would make Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates regret" their action, warning that Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the whole region, including the Israeli entity, would be "under the penalty of the Yemeni defense program" if the coalition launched an attack on the port.

Al-Thor further said, "Any US or Israeli attempt to support the Saudi-Emirati position in Yemen won't serve the Saudi regime and its allies, but rather will increase pressure on them." He added that any American or Israeli support for any attack on Hudaydah and Salif ports would endanger the American interests in the Red Sea.

In the latest attack on civilian facilities in Yemen, the Saudi-led coalition on Monday hit telecommunications networks in Sa'ada, cutting the service in several areas across the province.

According to Yemen's al-Masirah television network, Saudi airstrikes targeted telecommunications networks in the districts of Razih, Haydan, and Sahar.

Over the past two days, the Saudi airstrikes destroyed several telecommunications networks in the provinces of Sa'ada, al-Jawf, and Amran.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies, including the UAE, launched the brutal war against Yemen in March 2015.

The war was launched to eliminate Yemen's popular Houthi Ansarullah movement and reinstall former Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, a staunch ally of Riyadh.

The war, accompanied by a tight siege, has failed to reach its goals, killing hundreds of thousands of Yemeni people.

Barcelona Defender

Garcia out for Five Weeks

MADRID (Dispatches) - Barcelona centre back Eric Garcia has been ruled out for five weeks due to a hamstring injury sustained in yesterday's 1-1 league draw at Granada, the LaLiga club said today.

The 21-year-old, who signed for the Catalan side from Premier League champions Manchester City in the close season, was forced off with the problem early in the second half and replaced by Clement Lenglet.

"(Garcia) is likely to be sidelined for around five weeks," Barca said in a statement.

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England Draw 4th Ashes Test

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - England hung on for a gripping draw with just one wicket left to deny Australia a 4-0 series lead in the fourth Ashes Test in Sydney.

Number 11 batsman James Anderson safely played out a tense final over from leg-spinner Steve Smith as England ended on 270 for nine in a heart-pumping finish.

It all came down to the last over of the Test with eight fielders crowding around the bat as Anderson fended off Smith's spin.

Canada Sweep Past Spain to Win Maiden ATP Cup Title

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime stormed through a gripping clash with Spanish star Roberto Bautista Agut for a massive victory that earned his country a maiden ATP Cup title.

Their Sydney showdown followed Denis Shapovalov ending Pablo Carreno Busta's winning start to the season 6-4, 6-3 to set the scene for a crunch second singles rubber.

World number 11 Auger-Aliassime beat third-ranked Alexander Zverev during the tournament and again showed his class to down 19th-ranked Bautista Agut 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 and seal the tournament for Canada.

The Novak Djokovic-led Serbia won the inaugural edition of the teams event in 2020, when the Rafael Nadal-led Spain also had to settle for second, with Daniil Medvedev's Russia earning the title last year.

"The emotions are unbelievable, there is no better feeling than winning, we left everything out there," said Auger-Aliassime.

"We lost our first four matches in this competition, but never stopped believing.

"We trust each other, Denis and I and everyone on the team, and I think that is very important. I'm super thrilled for everyone on the team, and of course myself.

"Spain is always difficult, they've been the best nation in the world for some time."

Canada earned their place in the final after stunning defending champions Russia on Saturday.

They also beat Zverev's Germany and Britain in group matches, bouncing back after crashing to the United States in their opening tie of the tournament.

Halep Takes Her 23rd Career Title

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - No.2 seed Simona Halep captured the 23rd WTA singles title of her career, and first in Australia, at the Melbourne Summer Set 1 with a 6-2, 6-3 defeat of No.3 seed Veronika Kudermetova in the final.

In 2021, calf and knee injuries significantly disrupted Halep's season. The Romanian competed in 13 tournaments, and finished only nine of them. Consequently, her streak of winning at least one title every year since 2013 was ended, and she also dipped out of the Top 20 for the first time since 2013. Prior to this week, Halep last lifted a trophy at Rome 2020.

However, last year Halep claimed her first two wins over Kudermetova, beating the Russian in straight sets in the Australian Open third round and the Moscow second round. She made that three out of three in Melbourne, coming from an early break down in both sets to triumph in 1 hour and 14 minutes.

Halep improves to 23-18 in WTA finals overall; while Kudermetova, who won her maiden title in Charleston last April, falls to 1-2.

Barty Wins Adelaide Int'l

ADELAIDE (Dispatches) - World number one Ashleigh Barty showed why she is the Australian Open favorite when she demolished Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina in the final of the Adelaide International.

Barty took just 64 minutes to see off the seventh seeded Rybakina 6-3, 6-2 and claim the 14th singles title of her career.

The 25-year-old Australian has been in superb form this week and has had to beat a host of top players in a stacked top half of the draw.

She received a first round bye, but then faced Coco Gauff (world number 22), Sofia Kenin (12) and Iga Swiatek (9) on her way to the decider.

Against the big-serving Rybakina, the world number 14, Barty dominated every aspect of play and took control of the match midway through the first set.



It went to a tie-break with the Canadian playing an electric passing shot then a textbook forehand to storm 4-1 in front and held on to take the set in an enthralling 85 minutes.

Auger-Aliassime, just 21, was serving beautifully and giving a tiring Bautista Agut few chances.

In contrast, he was putting pressure on the Spaniard's serve, creating opportunities with his pounding forehands and it finally paid off with a break to go 5-3 clear.

With victory in sight, he served out for a deserved win that sparked joyous scenes as the team high-fived and hugged.

Both Spanish players had been in red-hot form, each winning all four of their singles encounters so far.

And Carreno Busta held a 4-1 advantage against Shapovalov going into their clash, winning their past three matches, including a five-set thriller in the 2020 US Open quarter-finals.

But the young world number 14 Canadian stepped up to emphatically gain revenge and put his country within one win of the title.

"It's a huge win," Shapovalov said after his match. "Full faith in Felix. He's an amazing player and I think we have a good chance."

The dynamic 22-year-old saved eight of the nine break points he faced to triumph.

The first game of the match, on Shapovalov's serve, proved critical.

Carreno Busta had five break chances, which if converted could have swayed the contest in his favour. But Shapovalov hung on, going for his shots to secure the first set.

The Spaniard, down a set and a break in the second set, broke back for 3-4, but Shapovalov pummelled a forehand winner in the next game to retake the break before serving out his victory.

Nadal Back On Track With Melbourne Title

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Spanish superstar Rafael Nadal's Australian Open preparations remain on track after he beat American Maxime Cressy 7-6 (8/6), 6-3 in the final of the Melbourne Summer Set.

Nadal decided to play the lower level tournament to get some match practice after missing much of 2021 with injury and Covid.

He has not been totally fluent this week and was pushed hard by the American qualifier, but Nadal had too much experience for the 24-year-old serve-volleyer.

It was Nadal's 89th title on the ATP tour and the win ensures he has won at least one singles crown every year for the past 19 years.

Cressy, who had to win through two rounds of qualifying just to make the main draw, started nervously but became more confident as the match wore on.

The American had a set point in the tiebreak but couldn't convert and once Nadal claimed the first set, the final result was almost inevitable.

Nadal will be aiming to break the record for most Grand Slam singles titles at this month's Australian Open.

He is currently tied on 20 titles with Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic, but with Federer injured and Djokovic in doubt because of visa issues, Nadal has a chance to go one ahead of his great rivals.

Nadal was playing his first tournament since August after injury and then contracting Covid.

Strolz Nets Debut World Cup Win in Slalom Upset



ADELBODEN (Dispatches) - Austrian Johannes Strolz emerged the surprise winner of Sunday's slalom in Adelboden for the 29-year-old's breakthrough success on the World Cup circuit.

Placed seventh, at only 0.17s adrift, after the first run, Strolz came through the pack in snowy conditions to deny his compatriot Manuel Feller.

Feller, matching his second in the giant 24 hours earlier, had shared the lead after the first run with another Austrian, Fabio Gstrein, who failed to finish.

Germany's Linus Strasser completed the podium.

Swiss skier Marco Odermatt, who won Saturday's race but who is bypassing the slaloms, heads the overall rankings by 376 points from Aleksander Aamodt Kilde.

Less than a second had split the top 24 skiers after the first leg on the Chuenisbargli slope.

The technically demanding course had caught out the two leaders of the season's slalom standings - Norwegian Sebastian Foss-Solevaag and Swede Kristoffer Jakobsen.

Another failing to finish was Clement Noel, winner of the season-opening race at Val d'Isere.

Defending overall champion Alexis Pinturault was well placed in fifth but the Frenchman came unstuck in the afternoon.

Monfils Claims 11th Singles Title

ADELAIDE (Dispatches) - Flamboyant Frenchman Gael Monfils claimed the 11th title of his career and his first in almost two years when he beat Russia's Karen Khachanov at the Adelaide International.

Monfils broke Khachanov once in each set to take the title 6-4, 6-4.

The 35-year-old Monfils has admitted he has struggled for motivation during the pandemic because he does not enjoy playing in empty stadiums.

As a result his ranking has dropped from inside the top 10 to its current position of 21.

But playing in front of a large crowd who had poured in to see local favourite Ashleigh Barty win the women's title, Monfils lifted and had the edge on his Russian opponent.

Both men had no trouble holding serve throughout the match.

But at 4-5 in both sets, Khachanov seemed to let his nerves get the better of him and he dropped serve each time to hand the match to Monfils.

The two men will remain in Adelaide for next week's second ATP tournament, where Monfils is top seed once again.

World number 29 Khachanov will be third seed, with the pair, who have been practising together this week, drawn to meet in the semi-finals.



Man Utd Deserve Criticism After Sub-Par Displays

LONDON (Dispatches) - Harry Maguire admits Manchester United deserve criticism for their sub-standard performances this season but has played down rumors of disharmony in the dressing room.

Ralf Rangnick suffered his first defeat as interim manager against Wolves last week, which was followed by reports of unrest among the players.

Maguire said United -- seventh in the Premier League -- must do better as they prepare for a third-round FA Cup tie against Aston Villa.

"I've obviously seen a lot of criticism and a lot of it is absolutely justified, but for me, with this team, it shouldn't need criticism to motivate players," Maguire said in an interview published on the club's website. "We all have to take massive responsibility, myself as captain as much as anyone, if not more," he said.

"We've got to start playing well and winning... This team finished second last year and we have a better and bigger squad this year, so we have to show the right attitude."

Maguire played down suggestions of disharmony among the players but admitted it was tough to keep all the members of a big squad happy.

