

Reports Published Accusing Iran of Shipping Arms to Yemen Are Kind of Unprofessional Media Propaganda Campaign and psycho Operation by Misusing Parts of a Draft Report by a Group Affiliated to the United Nations

# IRAN NEWS

Health Ministry Announced on Tuesday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic In Iran Increased to 131,940 With 25 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

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## FM in Qatar To Cement Ties

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has arrived in Qatar on the second leg of his regional tour with the intention of advancing the Iranian administration's policy of establishing closer ties with neighboring countries.

Speaking upon his arrival in Doha early on Tuesday, Amir-Abdollahian stressed that his visits to Oman and Qatar are in line with strengthening Iran's friendly relations with its neighbors. The top Iranian diplomat told reporters that he would exchange views with Qatari officials on Iran's capacity to provide the 2022 FIFA World Cup host with technical and engineering services.

He said that in Muscat, he exchanged views with Omani officials on the political cooperation between the two countries, on the investment in Iran's port city of Chabahar, and on the resumption of vessel movements along with Iran Air and Oman Air flights. Amir-Abdollahian further explained that he held discussions about the developments in Yemen, Afghanistan, and Palestine, as well as the ongoing talks in Vienna between Tehran and other remaining parties to the 2015 deal to revive the deal.

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## U.S. Urged to Return Achaemenid Tablets to Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations said on Monday that the United States must return Achaemenid tablets archive to Iran with no excuse.

Majid Takht Ravanchi, Iran's Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the UN, said that the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago borrowed the Achaemenid tablets for three years 90 years ago but has not returned all of them yet.

The archive is a part of Iran's culture and history and belongs to the Iranian people, Ravanchi said, adding that the US has delayed returning the tablets under a new pretext each time.

Americans admit that the tablets were a loan to the US, but they haven't been given back completely, the diplomat noted.

He said that Iran's clear demand was that the tablets should be returned completely and healthily to Iran's government.

The archive includes more than 30,000 clay tablets that were shipped to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago as a loan authorized by the Iranian Government in 1935 and arrived in Chicago in 1936.

The institute was slated to study the artifacts for three years and then return them to Iran, but it failed to fulfill the commitment for several decades.

Some parts of the archive have been returned to Iran in 1948, 1971, and 2004, but a large part of it is still held by the institute.



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## China's Imports of Iranian Oil Hit Record Since 2018



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - China's imports of Iranian crude oil last year hit a record high since the US imposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic in 2018 with the aim of bringing the country's oil sales down to zero, Bloomberg reports.

Chinese refiners brushed off the risk of the sanctions to take in 324 million barrels from Iran and Venezuela in 2021, about 53% more than the year before, data from market intelligence firm Kpler cited by the news provider showed.

"That's the most since 2018, when China took 352 million barrels from the two nations," it added.

According to Braemar and industry consultant Energy Aspects Ltd, Chinese imports of sanctioned crude should stay elevated around current levels early this year.

China's private refiners are main customers of Iran's floating oil cargoes through spot purchases. Crude from Iran stored in tankers offshore Asia is an attractive option given that it can be delivered quickly. There are millions of barrels of crude floating off China and around Singapore and Malaysia that include Iranian oil.

Rising crude prices have incentivized the private refiners, known as teapots, to snap up more oil from Iran and Venezuela without worrying about the risk of the sanctions because they don't have US-based businesses and do not need the American financial system for trade.

Oil markets are closely watching negotiations underway in Vienna between Iran and the remaining parties to an international nuclear agreement for a breakthrough to resume purchases from the country.

Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji has said Iran will return to its pre-sanctions crude production level as soon as the US sanctions are removed. Petroleum ministry officials have said they are confident most output could be restored within a month.

On Sunday, head of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Mohsen Khojastehmehr said the private sector is contributing greatly to the country's current oil sales.

He said Iran's oil revenues have increased significantly over the past few months and the country has received the payment for all its crude oil sales since the new government administration.

"In the thirteenth government, part of the country's lost oil markets has been revived and we have received the payment for all the oil we have sold so far," Khojastehmehr said.

On Tuesday, a Reuters report said Iran has the chance of more oil swap with Venezuela which is resuming exports of diluted crude oil (DCO) for the first time in nine months.

U.S. trade sanctions imposed on Venezuelan state-run oil firm PDVSA in 2019 had hurt its ability to produce exportable grades from its largest production region, the Orinoco Belt.

The extra heavy oil extracted from the Orinoco Belt has to be diluted with naphtha or condensate for transportation and exports. With international companies eschewing deals with Venezuelan oil, Iran has stepped in and struck swap arrangements with the South American which holds the world's largest supply of crude oil.

PDVSA has been receiving about 2.1 million barrels per month of condensate, a high-value light oil, in exchange for supplying NIOC with some 3.8 million barrels of its flagship Merey 16 crude.

Reuters on Tuesday cited an internal PDVSA schedule report showing that a Panama-flagged supertanker has loaded about 1.9 million barrels of DCO bound for Malaysia which is sometimes used to trans-ship Venezuelan crude bound for China.

The last time PDVSA had shipped DCO was in April, when it sent two cargoes to Asia, it said.

Shipping DCO to Asia could allow the resumption of the Venezuela-Iran swap, which was mostly fulfilled in the second half of last year before deliveries were paused in December, the news agency added.

## Dozens of UAE-, Saudi-Backed Militants Killed in Yemeni Missile Strike

SANAA (Dispatches) - Dozens of militants sponsored by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia have been killed when Yemeni army soldiers and fighters from allied Popular Committees launched a missile strike against their position in Yemen's southern province of Shabwah.

Informed sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Yemen News Portal website that a massive explosion shook a military camp of the UAE-backed militants - better known by the nom de guerre the Giants - in the Nokhan area, which lies east of the provincial capital of Ataq, on Monday evening.

According to the sources, the incident occurred when Yemeni soldiers and allied fighters launched a domestically-developed ballistic missile at the site, leaving dozens of the militants killed and injured.

The development came a day after Lebanon's Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network reported that the commander of the so-called Third Brigade, Majdi al-Radfani, had died of his injuries after Yemeni army troops and their allies targeted UAE-sponsored militants in the Bayhan district of Shabwah province.

The report added that more than 130 militants have been killed during battles with Yemeni Armed Forces over the past few days and dozens of others have been wounded. A number of their military vehicles have been destroyed as well.

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## ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

## Zionists' Bitter Confession

For years Zionist regime has been boasting that it will destroy Iran's nuclear facilities to stop Tehran from continuing its peaceful nuclear programs while it itself has so many nuclear warheads and A-Bombs but every time it threatens Iran, it is forced to swallow its words because of Iran's showing its offensive missile power and for this reason Zionist officials are forced to accept that they are unable to stop the Islamic Republic of Iran.

On Monday, a former Zionist statesman had a bitter confession and said the Zionists are unable to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities without suffering considerable damages. Former Israeli prime minister dismissed any possibility of a preemptive attack on Iran's nuclear facilities by the regime, saying that such a notion is "nonsense."

Ehud Olmert made the remarks in a Monday interview with Israel's Channel 12 news, during which he derided the idea that the Tel Aviv regime would be able to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities through a military strike.

Olmert emphasized that such a notion would be pure "nonsense," adding, "It is unnecessary arrogance that indicates weakness, not strength."

Olmert's latest remarks echoed his previous assertions in an opinion piece published in Haaretz Hebrew site in which he noted that Israel did not have conventional military capabilities that enable it to strike and permanently eliminate Iran's nuclear facilities as it did in Iraq in 1981 and Syria in 2007.

The Israeli regime has never stopped advertising the threat of "military action" against Iran and falsely accusing the Islamic Republic of seeking to acquire nonconventional military capability.

Iran, for his part, has repeatedly downplayed Israel's threats against its nuclear facilities, promising crushing response to any act of aggression against the country.

On January 3, Iran's foreign minister slammed anti-Iranian remarks by Israel's foreign minister Yair Lapid, saying that the Islamic Republic will defend its interests with power.

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian's remarks came in a tweet in response to earlier claims by Lapid that the Zionist regime "could attack Iran if necessary without informing the Biden administration," adding that "Israel has capabilities, some of which the world, and even some experts in the field, cannot even imagine."

Reacting to Lapid's allegations, Amir-Abdollahian took to Twitter saying that the senseless remarks made by the "fake Israeli regime against the great Iranian nation" are a dream, which will never come true.

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## Exports to Africa Rise Almost 200% y/y

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has reported a major surge in non-oil exports to Africa in the nine months to December 21 with an official in the country's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) saying that shipments had almost tripled over the period mainly thanks to increased government support for exporters.

TPO's head of Arab and Africa Office Farzad Piltan said on Monday that Iranian exports to African countries had reached a total of \$912 million in March-December last year, up 199% from the similar period in 2020.

Piltan said Ghana was Iran's largest customer of non-oil exports over the nine months to late December as the West African country had bought \$292 million worth of goods from Iran over the period.

Purchases by South Africa and Nigeria rose to \$169 million and \$85 million, respectively, said the official, adding that shipments to Sudan and Algeria had also increased between March and December last year.

That comes as imports from Africa into Iran remained low at \$40 million over the nine months to late December 2021, according to TPO figures.

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# FM Visit to China of High Importance

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's Ambassador to China Mohammad Keshavarzadeh said that Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian's upcoming trip to China was of high importance in the current circumstances.

Iranian and Chinese foreign ministers have repeatedly met in recent years, Keshavarzadeh wrote in a tweet on Monday.

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi signed the 25-year comprehensive cooperation program in his visit to Iran early in 2021, he added.

## U.S. Biggest State Sponsor Of Terror, Source of Insecurity Worldwide

*IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK*

**TEHRAN - The spokesman of the Iranian Armed Forces has described the United States as the leading state sponsor of terrorism in the world, saying Washington is the source of insecurity across the globe.**

Speaking in the city of Kerman on Tuesday, Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi said the criminal US regime exposed its true face before the world by its "brazen" assassination of Iran's top anti-terror commander General Qassem Soleimani.

"The U.S. is the world's biggest terrorist-nurturing country and the looter of the property of the people and the oppressed," Shekarchi said. "No insecurity happens in the world unless the United States is involved."

Iran called General Soleimani's assassination "state terrorism" and vowed to put an end to the US military's presence in the region as the ultimate act of revenge.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Shekarchi said General Soleimani was kind and



compassionate toward the people while being firm, brave, and invincible in the face of the enemy.

He also noted that the martyred commander stood up against the Daesh terrorist group and destroyed the "predatory animal."

"Who armed and supported this predatory animal?" he said, hinting at the US government. "We should be careful not to confuse the martyr with the executioner."

He also asserted that the enemy suffered more from the martyrdom of General Soleimani compared to when he was leading the Resistance Front, pointing to the increasing public push to expel American forces from the region.

## Sacred Defense Means of Cultural Transmission



TEHRAN (IP) - The Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces said that the eight-year Sacred Defense against the US-backed Iraqi war must be put into the spotlight as a means of transferring the national spirit to the next generations.

Major General Mohammad Hossein Bagheri said on Tuesday that the 8-year Sacred Defense should be considered as a unique event in the history of the Iranian nation as a highly significant event in the national culture and spirit of the present and future generations.

General Bagheri made the remarks in the conference of the managers of Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Sacred Defense Works and Values.

As another speaker of the conference, Iran's Police Chief stressed that focusing on the publication of works on the 8-Year Sacred Defense would protect the country against the enemies' threats.

Highlighting the historical defense as an honorable part of Iranian history, Brigadier General Hossein Ashtari said: "The enemies seek to defame our honors so that prevent them from being transferred to the next generations by creating ambiguity in them, and we should try to make these works as prominent as possible and pass them on to the next generation."

Forty-one years ago, in September 1980, Iraq's Ba'athist regime of Saddam, supported by then-Western and Eastern blocks of the world, triggered a war on the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Iran had newly got independent from the world's powers.

## No Limits to Establishing Cordial Ties With Neighbors

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says the Islamic Republic sees no limits when it comes to establishment of friendly relations with neighboring countries.

Iran's top diplomat made the remarks in a meeting with Oman's Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al-Said in Muscat on Monday.

Elaborating on the foreign policy of the new Iranian administration, Amir-Abdollahian said boosting cooperation with regional countries is among the administration's top priorities, adding that further promotion of political, economic and cultural ties with Muscat is high on Tehran's agenda.

Underlining Iran's fundamental stance on the need to boost cooperation with Persian Gulf littoral states, Iran's top diplomat emphasized that Tehran sees no limit or exception to establishment of cordial relations with regional countries.

The Iranian foreign minister voiced the country's readiness to improve economic cooperation with Oman, particularly in the fields of freight and passenger transport, energy and tourism.

He further briefed the Omani official on the latest developments in the ongoing talks between Iran and the P4+1 group of countries in the Austrian capital of Vienna and urged the participating sides to pursue practical and constructive initiatives.

Amir-Abdollahian emphasized that Iran is resolved to reach a "good agreement" with the five remaining parties to the 2015 landmark deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), if the opposite side shows goodwill and seriousness.

Speaking in a televised interview whose text was published on Sunday, the Iranian foreign minister said it is possible for negotiating parties in the Austrian capital to reach a good agreement in the shortest possible time if there is serious will on all sides.

Iran's top diplomat said, "If there is serious will, we will be able to reach a good agreement in the shortest time, and as of today, we believe that negotiations are positive and moving forward."

Elsewhere in his Monday meeting, Amir-Abdollahian pointed to the Yemen war and said the Islamic Republic's principled stance is to support efforts aimed at finding a political and dialogue-based solution to the crisis in Yemen and hailed Oman's position in this regard.

The Omani official, for his part, said Tehran and Muscat enjoy close and cordial relations but they need to further improve cooperation.

Oman is keen to play a role in promoting convergence among regional countries, he added.

## China, Iran Hold First Joint Exhibition of Stamps in Tehran

*IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK*

TEHRAN - China and Iran on Monday inaugurated their first joint exhibition of the two countries' stamps at the Post and Communications Museum in Iran's capital Tehran.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the exhibition, Chinese Ambassador to Iran Chang Hua said the stamps have demonstrated wonderful moments of the social development of China and Iran in microcosm. The stamps, as cultural messengers, have encapsulated the dialogue and integration of the ancient civilizations of China and Iran, and recorded their friendly

exchanges since the establishment of diplomatic relations five decades ago, Chang added.

Ramezanali Sobhanifar, Iran's deputy minister of communication and information technology, agreed that the stamps have shown the "very good relations" between the two ancient civilizations

historically connected by the Silk Road.

"We need to show the past relations between the two countries to the new generation to ... deepen bilateral relations so that the two countries use their potentials in different fields," said Sobhanifar, also head of Iran's National Post Company.

Celebrities from Iran's postal, cultural and diplomatic sectors attended the opening ceremony. Ahmad Mohit Tabatabai, president of Iran's National Committee of Museums, told Xinhua that this exhibition displays how the stamps from China have been collected in this Iranian museum that houses stamps from about 110 countries and regions.

A large number of stamp lovers visited the two countries' stamps on display on the first day of the exhibition, which runs until Friday.

Hamid Reza Soleimani, a collector of stamps and documents, said he "highly values the 50-year relations between China and Iran and hopes that relations between countries, particularly Iran and China, will improve day by day."

The exhibition followed a December joint issuance of two commemorative stamps depicting Chinese and Iranian ancient bridges to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.



## U.S. Says It Is Superman, Fails Preventing Corona Infection

TEHRAN (IP) - Health Minister says the U.S. introduces itself as a superman in the world but it has failed to control the growth rate of the corona infection in the country.

During the nearly two and half year coronavirus pandemic, when the whole world is coping with the new virus, the U.S. has the highest rate of infections while bragging itself as a superpower.

Bahram Einollahi said the enemies should be aware of their absolute failure to impose inhuman sanctions against Iran because Iranians always prove vital.

The minister stressed how the Iranian men and women had sacrificed their lives to save others.

Health Minister underlined: "Nobel Iranians stand strong and firm while being sanctioned and faced crippling economic conditions."

The Iranian minister of health remarks at the ceremony held on Monday evening to honor the contributors to Martyr Soleimani National Plan to fight Coronavirus.

## Iran Signs Offenders Extradition Treaty With 28 Countries

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's government spokesman says Iran had signed agreements with 28 countries to extradite criminals to return looted public property.

Ali Bahadori-Jahromi said in his weekly presser on Tuesday: "The government supports Iranians' rights, so in case of extradition of criminals, we have signed MoUs with 28 countries and significant measures have been taken, our approach is to take back the looted properties taken to other countries by the criminals."

The Government Spokesman said the Iranian people were waiting for the extradition of criminals living in Canada.

Fighting against corruption is one of the world's challenges when criminals flee to other countries, so the rules must prevent the corrupters from escaping abroad, he added.

According to the spokesman, Canada, during the last ten years, has never cooperated with Iran to extradite the corrupt criminals.

Yet, Canada has taken no step to cooperate with Iran, though, having meetings with Iranian International Police, he stressed.

He also referred to the critical coronavirus status in American, European, and African countries, which are painstakingly coping with the Omicron variant and are mainly in the red zone.

The official added that Iran is in good condition with public cooperation and implementing all hygienic protocols.

He also referred to the presence of diplomatic missions of some countries in Vienna while Iran-P4+1 talks are underway and said that Tehran has no involvement in these consultations.

Representatives of Saudi Arabia and South Korea have arrived in Vienna and met with some senior

## VP Stresses Reinforcing Iran-Cuba Ties Against U.S. Sanctions

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Vice President for Economic Affairs Mohsen Rezaee in a meeting with top Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel stressed strengthening bilateral relations against U.S. sanctions.

Rezaee has attended the Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega inauguration ceremony on behalf of the Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

According to Cuban Foreign Ministry website, President Díaz-Canel conveyed his greeting to Iranian president and the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

Both sides hailed bilateral political relations and took advantage of the opportunity for developing economic and trade relations and joint cooperation in health and pharmaceutical industry.

They underlined friendly relations between Tehran and Havana against U.S. sanctions.

## Yemen's Future Must Be Determined by Nation Itself

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's foreign minister says the future outlook of the war-torn Yemen must be determined by the country's own people through talks among all Yemeni groups.

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in a Monday meeting with Mohammed Abdulsalam, who is the chief negotiator of Yemen's National Salvation Government, in the Omani capital of Muscat.

He expressed regret over the continuation of the war imposed on the Yemeni people and stressed the need for an end to the country's siege and war.

The top Iranian diplomat said current problems in Yemen should be settled through diplomatic channels in cooperation with all Yemenis, adding that the country's political future can be determined only through intra-Yemeni talks.

Abdulsalam, for his part, extended his condolences to the Iranian government and people over the passing away of Iran's Ambassador to Sana'a Hassan Irloo due to COVID-19 infection.

He hailed Iran's support for the Yemeni people and briefed the Iranian foreign minister on the latest developments in the war-ravaged country.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies, including the United Arab Emirates, launched the brutal war against Yemen in March 2015 to eliminate Yemen's popular Houthi Ansarullah movement and reinstall former Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, a staunch ally of Riyadh.

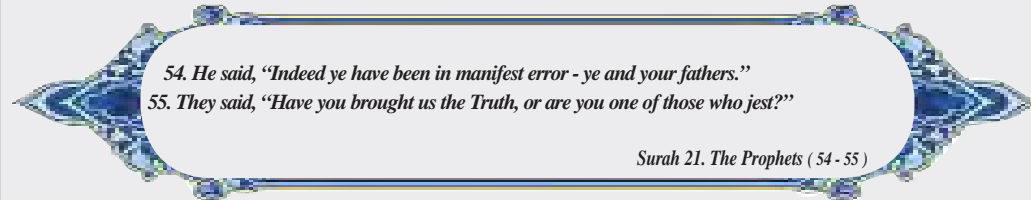
The war, accompanied by a tight siege, has failed to reach its goals, killing hundreds of thousands of Yemeni people instead.





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:12
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:31
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:45
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:13



## Tehran, Moscow Working on Using Their Local Banks in Trade

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

**TEHRAN – A member of board of directors of Iran-Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce says it is possible for Iran and Russia to use their local banks and currently the banking relation between Iran and Russia is underway, adding that there are different routes for transfer of money but due to the sanctions he cannot go through its details, reiterating that but the money transfer is underway and the idea of using local banks is under study and soon both sides will reach agreements either with the JCPOA or without JCPOA.**

In an interview with ILNA and reacting to President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi's upcoming visit to Russia, Seyed Jalil Jalalifar said that during the visit the macro economic issues of both countries will be discussed and the most important one is the North-South corridor where the role and investment of Russia is definitely more colorful. He added that Russia is seeking boosting its relations with East African states, India and Pakistan, and the North-South corridor is the best and safest route which passes Iran.

He noted that with activating the corridor, Russia will not be the only country benefiting it and countries like Iran and India will also benefit it, adding that of course, role of Iran and Russia for activating the corridor is very important and therefore some infrastructures are required that presidents of the two states should discuss it during their meeting.

He said that the logistic infrastructures in southern ports of Russia are not ready and this issue has repeatedly raised during the joint commission meetings but it has been in vain so far. Jalalifar went on to say that other important fields like energy, tourism,



industrial cooperation, joint investment, cooperation in the knowledge-based sciences and launch of the free trade are expected to be discussed during the meeting.

He stated that Russia enjoys having a proper geopolitical position as the country is neighboring with 14 countries and for this reason it is considered a gateway to have access for the target countries by Iran. He added by the way, Iran also is neighboring with 15 countries and Russia is one of them and therefore expansion of economic ties will be important strategically.

Jalalifar reiterated that Iran and Russia are to sign a 25-year cooperation document in the future and it is expected it is discussed during President Raisi's visit.

He then pointed to using national currencies in the bilateral trade and said Russians can exports goods from Iran and in return they can purchase goods in Iran's national currency, adding that this requires signing a barter trade agreement and banks of the two countries can register the record of the trades.

He said fortunately the trade volume between Iran and Russia is on the rise but it is not in a satisfactory level, adding that Russia has imported some \$79b of goods in 9 months and Iran could at least export goods worth of \$4b in the worst condition but unfortunately Iran's exports to Russia have been around \$1b this year while the figure was \$792m last year.

He then pointed to the reasons behind failure of Iran in increasing considerably the amount of exports to Russia and blamed some organizations in Iran and some decisions in Russia which have affected the trade between the two countries.

## Iran Iron Ore Pellet Output Up 23%

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's production of iron ore pellets, a main feedstock for steelmakers, has risen by 23% year on year in March-December last year, according to figures by the state-run metals and mining company IMIDRO.

IMIDRO figures cited in a Monday report by the IRIB News showed that iron pellet output by nine major companies in Iran had reached nearly 28.65 million metric tons in the nine months to December 21.

Nearly a third of output recorded by IMIDRO over the period, which was more than 9.34 million tons, came from Golgozar Mining & Industrial Co, the company that controls Iran's largest iron ore field in the country's southeast. IMIDRO figures showed that iron ore producers had increased their supply of pellets to domestic steelmakers by 10% over the March-December period to nearly 14 million tons.

Output rose by 17% in the calendar month to December 21 against the previous month to reach just over three million tons as supplies provided to Iranian steelmakers increased by 14% month on month to over 1.85 million tons, said IMIDRO.

Iran was facing a shortage of less than 10 million tons of iron pellets per year in 2015 when total annual pellet output was just over 20 million tons.

Boosted output of iron ore pellet has led to higher exports of steel from Iran while allowing iron ore companies to earn more from direct shipments of ore to customers in Asia and elsewhere.

Experts believe that continued growth seen in Iran's metals sector in recent years is a byproduct of US sanctions on the country's sales of crude. The sanctions imposed since 2018 caused the Iranian government to massively increase its investment in mines and in metals companies as the sector has a high potential for creating jobs and boosting the country's foreign currency revenues through increased exports.

## Tehran, Dushanbe Boost Trade Up to €500m

TEHRAN (IP) - Tajikistan's Ambassador to Tehran said that Iran and Tajikistan have agreed to increase trade volume to € 500 million soon.

Speaking on the sidelines of the "Perspectives of Tajik-Iranian relations" ceremony held on the 30th anniversary of the establishment Tehran-Dushanbe diplomatic ties, Nizamuddin Zahedi stated that to achieve the goals set, the two sides agreed to prepare and sign a long-term trade and economic cooperation development plan for 2030.

Zahedi continued: "Over the past 30 years, Iran and Tajikistan, which have a long history of political,

economic, trade, cultural, security, and military achievements, have taken significant steps."

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Tajikistan in September marked the beginning of a new phase in cooperation between the two countries, added the official.

The Tajikistan Ambassador to Tehran emphasized that the two countries agreed to use all trade and economic capacities to enhance cooperation.

There are facilities and capacities to implement the cooperation agreements between the two sides, with the volume of trade between Iran and Tajikistan has tripled during the last three months.

## Iran Ranks 4th in Global Nanotech Rankings

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's Nanotechnology Innovation Council says the country has ranked fourth in the global rankings in the field for the fourth year in a row. "The global rank and standing of Iran in the field of nanotechnology is assessed in quantitative terms.

Of course in terms of quality, Iran also ranks among the top 10 countries in the world given the articles published on the subject," the INIC Spokesman Saeed Sarkar said.

Sarkar stressed that, in nanotech Iran is ranked higher than such countries as South Korea, Germany and Japan, among others.

He said Iran has so far produced around 850 certified products, which have been industrialized and have helped improve people's lives.

The official added that Iran produced some 2.7 billion dollars worth of nanotech products last year. He said the construction and pharmaceutical industries are the key sectors, where nanotech products are more widely used.

## Iran Joins Countries Producing Kits for Omicron Diagnostic Tests

TEHRAN (IP) - The CEO of Barekat Electronic Health Knowledge-based Foundation said that Iran is one of the few countries that succeeded in producing the Omicron rapid diagnostic tests kit and joined the group of three countries with the technology.

Sajjad Morraaveji added: "Currently, these kits are designed to identify new variants of coronavirus and in the future can detect others."

He added that identifying new variants of coronavirus in 15 minutes with the help of these kits is possible. After the test, all information is digitally registered then, the people associated with the infected person are smartly tracked.

Morraaveji stated: "The kit has 92% accuracy and 98% sensitivity, and its daily production capacity is about 200,000 kits and can be increased if needed."

## Oil, Gas Condensate Output Expected to Rise



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Considering the new resource allocations for the development of the oil industry in the budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (starts on March 21), the country's crude oil and gas condensate production is expected to increase by 144,000 barrels per day (bpd) in the next fiscal year.

In the budget bill for the next year, special attention has been paid to improving oil and gas production and development of energy infrastructure across the country in order to boost the oil output to 3.952 million bpd.

The country's oil transmission network is also expected to expand fourfold to 10,758 kilometers next year, the report said.

Iran has been gradually boosting crude oil production to get ready for a strong comeback into the global market as the talks with world powers over the nuclear deal show signs of progress.

According to a Bloomberg report, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has stated that the country's oil fields are going through overhaul operations and connections with oil buyers are being re-established.

"In the most optimistic estimates, the country could return to pre-sanctions production levels of almost four million barrels a day in as little as three months," the report published in May 2021 stated.

Back in November 2021, NIOC Head Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr said his company was planning to boost the country's oil production capacity to the pre-sanction levels or nearly four million bpd by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2022).

"Based on our plans, we need \$90 billion of investment in the oil sector, while \$70 billion is also needed to develop gas fields," Khojasteh-Mehr said in a press conference on November 28, 2021.

Khojasteh-Mehr further stated that considering the increase in the oil and gas production and the country's refining capacity, NIOC is also planning to boost the oil and gas industry's export capacity to reach 1.5 times more than the pre-sanction levels over the next 10 years.

## Chadormalu Co. Seeks Maximum Exploiting Home-Made Capacity

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN – Manager of financial affairs and human resources of Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company says the company is trying to make most of the capacity of the home-made equipment



and spare parts in its mineral and industrial complexes.

Eng. Farhad Azarinfar said that last year over 1,446 items of parts and new consuming parts in the extraction, processing, pelletizing, direct reduction and steelmaking sections of the company have been indigenized and by the end of last Iranian calendar year, totally 28,000 parts and spare parts were provided through domestic resources and replaced the foreign like items.

He went on to say that only last year the company saved 19m euros through using the home-made parts which shows 7.3m euros of growth in saving forex comparing to the preceding year.

Azarinfar also pointed to the projects, research and study projects, adding that with decline in consumption and production costs as well as indigenizing the industrial parts and machineries, the company could implement several research projects as it started and finished 77 research projects last year whose effects are clearly evident in optimization, reducing energy consumption, increase of iron ore concentrate and pellet production controlling and reducing pollutants as well as reducing the time costs of repair and indigenization.

He went on to say that according to the plans, this year 25 research projects in the mining complex, 34 projects in the industrial complex, including 14 projects in pelletizing, 13 projects in steelmaking and 7 projects in the direct reduction, have been carried out.

Azarinfar also said the company held the first festival on top ideas which was warmly welcomed as the secretariat of the festival received 946 new ideas and ultimately the top 13 ideas were named at the end of the festival.

He noted that the company will continue its cooperation with university for taking advantage of the home-made capacity.

## 10 Sewage Treatment Plants Constructed in 10 Years in Isfahan



**IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK**

ISFAHAN – The CEO of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company (ABFA of Isfahan) says construction of 10 sewage treatment plants in 10 years indicates jihadi spirit and strong determination of the personnel of the company for better serving the public.

Hashem Amini said non-stop services with the goal of improving the level of welfare and public health have been put on the agenda of the company, adding that out of 28 sewage treatment plants in Isfahan Province, 10 have been built in recent decade.

He said besides construction of sewage treatment plants in the towns of Khansar, Daran, Chadgan, Najafabad, Natanz, Harand, Ejieh, Varnamkhash, Tiran, Boeen and Miandasht, two packages of sewage treatment have been constructed in the past ten years for the Mehr Housing Units of the towns of Natanz and Ferydoonshahr.

Amini noted that the sewage input of the treatment plants in nine plants are treated based on the activated sludge method, 13 plants based on the aerated lagoon and 8 plants based on the waste stabilization pond methods which are in accordance with the environmental standards.

He added that currently 73.5 percent of the urban population of Isfahan Province is under the sewage network coverage, adding that currently some 3.211m people in towns and cities and 5,900 people in the villages of the province are enjoying the wastewater services.

Amini reiterated that Isfahan Province with having 8,309 kilometers of collecting network, 500 kilometers of transfer line accounts for 13 percent of the total collection network and transfer line of wastewater of the country.



He said the CTSO would not allow “color revolutions” to take place, a reference to several popular revolutions in ex-Soviet countries over the last two decades, including Ukraine and Georgia.



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## Turkey's Unemployment Unchanged at 11.2% in November

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's jobless rate remained unchanged at 11.2 percent in November compared with the previous month, the Turkish Statistical Institute said.

Non-agricultural unemployment, adjusted for seasonal factors, increased by a monthly 0.1 percentage points to 13.1 percent, the institute said on its website on Monday. The number of people in the labour force rose by 267,000 to 33.6 million, it said.



## IMF Warns Developing Countries of Economic Turbulence

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Emerging economies should gird for possible rough times as the U.S. Federal Reserve prepares to raise interest rates and world economic growth slows because of the Omicron variant of Covid-19, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned.

The IMF, which is scheduled to release updated economic forecasts on January 25, said that for now global economic recovery from the ravages of the pandemic should continue this year and next.

But "risks to growth remain elevated by the stubbornly resurgent pandemic," IMF economists Stephan Danninger, Kenneth Kang and Helene Poirson wrote in a blog post.

The highly contagious Omicron strain has spread like wildfire around the world since mid-December, causing record numbers of new Covid cases in the latest wave of the global health crisis.

Omicron, which seems to cause less severe disease than previous strains of the coronavirus, is causing countries to reinstitute health measures that hamper economic growth.

"Given the risk that this could coincide with faster Fed tightening, emerging economies should prepare for potential bouts of economic turbulence," the economists said, as these countries are also confronting elevated inflation and substantially higher public debt.

The Fed has signalled that it will raise key interest rates sooner and more aggressively than it had planned, in order to counter rampant inflation in the US that is hitting US households and consumption — the engine of economic growth in America.

Higher interest rates mean financing costs for some emerging economies with dollar-denominated debt will rise.

These countries are already lagging behind in the global economic recovery and thus less able to absorb added expenditure.

"While dollar borrowing costs remain low for many, concerns about domestic inflation and stable foreign funding led several emerging markets last year, including Brazil, Russia, and South Africa, to start raising interest rates," the IMF said.

Quicker Fed rate hikes could rattle financial markets and cause tighter financial conditions on a global scale, the blog says.

The risk is there will be a slowing of demand and trade in the U.S., as well as capital flight and a depreciation of the dollar in markets of emerging countries.

The IMF recommended that emerging economy nations "tailor their response based on their circumstances and vulnerabilities."

And central banks that are raising interest rates to fight inflation should engage in "clear and consistent communication" so people better understand the need for price stability, the international lender said.

## UK Manufacturers Optimistic Despite Brexit Risks

LONDON (Dispatches) - British manufacturers are optimistic over the 2022 outlook but fear fresh Brexit fallout one year after the nation's departure from the European Union, a survey showed today.

Industry body Make UK, representing 20,000 manufacturing companies across Britain, revealed the findings of its survey of 228 firms conducted with consultancy PwC.

The survey concluded that manufacturers "are more positive about the growth outlook as they enter 2022, with greater confidence in the prospects for their own companies than either the global or UK economies".

Almost three quarters of respondents "expect conditions in manufacturing to improve" this year despite the Omicron variant affecting some output.

Two thirds insisted Britain remained a "competitive location" for manufacturing, but the same proportion also stated leaving the EU had hurt their business.

And 56 per cent of firms believed more Brexit woes will materialise this year.

Britain formally left the EU single market and customs union at the start of 2021.

"One year on from leaving the EU, two thirds of companies said that leaving had moderately or significantly hampered their business, with over a half of companies fearing a further impact this year from customs delays due to import checks and changes in product labelling," Make UK said. The manufacturing sector has also been hit by the ongoing global supply crunch — and soaring inflation caused largely by spiking energy costs.



## Thailand Central Bank Sees Lower H1 Economic Growth

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Thailand's central bank said on Monday the country's economy could see lower growth in the first half of 2022 than a baseline scenario due to uncertainties caused by the Omicron variant of the coronavirus.

While Southeast Asia's second-biggest economy has been supported by domestic spending and a rebound in tourism, a growing outbreak of Omicron remained a key risk, the Bank of Thailand said in a statement.

Thailand is expected to bring the Omicron outbreak under control within the first quarter of 2022, it said. "There are great downside risks in the first half of 2022 because of the Omicron outbreak, which could be more severe and longer than expected," Sakkapop Panyanukul, a senior director at the Bank of Thailand, told a meeting with analysts.

Thailand's economy is forecast to expand by 3.4% in 2022, the central bank said last week.

Financial stability for households and businesses remained fragile, reflected by high levels of household and corporate debt, central bank data showed.

Non-performing loans (NPL) were seen increasing slightly, Sakkapop said, adding that the bank will roll out targeted measures in this area.

Inflation is also seen increasing temporarily in the first half of 2022, but would still be within target, Piti Disyatat, an assistant governor at the central bank, told the meeting.

"If inflation needs to be managed, increasing interest rates will be our main tool," Piti said.

The Bank of Thailand is also ready to intervene in markets if the baht currency became too volatile, he said. The baht hit 33.14 against the U.S. dollar on Jan. 5, the highest since late November, though eased to 33.67 on Monday. The central bank's monetary policy committee last month kept the benchmark interest rate at a record low of 0.50% for a 13th consecutive meeting to support the economic recovery.

Going forward, the committee will only meet six times a year, or every seven to 10 weeks, down from eight times or every six to eight weeks previously.

## Philippines Urges Indonesia to Lift Coal Export Ban

MANILA (Dispatches) - The Philippines' energy secretary Alfonso Cusi has appealed to Indonesia to lift its coal export ban, saying the policy will be detrimental to economies heavily reliant on the fuel for power generation, Manila's Department of Energy said.

Indonesia, the world's biggest thermal coal exporter suspended exports on January 1 after its state power utility reported dangerously low inventory levels of the fuel at its domestic power stations.

The Philippines' move follows similar requests from other Asian governments such as Japan and South Korea.

Cusi made the appeal in a letter sent via the Department of Foreign Affairs to Indonesia's Minister of Energy & Mineral Resources, Arifin Tasrif, the energy department said in a news release, without specifying when the letter was sent.

Cusi had asked the foreign affairs department to intercede and appeal on behalf of the Philippines through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) cooperation mechanism.

The ban drove coal prices in China and Australia higher last week, while scores of vessels slated to carry coal to major buyers such as Japan, China, South Korea and India have been in limbo off Kalimantan, home to Indonesia's main coal ports.

The Philippines, which is still heavily dependent on coal for power generation, buys most of its requirements from Indonesia, and some, more expensive, supplies from Australia and Vietnam.

Nearly 70 per cent of the 42.5 million tons of Philippine coal supply in 2020 was imported, according to government data.

Power generated by coal comprises about 60 per cent of the country's power mix, and in 2021 the country sourced 2.3 million tons per month from Indonesia to fuel its power plants, the energy department said.

Senator Win Gatchalian, who heads the Senate energy committee, has called on the energy department to prepare contingency measures because of the export ban, including looking for other potential suppliers.

## Venezuela to Export Diluted Crude After 9-Month Pause

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuelan state-run oil firm PDVSA this week will resume exports of diluted crude oil (DCO) for the first time in nine months, according to a document seen by Reuters.

Since U.S. trade sanctions were imposed on PDVSA in 2019, a lack of diluents, especially heavy naphtha, has hurt its ability to produce exportable grades from its largest production region, the Orinoco Belt. Its extra heavy oil must be diluted with naphtha or condensate for transportation and exports.

A key swap deal that provided Iranian condensate for crude has allowed PDVSA to alter its production and shipping strategies and build its stocks of DCO. PDVSA was receiving about 2.1 million barrels per month of condensate in exchange for supplying the Iranian National Oil Co (NIOC) with some 3.8 million barrels of its flagship Merey 16 crude.

But a recent accumulation of DCO in onshore tanks has forced PDVSA to dedicate a portion of its limited vessel fleet to floating storage, encouraging it to resume exports of the lower-quality grade to Asia.

A Panama-flagged supertanker has loaded about 1.9 million barrels of DCO bound for Malaysia, according to an internal PDVSA schedule report. Malaysia is sometimes used to trans-ship Venezuelan crude bound for China.

By analyzing satellite images, vessel monitoring service TankerTrackers.com said the supertanker undocked on Sunday at PDVSA's Jose port after finishing loading. It was waiting on Monday for authorization to set sail.

PDVSA did not reply to a request for comment.

The last time PDVSA had shipped DCO was in April, when it sent two cargoes to Asia, according to Refinitiv Eikon data and PDVSA schedules.

Compared to Merey 16 crude, DCO is often sold at deep discounts due to its high content of water and sediments. Refiners from Europe and Asia often prefer to buy Merey 16 or any of PDVSA's upgraded crudes over DCO.

But the move to export DCO could ease production, storage and transportation bottlenecks of other crudes from the Orinoco Belt, according to company documents.

Shipping DCO to Asia also could allow the resumption of the Venezuela-Iran swap, which was mostly fulfilled in the second half of last year before deliveries were paused in December.

## Kazakh Oil, Condensate Output Down 6% in Early January



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Kazakhstan's daily oil and gas condensate production fell 6% in early January from December levels, according to two industry sources and Reuters calculations, as mass anti-government protests rocked the country.

Output from Kazakh oil fields fell to 1.766 million barrels per day (bpd) in the first nine days of the month from an average 1.882 million bpd in December, calculations showed and the sources said, citing preliminary daily output data.

The country's oil exports were however unaffected by the output drop, three other traders said.

"There were worries that the situation might affect export positions loading early in January," said a trader with an international firm familiar with Kazakh oil transit shipments via Russian ports.

The protests in Kazakhstan, which saw the deadliest violence in the country's 30 years of independence from Moscow, disrupted transport routes and led to production curbs at oil fields including the giant Tengiz field operated by Chevron (CVX.N).

Chevron said on Sunday that the company had been gradually increasing output at the field, which is located in the north-west region of Kazakhstan close to where the protests started, after a temporary decline.

Daily oil output at Tengiz was down 13% from its December average in the first nine days of the month, the sources said and Reuters calculations showed. As of Jan. 9, it was back to normal, the sources added.

Other fields located further from protests managed to increase output.

Production at the offshore Kashagan oil field operated by North Caspian Operating Company (NCOC) was 0.2% higher during the period than in December, while at the Karachaganak oil field in western Kazakhstan it was up by 6%, according to the sources.

Output at smaller independent Kazakh oil producers has fallen by 17% so far in January to 210,918 bpd compared to the previous month.



## Chances to Reach Agreement In Vienna Increase

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Vienna talks to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) are facilitating and the chances for reaching a solution have increased, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov stated. “The Vienna talks have speeded up. We believe that the chances to reach a solution within the framework that had been developed during the previous rounds, including six rounds held until June 20, have increased. This is a positive thing. All parties are demonstrating readiness to solve the remaining problems,” the deputy foreign minister noted according to TASS.



## Last 7 Years Warmest on Record Globally

PARIS (Dispatches) - The last seven years have been the hottest on record globally “by a clear margin”, the European Union’s climate monitoring service reported Monday, as it raised the alarm over sharp increases in record concentrations of methane in the atmosphere.

Countries around the world have been blasted by a relentless assault of weather disasters linked to global warming in recent years, including record-shattering wildfires across Australia and Siberia, a once-in-1000-years heatwave in North America and extreme rainfall that caused massive flooding in Asia, Africa, the U.S. and Europe.

In its latest annual assessment, the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) confirmed that 2021 had joined the unbroken warm streak since 2015.

It found that last year was the fifth warmest on record globally, marginally warmer than 2015 and 2018. Accurate measurements go back to the mid-19th century.

The annual average temperature was 1.1 to 1.2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, measured between 1850 and 1900, C3S said.

That was despite the cooling effect of the natural La Nina weather phenomenon.

Overall, the monitoring service found the last seven years “have been the warmest years on record by a clear margin”.

“2021 was yet another year of extreme temperatures with the hottest summer in Europe, heatwaves in the Mediterranean, not to mention the unprecedented high temperatures in North America,” said C3S Director Carlo Buontempo.

“These events are a stark reminder of the need to change our ways, take decisive and effective steps toward a sustainable society and work towards reducing net carbon emissions.”

The C3S also monitored atmospheric concentrations of the planet-warming gases carbon dioxide and methane, finding that both had increased with no sign of a slowdown.

Methane particularly has gone up “very substantially”, to an annual record of about 1,876 parts per billion (ppb).

Growth rates for 2020 and 2021 were 14.6 ppb per year and 16.3 ppb per year, respectively. That is more than double the average annual growth rate seen over the previous 17 years. But an array of human-caused and natural sources made it hard to pinpoint why there had been such a strong increase in recent years, C3S said.

Methane (CH4) is the gas most responsible for global warming after CO2. While more short-lived in the atmosphere, it is many times more potent than CO2.

Natural sources include wetlands, while human-induced sources are leaks from natural gas and oil production, coal mining and landfills, as well as rice paddies, livestock and manure handling.



Vincent-Henri Peuch, Director of the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service, which tracks greenhouse gas increases, said observational evidence was crucial in the effort to avoid “climate catastrophe”. Reducing the amount of methane seeping into the air would quickly translate into a slowdown of rising temperatures, and help close the so-called emissions gap between the Paris Agreement target of a 1.5C cap on warming and the 2.7C we are heading for even if all nations honor their carbon-cutting promises.

That has spurred interest from policymakers keen to find the quickest ways to wrestle down emissions. At the COP26 climate summit last year, around a hundred nations joined an initiative to cut methane emissions by at least 30 percent this decade. Noticeably absent was China.

The oil and gas industry has the biggest potential for rapid reductions, especially through the detection and repair of gas leaks during production and transport.

While global warming may seem gradual, its impact on extreme events is “dramatic”, said Rowan Sutton, of Britain’s National Centre for Atmospheric Science at Reading University.

“We should see the record breaking 2021 events, such as the heatwave in Canada and floods in Germany, as a punch in the face to make politicians and public alike wake up to the urgency of the climate emergency,” he told the Science Media Centre.

“Moreover, the continued increases in greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere screams out that the underlying causes have yet to be addressed.”

## Germany Blames Malaysian Owner for Shipyard Bankruptcy



BERLIN (AP) — Germany is blaming the collapse of a shipyard business on its Malaysia-based owner Genting Group, saying the conglomerate refused to contribute to a government bailout plan.

The MV Werften shipyard in northeastern Germany, which Genting bought in 2016, filed for bankruptcy protection Monday after getting into financial difficulties over the construction of a massive cruise liner.

The German government had earlier said it was willing to discuss a 600 million-euro (\$678 million) bailout plan that would protect 1,900 jobs.

But German officials made clear that they wanted Genting, which is majority-owned by Malaysian billionaire Lim Kok Thay, to contribute at least 10% to the rescue effort.

“The German government did everything to prevent the insolvency of MV Werften and thereby save jobs,” Economy Minister Robert Habeck told German news agency dpa. “However, the owners rejected our offer of help; the bankruptcy application is the result.”

Habeck called it “bitter news” for those employees in the economically depressed state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

Dpa quoted him saying that the federal and state governments would continue to discuss the shipyard’s future in the coming weeks.

Genting Hong Kong, part of Genting Group and the shipyard’s immediate owner, has struggled with the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on its shipping businesses.

The company’s financial woes also triggered the insolvency application Monday of another shipyard it owns in Germany, Lloyd-Werft in Bremerhaven.

## Latinos Win Big at the Golden Globes

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches)

-Latinos won big at the Golden Globe Awards on Sunday, with Rachel Zegler and Ariana DeBose taking the top acting awards for “West Side Story,” Mj Rodriguez winning for her role on the FX show “Pose,” and “Encanto” winning best animated feature.

Zegler won for best actress in a motion picture and DeBose for best supporting actress for their roles in Steven Spielberg’s remake of the classic 1957 Broadway play. Michaela Jaé “Mj” Rodriguez took home the award for best actress in a TV drama for her role as housemother and nurse Blanca, becoming the first transgender actor to win a Golden Globe.

Zegler, who is Colombian American, wrote on Twitter that she won the award exactly three years after she was cast as María, on Jan. 9, 2019. “Life is very strange,” she wrote.

DeBose, who is Afro Latina, said on Twitter after her win, “There is still work to be done, but when you’ve worked so hard on a project — infused with blood, sweat, tears and love — having the work seen and acknowledged is always going to be special. Thank you.”

Many Puerto Ricans and Latinos felt seen for the first time in the 1961 movie version of “West Side Story,” the first large-scale film to acknowledge the presence of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. mainland. But in it, almost all of the Puerto Rican characters were played by white actors in brownface and spoke with an accent that barely resembled Spanish — much less Puerto Ricans’ distinct pronunciations. Even Rita Moreno, the sole Puerto Rican in the cast, was forced to speak with an exaggerated accent and wear brown makeup to darken her skin.

“Being the first Latino to play her on screen,” Zegler told NBC News in December about María, “that was a huge moment.”

Zegler said her Hispanic heritage and experiences strongly informed the way she approached the role.

“I spoke Spanish on the street and was told to go back from where I came from, even though I was born in New



Jersey,” Zegler said. “That’s the reality of being a Latina in the United States.” DeBose told NBC News in an interview about how she approached her role of Anita, over half a century after the original musical and movie.

“I was very adamant that whatever interpretation I delivered for this performance was going to be massively different,” DeBose said.

“By virtue of being a Black woman, that makes it a different portrayal, because my physical manifestation has to inform this particular version.”

In the remake, Anita doesn’t shy away from bringing up issues of colorism and racism within her own Latino community — and how it affects her perception of the world. In one scene, Bernardo suggests that Anita is not really part of his family, even though they all live under the same roof and she pays rent. Anita calls him out in Spanish, asking if he said that because she is “prieta,” Puerto Rican slang for dark-skinned or Black.

“Encanto,” which means “charm” in Spanish, is the 60th animated Disney feature film. With songs and music by “Hamilton” composer Lin-Manuel Miranda, it tells the story of the Madrigals, a multigenerational family who live in the mountains of Colombia.

Two generations of Madrigal children get magical powers on their fifth birthdays, which define them both at home and in the village. They can make plants grow and flowers bloom, control the weather with their emotions, heal people with food, speak with animals and even see the future.

In a previous interview with NBC News, Miranda spoke about how he and others involved with the movie traveled to Colombia ahead of the songwriting and moviemaking.

“Every time we leaned into the specificities of Colombian music, that always unlocks story, it always unlocks character for us,” Miranda, of Puerto Rican heritage, said. “The specificities are the thing that make it relatable.”

Latina actor Stephanie Beatriz, who voiced the main teen, Mirabel, on “Encanto,” said in a previous NBC News interview that they harnessed their own family experiences when they made the movie.

The Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which is behind the awards, has been criticized for its lack of diversity, with the organization unveiling steps last year to achieve “transformation change.”

The ceremony that took place at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Los Angeles was not broadcast on network television and wasn’t available for livestreaming. The winners were announced on social media.

The Globes are typically seen as a bellwether for the upcoming Academy Awards.

## Zionists’ Bitter Confession

FROM PAGE 1

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

Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) launched a massive military exercise in late December 2021, following which both Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Mohammad Baqeri and IRGC Chief Commander Hossein Salami warned that the Iranian armed forces will “cut off” the hands of aggressors in case of an attack against the country.

Those drills and reactions from IRGC forced the Zionists to swallow their words and stop their bullies against Tehran and now even Olmert has to have a bitter confession about Iran’s power and the current Israeli officials should also follow Olmert and stop bullying Iran or else they see the consequences of any mistake.

As the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Seyed Ali Khamenei said on Sunday, Iran has progressed in several fields which enables the country to stand strongly against any aggression or mistake of its enemies. Unfortunately enemies as well as their puppets inside the country close their eyes on the positive points and progresses like self-sufficiency in many fields by painting a negative picture of the country to destroy hope among the Iranian nation for having a bright future.

So as the Leader has reiterated, the nation should remain united against the enemies because they do not want a united Iran in order to dictate themselves on the Iranians in different ways. Unity and hope are two key factors for attaining a good future in the country and enemies who are well aware of it are trying to target it through magnifying weaknesses to overshadow successes.

The Islamic Republic of Iran in recent decades has found its way towards progress and bright future, and enemies like the fake regime of Israel are unable to stop it and Iranian nation needs to remain united and patient to see the fruit of their patience, as the current government is trying to resolve the problems and it needs public patience because it is unable to resolve the problems overnight and people should work with the government to repair damages of the previous government.

As the proverb says, no pain no gains and now it is time to gain.

## FM in Qatar...

FROM PAGE 1

“As you know, the Omanis played a role in concluding negotiations in the form of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) both at the multilateral level and in relation to some Western parties. The Omanis still have sincere intentions for the talks to achieve a lasting result and continue their diplomatic efforts to help the [negotiators] reach a good agreement,” he added.

Later on Tuesday Amir-Abdollahian met and held talks with the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani as well as the Qatari Minister of Foreign Affairs in Doha.

During the meeting, the Iranian Foreign Minister and Emir of Qatar discussed the latest developments in the relations between the two countries in various fields of politics, trade, security, and economy.

Iranian Foreign Minister expressed the readiness of the Islamic Republic of Iran to develop interactions with the countries of the region in bilateral or multilateral formats.

The latest developments in the Vienna talks on the removal of oppressive sanctions, issues related to Afghanistan and Yemen were among the other issues raised by the Iranian top diplomat in this meeting.

The Emir of Qatar also expressed the readiness of his country in expanding bilateral cooperation in regional issues.

Iranian senior diplomat also held another meeting with Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Qatari Minister of Foreign Affairs.

## Dozens of...

FROM PAGE 1

The Yemeni armed forces shot down an unmanned aerial vehicle belonging to the United Arab Emirates Air Force (UAEAF) as it was flying over Shabwah province.

They hit the Chinese-built long-endurance Wing Loong 2 drone with a surface-to-air missile on Tuesday morning, spokesman for the Yemeni Armed Forces Brigadier General Yahya Saree tweeted.

Saree said the armed drone was targeted while carrying out hostile acts over the Ain district of the province.

## Exports to Africa...

FROM PAGE 1

Piltan said Iran aims to easily hit a record target of \$1 billion in exports to African countries in the calendar year to late March.

He said exports to the region could further rise with an increase in Iranian government’s support for exporters as well as with policies that could give Iranian companies more access to African markets.

The official said Iranian Vice President Mohammad Mokhber will for a first time head a special task force to promote exports to Africa.

TPO estimates suggest Iran has a capacity to increase its trade with African countries to around \$5 billion per year.



## Djokovic Rules ATP Rankings

PARIS (Dispatches) - There were no ATP points for Novak Djokovic's victory in the law courts on Monday but the Serb remains comfortably the world's top-ranked men's player ahead of next week's Australian Open. Djokovic, who may still be excluded from the year's first grand slam event because of his Covid-19 vaccination status, remains over 2000 points clear of second-ranked Daniil Medvedev to claim the number one spot for the 355th week in his career.

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## Halep Climbs to 15th in WTA Rankings

PARIS (Dispatches) - Former world number one Simona Halep's first title win in 16 months in Melbourne at the weekend saw her jump five places to 15th in the WTA rankings released on Monday. Australia's Ashleigh Barty, who won the Adelaide tournament on Sunday, dispatching Elena Rybakina in just 64 minutes to the final, still dominates the rankings. The 25-year-old, who will be looking to make it past the semi-finals at the Australian Open for the first time, is top of the pile for the 110th week, seven weeks behind the record set by Justine Henin.

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SPORTS

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 12, 2022

# Raiders, 49ers Win In OT To Clinch Playoff Berths

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Derek Carr threw a pair of touchdown passes to Hunter Renfrow and Daniel Carlson kicked the last of his five field goals as time expired in overtime as the Las Vegas Raiders clinched a spot in the NFL playoff field by holding on for a 35-32 victory over the visiting Los Angeles Chargers.

Carr went 20-of-36 passing for 186 yards as Las Vegas (10-7) won its last four games to earn a trip to Cincinnati for a wild-card game Saturday. Adding to the drama was that a tie game would have put both teams in the playoffs. Instead, the Raiders' victory eliminated the Chargers and allowed the Pittsburgh Steelers to make the playoff field.

Carlson kicked a 40-yard field goal on the first possession of OT to give the Raiders a 32-29 lead, with the Chargers tying the game 32-all on a 41-yard kick from Dustin Hopkins with 4:30 remaining in the extra period. Carlson won it on a 47-yarder on the final play of OT as the Raiders (10-7) advanced to the playoffs for the first time since 2016.

Chargers quarterback Justin Herbert completed 34 of 64 passes for 383 yards and three touchdowns with one interception. Austin Ekeler had a rushing and receiving TD for the Chargers (9-8), while Mike Williams had nine catches for 119 yards.

### 49ers 27, Rams 24 (OT)

Robbie Gould kicked a 24-yard field goal with 2:48 remaining in overtime, allowing San Francisco to earn a wild-card spot in the NFC playoffs with a come-from-behind victory over host Los Angeles.

Rookie cornerback Ambry Thomas intercepted a Matthew Stafford pass six plays later, assuring the 49ers (10-7) the No. 6 seed in the West and a meeting with the third-seeded Dallas Cowboys in the first round of the playoffs.

San Francisco quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo, playing 17 days after tearing a ligament in his right thumb, completed 23 of 32 passes for 316 yards and one touchdown.

After blowing a 17-0 lead and seeing a five-game winning streak come to an end, the Rams (12-5) fell to the No. 4 seed in the NFC and will host the fifth-seeded Arizona Cardinals next week.

### Steelers 16, Ravens 13 (OT)

Chris Boswell booted a 36-yard field goal with 1:56 remaining in overtime



to give Pittsburgh a victory over host Baltimore. The victory, combined with the Jacksonville Jaguars' upset of the Indianapolis Colts and the Raiders' win over the Chargers later Sunday night, earned Pittsburgh the No. 7 spot in the postseason. The Steelers (9-7-1) will visit the No. 2 seed Kansas City Chiefs in the wild-card round.

Pittsburgh's Ben Roethlisberger completed 30 of 44 passes for 244 yards, one touchdown and one interception in what could have been his final regular-season appearance. Steelers star T.J. Watt had one sack to match the NFL record of 22.5 set by Michael Strahan of the New York Giants in 2001.

### Dolphins 33, Patriots 24

Jaylen Waddle broke the NFL rookie single-season record for receptions, finishing with 104, and Xavien Howard scored on a pick-six as host Miami upset New England.

This was the first time since 2000 that Miami (9-8) swept its season series with New England. Dolphins quarterback Tua Tagovailoa completed 15 of 22 passes for 109 yards, one touchdown and no interceptions.

New England (10-7), which entered the week already having clinched a playoff berth, lost a shot at winning the AFC East division title. The Patriots were led by Brandon Bolden, who scored two touchdowns. Quarterback Mac Jones completed 20 of 30 passes for 261 yards, one TD and one interception. The Patriots, the No. 6 seed, will face the third-seeded Bills in a wild-card game on Saturday.

## Coutinho Completes Villa Medical



LONDON (Dispatches) - Aston Villa manager Steven Gerrard labelled Philippe Coutinho "invaluable" after the Brazilian star completed a medical ahead of a loan move from Barcelona.

Villa confirmed that Coutinho passed his medical and that he was in France while he obtained a work permit.

The 29-year-old is expected to join his new team-mates at Villa's Bodymoor Heath training ground on Wednesday.

Gerrard played with Coutinho at Liverpool and believes the playmaker will have a big impact on his return to the Premier League.

"His presence will be invaluable, given injuries and the AFCON tournament have reduced our attacking options," Gerrard told Villa's website on Monday.

"He is a player I enjoyed playing with previously and I know the rest of the squad here at Aston Villa will benefit from his quality and experience."

Villa have signed Coutinho on loan for the rest of the season and have the option to buy him in the summer.

Barcelona confirmed Villa will pay part of Coutinho's wages as he returns to the Premier League four years after leaving Liverpool.

Coutinho joined Barcelona in 2018 in a deal worth £146 million (\$198 million), but he has struggled at the Nou Camp and spent 2019-20 on loan at Bayern Munich.

He becomes Gerrard's first signing at Villa since joining from Rangers in November to replace Dean Smith.

## Keys Knocks Out Svitolina in Adelaide

ADELAIDE (Dispatches) - American Madison Keys brushed past Ukrainian second seed Elina Svitolina 6-2 6-4 in the opening round of the Adelaide International.

Keys sent down 14 aces and won 84.8 per cent of her first serve points in a dominant performance as she wrapped up the win in an hour 17 minutes.

The American got off to a rip-roaring start, breaking Svitolina's serve twice in the first four games of the match to race into a 4-0 lead, before closing out a strong opening set with a couple of comfortable service holds.

The 87th-ranked Keys kept her foot planted on the gas in the second set, forcing Svitolina to defend a break point in the first game and then breaking minutes later to take a 2-1 lead, which she rode on to take the set 6-4.

"I'm pretty happy with that. My returning was the biggest part of my game tonight, it's what helped me get ahead," Keys said.

"I'm trying to make myself live in the moment a little more. Last year I got a little too wrapped up in winning and losing and wasn't loving playing tennis as much."

Czech sixth seed Marketa Vondrousova fought back from a set down to beat Viktorija Golubic 5-7 6-4 6-3 and set up a clash against Croatia's Ana Konjuh.

In the men's Adelaide ATP 250 event, Spaniard Jaume Munar made light work of local John Millman, breaking the Australian's serve twice in both the first and the second set for a 6-2 6-2 win.

"I used to play more on clay in tournaments, but I have practised a lot on hard courts when I was young and I like it," said Munar, who reached the quarter-finals of the Melbourne Summer Set last week.

"In recent years maybe I've not played very well on hard courts, but I think tonight was one of my best performances on this surface."



# Barcelona Extend Umtiti Contract

MADRID (Dispatches) - Barcelona extended Samuel Umtiti's contract until 2026 on Monday, a deal that creates enough space in the club's budget to register Ferran Torres, their new signing from Manchester City.

Torres has been unavailable to play for Barca since joining two weeks ago because

registering the striker would mean falling foul of La Liga's spending restrictions.

Umtiti's three-year extension means his wages will be spread over a longer period of time, which in turn reduces the amount Barcelona are due to pay in the current financial year.

Barcelona also said "the French defender is reducing a part of the salary that he was due to receive in the year and half remaining on his contract".

The club added: "This contract extension does not entail any greater financial commitments for FC Barcelona with regard to the player."

The extension came as a surprise given Barcelona have been trying to sell Umtiti to help reduce the club's debts of more than a billion euros. His previous contract was worth around 18 million euros per year.

Barca's spending limit this season is just under 98 million euros but they are significantly over-budget, with La Liga rules stating they can spend only 25 per cent of any savings made as a result.

Umtiti was once a key player for the Catalans but his career has taken a downward turn due to a string of injuries and he has long-been on the fringes of the first team.

But the 28-year-old's unexpected renewal means Torres is finally eligible to play for Barca. "Through this contract extension, FC Barcelona will be able to increase its 'financial fair play' quota and thus register Ferran Torres with Spanish Football League," the club said.

## Cavani Wants to Stay at Man Utd

LONDON (Dispatches) - Edinson Cavani has told Ralf Rangnick that he wants to stay at Manchester United and help improve the misfiring team's fortunes after speculation that he would leave during the January transfer window.

The 34-year-old moved to Old Trafford in October 2020 and was strongly tipped to depart after just one season, only to agree to stay for a further campaign.

Rangnick said last week he would not let Cavani go and he has now confirmed that the veteran striker is keen to stay. "I told him that if it was up to me I would want him to stay and I had a conversation with him (on Thursday)," said Rangnick.

"He came to my office and we spoke for almost half an hour and he told me that he will definitely stay, he will want to stay until the end of the season."

"Not only because I told him that he should stay or has to stay, but he did it on his own behalf."

Rangnick said Cavani was happy to play matches from the start but would also be the "best possible role model" for other players even if not playing.

"This is, for me, good news because Edi is one of those players with his vast amount of experience, his mentality, his work ethic, who could really be a perfect role model for all the other players," he said.



## Djokovic Wants to Play In Australian Open

BELGRADE (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic on Monday said he hoped to still compete in the Australian Open while his mother said the decision to overturn his visa cancellation was the "biggest victory in his career."

The ruling overturned the cancellation of his visa on Covid-19 health grounds, and ending his detention, potentially clearing the way for his attempt on an unprecedented 21st Grand Slam singles title.

The first Grand Slam of the year begins next Monday in Melbourne.

"Despite all that has happened, I want to stay and try to compete @AustralianOpen. I remain focused on that," Djokovic tweeted.

His mother Dijana appearing at a press conference in Belgrade called it "the biggest victory in his career, bigger than all his grand slams".

His brother Djordje said justice had been served.

"Truth and justice came to the light. I would like to thank the justice system of Australia," said his brother Djordje, adding Djokovic had been able to train since being released from detention.

The 34-year-old Serbian had been held for several nights in an immigration detention facility in Melbourne after he failed to present a solid medical reason for not being jabbed against Covid-19.

