

**Health Ministry Announced
On Wednesday That the Number of
Deaths From the Coronavirus
Pandemic in Iran Increased to 131,972
With 32 More Iranians Killed by the
Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

IRAN NEWS

**French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves
Le Drian Has Repeated His Claims
Against Iran's Nuclear Program While
Acknowledging that Tehran Continues
Its Cooperation With the IAEA**

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S. Korea Authorized To Pay Compensation To Iranian Investor

SEOUL (Dispatches)- The United States has authorized the South Korean government to send overdue compensation to Iran's Dayyani Group under a 2018 investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS), Seoul's foreign ministry said Wednesday.

The U.S. Treasury Department's Office Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) issued a "specific license" on Jan. 6 to allow the Seoul government to pay compensation to the Iranian investor over a failed takeover of Daewoo Electronics dating back to 2010, according to the ministry.

Earlier this week, South Korea's Vice Foreign Minister Choi Jong-kun met with US Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley in Vienna on the sidelines of the talks to restore a 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

In June 2018, the International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) ordered the Seoul government to pay the Dayyani family about 73 billion won (\$63 million), but the payment has not been made due to U.S. sanctions on Iran.

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Cooperation With Iran Contributes to Peace, Stability in ME

TEHRAN (IFP) - Ahead of Iran's Foreign Minister's visit to Beijing, the top Chinese diplomat said maintaining high-level exchanges with Tehran will deepen bilateral relations and contribute to the peace, stability and development in the Middle East.

At the invitation of Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian will visit Beijing on January 14.

"China and Iran enjoy long-standing and profound friendship. Under the leadership of the two heads of state, the relations have achieved marked progress in recent years," Foreign Ministry Spokesman Wang Wenbin stated at a press conference on Tuesday. "We firmly support each other on issues concerning our respective core interests, promote practical cooperation across the board in a steady manner and maintain close communication and coordination in international and regional affairs," he added.

"Facing the impact of COVID-19, China and Iran rendered each other help and assistance in times of need, highlighting the strength of our profound relations. In 2021, the two countries jointly celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties and opened up a new chapter in our friendship.

Standing at a new historical starting point, China is ready to work with Iran to further deepen the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership to the benefit of our two countries and two peoples," the spokesperson continued.

Ankara has also announced Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu will pay a visit to China on Wednesday. The Turkey's Foreign Ministry said Cavusoglu will address "bilateral relations as well as current regional and international issues" during the visit.

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AUCTION SJSCO 140020



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Iranians Mark 2016 Capture of Intruding U.S. Ships



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Wednesday was the eighth anniversary of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy's capture of two American navy ships in the Persian Gulf, where US Navy sailors were forced to kneel down before Iranian naval forces after trespassing into Iranian territorial waters.

Marking the occasion, a commander of the IRGC, said on Wednesday that after the capture, the IRGC Navy warned American ships that they would be targeted if they came forward.

"The sailors of the second naval zone of the IRGC warned them sternly that 'we will hit you if you enter the territorial water of the Farsi Island,' and every time these warnings were issued, they would cause them (American ships) to retreat," Ramezan Zirahi recalled.

He said the IRGC's sailors were not after war, but were merely doing their duty of defending the Islamic homeland. Pointing to the IRGC Navy's readiness along the country's Persian Gulf coasts, the commander said, "If the Americans had made a mistake, a hell of fire would have been ignited for them."

On January 12, 2016, two US Navy crafts, carrying 10 Marines, were intercepted by the IRGC Navy after they entered Iranian territorial waters near Iran's Farsi Island.

Initially, the US military claimed the sailors inadvertently entered Iranian waters owing to mechanical failure, but Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi, the then-commander of the IRGC Navy, said later that the incident occurred because of technical problems with the navigation systems of the US vessels.

The IRGC released the sailors a day later, saying in a statement that "after technical and operational examinations done in interaction with the country's relevant political and national security authorities and the establishment of the inadvertent and unintentional nature of the entry by the American Navy crafts and their apology, a decision was made to free them."

The statement said the Americans had apologized and pledged not to repeat the mistake, adding, "The arrested American Marines were released into international waters under IRGC Navy vessels' watch."

Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry thanked Iranian authorities at the time for their cooperation in the release of US Navy sailors.

Later, Iran released a series of images and videos that, among other things, showed the U.S. Navy sailors on their knees with their hands clasped behind their heads as they were being apprehended on their vessels.

Zirahi said the forces of the IRGC Navy made history as they captured the "arrogant sailors of the Great Satan."

"An hour after the encounter with the Americans, they entered the Farsi Island's waters with aircraft carriers and warships while in confusion and excitement and out of the control of their marines," the commander recollected.

"Their warship warned nervously and angrily, so that they could achieve their goals through psychological pressure," he said. "But the IRGC Navy managed the battlefield with authority."

Zirahi further said the Americans realized after the encounter that Iran was not kidding.

At the current juncture, he continued, the military capability of the Islamic Republic is not comparable even to the previous year.

He also said the Islamic Republic is not after tensions and instability in the region at all, but warned that any stupid action will be met with a decisive response on part of the Iranian Armed Forces.

Yemeni Forces Inflict Massive Losses on UAE Mercenaries

SANAA (Dispatches) - Yemeni army troops and fighters from the allied Popular Committees have managed to liberate hundreds of square kilometers of land and inflict heavy losses on the United Arab Emirates (UAE)'s mercenaries during the latest advances in the southern province of Shabwah over the past few days.

Spokesman for the Yemeni Armed Forces Brigadier General Yahya Saree stated on Wednesday that more than 515 militants and Daesh terrorists, including high-profile militant commanders, had been killed during the operations, while over 850 others have been wounded. He added that more than 200 UAE-backed militants – better known by the nom de guerre the Giants – were also missing in action.

The senior Yemeni military official added that Yemeni armed forces have launched dozens of missile strikes against the positions of UAE mercenaries and Daesh terrorists in Shabwah, killing and wounding scores of them.

"Yemeni army soldiers and Popular Committees fighters continue to make sacrifices out of altruism as they confront Daesh elements and UAE mercenaries," Saree said.

The remarks come as the UAE has reportedly dispatched allied Takfiri militants as well as military equipment to Yemen's strategic central province of Ma'rib as Yemeni army troops and fighters from Popular Committees are gaining grounds there.

Pro-Saudi media outlets alleged that groups of UAE-backed militants had entered Ma'rib province from neighboring Shabwah province.

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Crime of Assassinating Scientists Not to Go Unpunished

TEHRAN (pressTV) - A senior Iranian Judiciary official slams the crime of assassinating the country's nuclear scientists as a gross human rights violation, saying the killings -- largely blamed on the Israeli regime-- will not go unpunished.

Kazem Gharibabadi, the Judiciary chief's deputy for international affairs and secretary of the country's High Council for Human Rights, posted a tweet on Tuesday to mark the 10th anniversary of the assassination of senior nuclear scientist Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan.

He praised the scientist for his tireless efforts toward "promoting and localizing peaceful nuclear knowledge."

"The crime of assassinating scientists will not go unpunished as a gross violation of Human Rights," Gharibabadi said.

A chemistry expert, Ahmadi Roshan, 32, oversaw a department at the Natanz nuclear facility. He was murdered on January 11, 2012 by a magnetic bomb placed on his car in northern Tehran, in a terrorist attack blamed on Israel.

Over the past years, Iranian nuclear scientists have been the target of the Western and Israeli spy agencies' assassination attempts.

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Kashmir Apple Growers Demand Ban On Imports From Iran

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Apple growers in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday sought the intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to prevent the huge losses they have incurred due to the import of Iranian apples to India.

Addressing a press conference in Srinagar, President of Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers and Dealers Association and New Kashmir Fruit Association Bashir Ahmad Bashir said traders outside Kashmir have imported huge quantities of apples from Iran at cheap rates due to the sanctions on Iran.

Iranian apples are selling cheap, but they cannot match the quality of Kashmiri apples," he said. "Iran is under sanctions; that is why Iranian apple is cheap to import."

He said the Iranian apples had been imported to India via Dubai. "Last year, Iranian apples were also imported to India via Pakistan," he said. "There are reports that more than 150 trucks are waiting for Indians from Afghanistan."

He said the import of Iranian apples into India via Afghanistan and Pakistan has become difficult after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

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Iran's 1st Geothermal Power Plant to Come On Stream by Late June

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's first geothermal power plant, with the primary electricity generation capacity of five megawatts (MW), is going to go operational before the next Iranian calendar year's summer peak consumption period (summer starts on June 22), an official with the Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH) announced.

According to Hamidreza Azimi, the project is mainly completed and the only remaining part is related to the washing of the power plant's steam wells for which the relevant contract has been concluded and the selected contractor has started the process of equipping the workshop, the Energy Ministry's news portal Paven reported.

According to the plan, the equipment related to the washing of the power plant's wells will enter the workshop within the next month and the operations related to this section will be carried out within 45 days so that the process of the power plant's synchronization would be started, Azimi explained.

Located in Meshgin Shahr County in the northwestern Ardebil province, the country's first geothermal power plant is being constructed by TPPH.

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Zionist Regime Can't Equal Iran in Power

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Army Commander Brigadier General Mohammad Hossein Dadras said the Zionist regime of Israel cannot equal Iran in power.

Dadras said that Iran has the power to response any threat, adding that no weapon is exported.

He noted that equipment is domestically made and can be used against all threats. He also warned ill-wishers against firm response.

Executive Bodies Urged To Be in Constant Contact With Elites

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi called on members and agents of the government to be in constant contact with the elites and experts related to their field of work, even those who oppose the taste of the government, and that no government agency should neglect to communicate with the elite community related to its field of management.

Speaking on Wednesday morning in a cabinet meeting, Raisi referred to the Supreme Leader of the Revolution's commendation for the slogan of a popular 13th government and said, "All government officials should try to continue this path and try to improve it".

The President called on the members of the government to communicate and meet with the client and the people who refer to the offices.

Raisi called on all government officials to recognize the people as trustworthy observers and said, "If you receive a report from the people, be sure to check it carefully and if it is correct, act accordingly".

The President also called on members and agents of the government to stay in touch with the elites and experts in their field, even those who oppose the government's tastes, and stated, "None of the government agencies should neglect coordination with the elite community, and they should have regular meetings and discussions with experts in their field".

In another part of his speech, Raisi emphasized the need to formulate and implement a fair salary payment system and noted, "As the thirteenth government, according to the slogans



and approaches of this government, we must make the salary payment system fair".

"What is being done today is the dominance of bargaining in the payroll system, which must be reformed within the framework of a coordinated and fair payment system," he said.

Raisi stated, "It is necessary to form a working group to formulate a new, uniform and fair law for payment of salaries in a short period of time, and this law, after being approved by the parliament, will adopt all the current laws and regulations on payment of salaries and benefits in different agencies".

Addressing the relevant officials, the President emphasized that the price of goods should not be allowed to increase in any way, and said, "Different agencies should announce any facilities, including the authorities they need, and in return are obliged to resolutely prevent any price increase".

Ayatollah Raisi emphasized, "Unfortunately, some currents seek to create despair and hopelessness in the people, and the executive and government agencies should try to make the people more hopeful about the future of the country by reporting and presenting news of what has been done and not what is to be done".

Permanent Agreement, Iran's Priority

ORUMIYEH (IRNA) - A senior lawmaker has said that a permanent agreement is high on the agenda of the Iranian team in Vienna, Austria.

Iran is after a permanent agreement which safeguards Islamic Republic's interests, Vahid Jalalzadeh, the chairman of Majlis (Parliament) National Security and Foreign Policy Commission said.

Proposals made by the 4+1 for temporary agreement are not Iran's ideal; however, they are under review, Jalalzadeh underlined.

He went on to say that the proposals are neither accepted nor rejected.

As Iran has experienced unilateral withdrawal from one side without paying compensation, the country reaffirms an agreement based on building confidence for serving Islamic Republic's interests, the member of parliament stressed.

United States withdrew unilaterally from the July 2015 nuclear deal, aka Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in May 2018 and imposed as it claimed the highest level of sanctions on Iran in November the same year.

As Jalalzadeh noted, any agreement needs fulfillment to commitments.

The West has been disloyal to its commitments, so it should take effective step towards compensating for the lost confidence, he said.

He further stated that the U.S. is behind the doors of the negotiating room, and its entry could be thought about if the talks were in line with providing Islamic Republic's interests.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the parliamentarian referred to declaration of some excessive demands as reasons for slowing the talks.

According to Iranian officials, the Islamic Republic has attended the Vienna talks with due seriousness and authority and if the other side is more serious to lift the sanctions, time to reach a final agreement will be shorter.

Iran Lifts Travel Bans at Shared Borders With Neighbors

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Iranian interior minister said on Tuesday that travel bans at shared borders with neighboring countries have been lifted.

Ahmad Vahidi, who is a key member of the National Taskforce for Fighting Coronavirus told reporters that travel restrictions with neighboring countries have been lifted and the individuals from the neighbors can enter the country on condition they have a negative PCR test or provide proof of injection of 2 doses of vaccine.

Vahidi added that restrictions for the passengers who enter Iran through air borders from the countries in which the Covid-19 pandemic is under control have been removed.

He also added that restrictions for European countries, France and England are still in place, adding that Tehran is pulling over the restrictions for travelers from other countries.

The minister also stressed that restrictions for the countries where the Omicron variant is growing are likely to increase.

Vahidi further pointed out that citizens of allowed countries can enter Iran through shared border crossings if they abide by health operating standards such as providing negative PCR test results as well as documents that show they have been vaccinated.



the fight against security breaches.

He added considering the common borders of Iran and Pakistan, relief and rescue cooperation, prevention of criminal acts at sea, identification of criminals and border trespassers are inevitable.

Brigadier General Ahmad Ali Goudarzi also called for increased cooperation in the area of intrinsic border duties of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency.

Iranian Border Guard commander arrived in Karachi on Wednesday morning to strengthen bilateral cooperation and attend the International Barracuda-XI Exercise.

The Barracuda-XI Exercise kicked off on January 11 with the participation of 19 countries and will continue until Thursday. The exercise is taking place in the northern part of the Arabian Sea, in Pakistani territorial waters near the Karachi coastline.

Tehran, Moscow to Negotiate Financial Agreement During President Raisi Visit



TEHRAN (IRNA) - One of the advantages of the forthcoming visit of the Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to Russia is that negotiations about trade relations and financial agreements will be held at the highest level, a senior commercial official in Iran has said.

Kambiz Mirkarimi, the vice-chairman of Iran-Russia joint chamber of commerce, has described President Raisi's trip of to Moscow as very important.

The high level of talks will be effective in achieving goals of developing economic cooperation, Mirkarimi said.

According to reports, the Iranian president is slated to visit Moscow in coming days and meet with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

In a related development, Iran's Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali has already said that the upcoming visit of President Raisi to Russia will be a turning point in historical relations between the two countries.

Majlis Agrees on Oman Sea Water Transfer Project to Southeastern Iran

TEHRAN (IP) - Lawmakers obliged the Ministries of Energy and Industry, Mining and Trade as well as the Vice Presidency for Science to implement the Oman Sea water transfer project to Iran's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan.

During the open session of Iran's Parliament on Wednesday, January 12, the lawmakers agreed with the principle of the single clause of the plan to transfer water from Sea of Oman to Sistan and Baluchestan province with 170 votes in favor, 31 votes against and 7 abstentions out of total of 228 parliamentarians present at the meeting.

The Ministry of Energy, in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade and also using the scientific potential of the Vice Presidency for Science, is obliged to invest in domestic or foreign investment in water extraction, desalination, water transfer and the use of salt and metal left over from the Oman Sea to take action to transfer water to Sistan and Baluchestan province.

The executive by-law of this law shall be compiled by the Ministry of Energy and approved by the Council of Ministers no later than 3 months after its approval.

Afghanistan Embassy's Activities Continuing in Tehran

TEHRAN (MNA) – Caretaker ambassador of Afghanistan Embassy to Iran said that ambassadorial activities of the embassy continue in Tehran.

Speaking in a press conference at the venue of the embassy on Tuesday evening, Abdul Qayyum Sulaimani Ambassador of Afghanistan to Tehran reiterated that activities of the embassy will continue within the framework of international law and based on Vienna Convention like before.

Islamic Republic of Iran tried to hold talks between Afghan political factions and announced that it is ready to pave suitable ways for continuation of talks, he said, adding, "Hence, Iran played a very positive and constructive role in holding these talks."

All ambassadorial activities of the Embassy to Iran will be carried out within the framework of international law and Vienna Convention like before, Caretaker of Afghanistan Embassy to Iran added.

Earlier, Iranian Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh said that diplomatic activities of the Afghan Embassy in Tehran, like all foreign embassies, will be carried out in accordance with principles and rules stipulated by the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, and no change has been made beyond the convention.

Iranian Commander Calls for Enhanced Maritime Cooperation With Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - The Commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran Border Guards has stressed upon the need to enhance cooperation between Tehran and Islamabad, exchange information and implement a mechanism based on the principles of equality and common interests.

During his official visit to Pakistan on Wednesday, Brigadier General Ahmad Ali Goudarzi met with Rear Admiral Mirza Fawad Amin Beg, Director General of the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency, in the port city of Karachi.

Colonel Mostafa Ghanbarpour, Iran's military attaché in Pakistan and members of the delegations of the two countries attended the meeting.

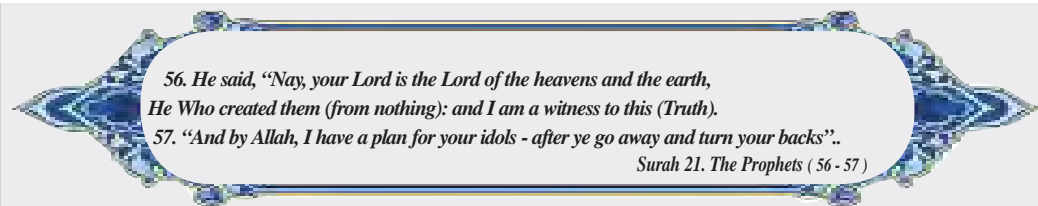
Iran Border Commander during the meeting called for a mechanism based on the principles of equality and common interests, mutual respect, respect for border integrity, jurisdiction and the establishment of a continuous framework for maritime cooperation and exchange of information between two neighboring countries.

He added that in the maritime cooperation the two countries should hold search and rescue operations, actions against maritime crime and protection of the marine environment and increase



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:13
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:32
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:45
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:13



Tehran Determined to Expand Economic Ties With Damascus

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Roads and Urban Development Minister Rostam Ghasemi says Iran is determined to expand its trade ties with Syria.

Speaking upon his arrival in Damascus, Ghasemi said that end of war in Syria is a new beginning for new round of economic ties between the two countries especially Iran and Syria have been together for years in fighting the international terrorism.

With the war almost over in Syria, Tehran and Damascus are determined to reach real trade agreements and expand their economic relations, the minister reiterated.

Ghasemi is leading a high-ranking economic and trade delegation to Damascus and was welcomed by Syria's Economy and Trade Minister Mohammad Samer al-Khalil at Damascus International Airport.

"The end of the war in Syria is the beginning of a new era of economic relations between the two countries, especially given that Iran and Syria have been beside one another throughout the era of fighting international terrorism," Ghasemi said.

During his three-day visit, the Iranian minister is scheduled to meet with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, as well as the country's prime minister and ministers of economy and trade, transport, social affairs and labor, and housing and construction.

The Syrian industry, construction, and infrastructure will be the main focus of the bilateral talks.

Khalil, for his part, hailed the inseparable ties between the two nations and



expressed gratitude for the sacrifices made by the zealous Iranian youth on his country's soil.

"In Syria, we want extensive cooperation with Iran," the Syrian minister stated.

"We hope that the meetings of Mr. Ghasemi and his accompanying delegation with the Syrian officials will lead to agreements aimed at reaching economic and trade partnerships between the two sides," he added.

Last month, Syria's Minister of Industry Ziyad Sabbagh invited Iranian companies and advanced industries to invest in the Arab country's process of reconstruction and recovery from the Western-sponsored war on Syria, which began in 2011.

The Syrian minister called on Iranian companies to "have partnership and cooperation with the public and private sectors in the Syrian Arab Republic and use the benefits provided by the law, which gives a great opportunity for investment in Syria" to further promote bilateral ties.

Days later, Iran's vice president for parliamentary affairs, Mohammad Hosseini, said Tehran was ready to implement reconstruction projects in Syria.

Iran Exporting agro Products To Central Asia for 25 Years

MASHHAD (IRNA) - Iranian agriculture products have been exported to five Central Asian countries via Sarakhs border terminal for at least 25 years, an Iranian official said.

Habibollah Heydari, the caretaker of Sarakhs Customs Office, said that the exports are being carried out via railway and road terminals.

From the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2021), Iran has exported 4,750 tons of potatoes from Sarakhs border terminal to Turkmenistan and other Central Asian states, Heydari noted.

Countries such as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan have been the main export destinations of Iran's agricultural products since 1996.

Mohammad-Ali Bagheri, the director general of Lotfabad Dargaz Customs Office in North Khorasan Province, said earlier that Iranians exported 122,000 tons of potato from this border terminal to Turkmenistan in the first nine months of the year.

None of the potato consignments were returned during this period, he said, adding that potato is the most important agricultural export item from Lotfabad Dargaz border terminal.

Apples, tangerines, oranges, and bell pepper are among the most exported agricultural products in the mentioned period, Bagheri noted.

According to Khorasan Razavi Province's Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, exports of Iranian goods via Sarakhs and Lotfabad to Turkmenistan and other Central Asian countries have returned to the pre-coronavirus scale.

Iransians exported 437,612 tons of commodities via Sarakhs and Lotfabad border terminals to Central Asia within eight months of the current year. The export stood at 432,670 tons in the same period in 2019.

Sarakhs border terminal is located in Khorasan Razavi Province.

Lotfabad border terminal is located near Dargaz City 90 kilometers south of Ashgabat, the capital city of Turkmenistan, and 22 kilometers north of Dargaz City.

Iran's joint borderlines with Turkmenistan and Afghanistan include 14 percent of total borderlines of the Islamic Republic.

Gov't Plans Fresh Cash Handouts

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The government will be allowed to dispense fresh cash handouts and spending coupons in the calendar year starting late March to compensate for the economic impacts on people of a plan to dismantle foreign currency subsidies given to imports of foods and staples.

A member of the Iranian's parliament's budget appropriation committee said on Tuesday that the administrative government will definitely dismantle a system in the Persian year 1401 budget under which the US dollar is provided to importers on a heavily subsidized price of 42,000 rials.

Rahim Zare said that the official price for changing foreign currencies into Iran's rial in the next calendar year's budget will be based on rates used in the Electronic Trading System (ETS), a secondary foreign currency market controlled by Iran's central bank where exporters supply their hard currency proceeds to

importers of goods into Iran.

The removal of the so-called Preferential Currency Price is aimed at preventing massive wastes and corruption cases in an economy where the free market price of the US dollar is currently at nearly 280,000 rials.

The ETS price is normally 10% or more lower than the unofficial market price of foreign currencies in Iran. Zare said the government will be allowed to dispense 2,500 trillion rials (nearly \$9 billion) worth of direct cash handouts and spending coupons to compensate people in the country for price hikes that could be caused by removal of foreign currency subsidy.

Head of Iran's Association of Meat Chicken Breeders Habib Assad Nejad said on Tuesday that the agriculture ministry is preparing spending coupons that people can use to buy meat and dairy products after subsidies are removed.

Iran-Bolivia Joint Chamber of Commerce To Be Activated Soon



ARAK (IRNA) - Ambassador of Bolivia in Iran said here on Tuesday that the Iran-Bolivia Joint Chamber of Commerce will be activated within the next couple of months by expansion of economic ties and good memoranda of understanding (MOUs) will be signed.

Ambassador Romina Perez Ramos made the remarks on Tuesday evening in a meeting with the governor general of the Central Province, adding that there are appropriate potentials in both Iran and Bolivia for expansion of economic ties, which is why our countries' economic and commercial ties need to be strengthened.

"Iran is active in the scientific and technological fields and we need to use these capacities in Bolivia maximally," said the Bolivian ambassador.

The ambassador also proposed cooperation in agricultural and mining fields with Iran, and also exporting such products to Iran.

He said that the Central Province is an industrial pole in Iran, adding that his country is comprised of 9 provinces.

Arak (is the capital of Markazi (Central) Province of Iran. The city is nicknamed the "Industrial Capital of Iran".

As a major industrial city, Arak hosts several industrial factories inside and within a few kilometers outside the city, including the factory of Machine Sazi Arak and the Iranian Aluminum Company. These factories produce nearly half of the needs of the country in steel, petrochemical, and locomotive industries.

Some Idle Industrial Units Revived in Bushehr

TEHRAN (MNA) - As announced by a provincial official, 17 idle industrial units returned to the production cycle in Bushehr province, in the southwest of Iran, in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-Decemehr 21, 2021).

Mehdi Safavi, the managing director of the province's Industrial Parks Company, said that the mentioned units returning to the production cycle created jobs for 310 people.

The official put the number of idle units returning to the production cycle in the province at 30 in the past Iranian year, and said that it was more than the planned figure by six.

He also announced that contracts for implementing 71 production projects worth 8,386 trillion rials (about \$29 million) to create jobs for 1,208 people were signed in the industrial parks and zones of the province in the first nine-months of the current year.

As announced by the head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), in the last Iranian calendar year, 1,557 stagnant and semi-active units returned to the production cycle in the industrial parks with a financing of 35 trillion rials (over \$120.6 million), providing employment for 27,000 people.

With the aim of reactivating stagnant units or units that are operating below capacity, 900 consultants from the private sector and knowledge-based companies were selected in the form of industry clinics across the country to recognize the weaknesses of these units, Ali Rasoulmanesh has previously stated.

"Despite the two major challenges of sanctions and coronavirus pandemic, which imposed severe restrictions on the country, we tried to activate domestic capacities by turning to localizing the technology of manufacturing parts and equipment", he added.

Sanctions have caused problems for financial exchanges and the export of goods to other countries, he said, adding, "The negative effects of coronavirus pandemic on various parts of the country, including industry, are not hidden from anyone, and the economic growth of some countries has reached below zero during this period."

"Mahan Gozin", a Warm Beginning In a Cold Season With 55 Works

IRAN NEWS ART DESK

TEHRAN – A group visual arts exhibition "Mahan Gozin" will open on Sunday, December 16 at Ragadid Complex at Enghelab Cultural and Sports Complex of Tehran in the fields of painting and sculpturing with curatorship of Behdad Najafi Asadollahi, an abstract expressionist painter.

According to Najafi Asadollahi, this event is the beginning of a chain of various activities and exhibitions in the field of visual arts like painting, photography, sculpturing and calligraphy which will be continued regularly and based on schedule. He added that for new art mediums like Installation, performance, video art and digital art some special programs have been taken into consideration which will be carried out from this year.

He said Mahan Gozin exhibition will put on display 47 painting works and 8 cubo works from 50 painting and sculpturing masters and artists which are as follows alphabetically:

Alireza Adambakan, Akram Afzali, Ebrahim Akbari Garaz, Mehdi Alaeinejad, Reza Alizadeh, Yaghoob Ammamehpich, Amir Hossein Amirjalali, Saeedeh Arian, Nasim Atashinjan, Reza Barati, Hooman Bayat, Ali Beigiparast, Reza Emadi, Saeed Emdadian, Mohammad Hadi Fadavi, Maryam Farzadian, Fatemeh (Rahil) Ghavami, Kambiz Hazratpour, Hamid Jafari Shakib, Sara Keshmiri, Farnak Khaef, Seyed Ali Khalegh, Kayhan Khalili Fard, Ahmad Khalili Fard, Mostafa Khazaei, Mani kumar, Parviz Moazzez, Mehdi Mohebbi, Manoochehr Mooghari, Mahin Monfared, Pejman Motaghian, Jalal Motevalli, Behdad Najafi Asadollahi, Tara Nazmalizadeh, Akbar Nikanpour, Bahman Nikoo, Javad Nobahar, Ardeshtir Parsaei, Khadijeh Rajabi, Parvaneh Razaghi, Reza Razghandi, Bamdad Rezvanian, Pardis Shafieioon, Valiollah Shaker, Elham Shiravi, Mohsen Soleimani, Mohammad Hossein Soghandi, Behnam Valadvand, Ahmad Vakili, Shahnaz Zehab, Mahdi Ziaoddini, Hadi Ziaoddini.

The exhibition will start on December 16 and will end on December 30. It will be open to the public at Ragadid Complex of Enghelab Sport and Cultural Complex of Tehran from 11 a.m. till 20 p.m.



Longest Persian Novel Published in Cairo

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The longest Persian novel or the second longest novel in the world "Kelidar" has been translated into Arabic and published in Cairo, Egypt.

Mohammad-Ali Azarshab, a renowned professor of Arabic literature and language, told IRNA that since contemporary Persian novels have been welcomed in Arab countries, Mahmoud Dowlatabadi's Kelidar has been translated into Arabic and published in Cairo.

Kelidar is story of a nomadic Kurdish family, who moved to a village in the outskirts of Sabzevar city in Khorasan Province, northwest Iran.

The story of the novel was written based on real life of the main character, Kolmishi Gol-Mohammad, who was a known hero in Sabzevar during Dowlatabadi's

childhood. The story happened during a highly volatile political situation in Iran after World War II, between 1946 and 1949.

Kelidar, which has its name after a mountain near Sabzevar, where the story happened there, is unknown in terms of pronunciation for many people. Although Dowlatabadi himself pronounced it "Klidor," the novel is being pronounced Kelidar.

Despite the fact that the novel has been written based on a real story, Dowlatabadi added fiction to the novel anywhere needed in order to turn the story into a coherent and impressing one.

Some are of the opinion that Kelidar is the second longest novel in the world after the French novel of "In Search of Lost Time," a novel in seven volumes written by French author Marcel Proust.

Mexican President Doing Well Despite Second Covid Bout

MEXICO CITY (Dispatches) - Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said he was doing well despite catching Covid-19 for a second time, suggesting Omicron was a less dangerous variant.

"I'm feeling pretty good," Lopez Obrador, 68, said in a video message played during a news conference led by Interior Minister Adan Augusto Lopez in his absence.

"Let's not be scared. Fortunately this is a variant that does not have the level of danger of the Delta variant," Lopez Obrador added, speaking with a croaky voice.



Hungary Sets April 3 Election With Orban Facing United Opposition

BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - Hungary will hold an election on April 3 where nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban, one of Europe's longest-serving leaders and a foe of immigration, will face a close race against an opposition united against him for the first time.

The 58-year-old Orban, who rose to power in a 2010 election landslide, has transformed Hungary into a self-styled "illiberal democracy" with tightened controls on media and civil society groups that have put Budapest at loggerheads with European Union headquarters in Brussels.



Russia Holds Tank Drills Near Ukraine



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia staged live-fire exercises with troops and tanks near the Ukrainian border on Tuesday while sounding a downbeat note over the prospects for talks with the United States that Washington hopes will remove the possible threat of an invasion of Ukraine.

A day after the U.S. side urged Russia at talks in Geneva to pull back an estimated 100,000 troops from near the border, the defence ministry said about 3,000 servicemen had started combat training including mock battles in four regions of southwestern Russia.

The drills suggested that the Kremlin has no intention of easing the military pressure that has brought the United States to the negotiating table, where Moscow has presented demands for sweeping security guarantees from the West.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said it was positive that Monday's talks had been held in an open, substantive and direct manner, but that there was no real cause for optimism.

Russia wants quick results, he said. "There are no clear deadlines here, no one is setting them - there is just the Russian position that we will not be satisfied with the endless dragging out of this process."

Peskov said the situation would be clearer after two further rounds of talks that Russia is due to hold this week - with NATO in Brussels on Wednesday and at the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Vienna on Thursday.

Russia has repeatedly said it has no intention of attacking Ukraine but that it has the right to deploy its forces as it deems fit on its own territory.

Moscow insists that the United States and its allies rule out the possibility that Ukraine could ever join NATO, which promised as far back as 2008 to admit Kyiv one day. It also wants NATO to remove forces and weaponry from ex-communist countries that have joined it since the end of the Cold War.

Washington has said it cannot accept these demands, although it is willing to engage on other aspects of Russia's proposals by discussing missile deployments or limits on the size of military exercises.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said after the Geneva talks on Monday that the two sides had "in some ways opposite views". He told reporters: "For us it's absolutely mandatory to make sure that Ukraine never, never, ever becomes a member of NATO," read more

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said: "We were firm ... in pushing back on security proposals that are simply non-starters to the United States."

NATO has no immediate plans to admit Ukraine, but says Russia cannot dictate its relations with other sovereign states - a stance reaffirmed by Ukraine's foreign minister on Tuesday.

North Korea Launches More Advanced Missile After Hypersonic Test

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea appeared to test-fire a ballistic missile that may be more advanced than a "hypersonic" one it launched less than a week ago, South Korea's military said, as Pyongyang pursues increasingly powerful weapons.

Tuesday's launch, condemned by authorities in Washington and Tokyo and prompting an expression of concern from the U.N. secretary general, underscored North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's New Year's vow to bolster the military with cutting-edge technology at a time when talks with South Korea and the United States have stalled.

Initial estimates found the missile travelled more than 700 km (435 miles) to a maximum altitude of 60 km at up to 10 times the speed of sound (12,348 km/h), South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said in a statement.

"We assess that this is more advanced than the missile North Korea fired on Jan. 5, though South Korean and U.S. intelligence authorities are conducting detailed analysis," the JCS said.

The launch was detected around 7:27 a.m. (2227 GMT Monday) from North Korea's Jagang Province toward the ocean off its east coast, the same location as last week's test.

The U.S. military's Indopacific Command said while it had assessed that the launch did not pose an immediate threat to the United States or its allies, it "highlights the destabilising impact of North Korea's illicit weapons program."

The Federal Aviation Administration said on Tuesday it briefly halted departures at some U.S. West Coast airports around the time of reports that North Korea had launched a ballistic missile.

A U.S. official said the pause lasted less than 15 minutes "due to initial reports of events in the Indo-Pacific region," without directly tying it to the missile launch.



Senior Pakistani Taliban Leader Killed in Afghanistan

KARACHI (Dispatches) - A senior leader of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (Pakistan Taliban or TTP) has been killed in eastern Afghanistan, Pakistani security officials say, as a peace talks process between the armed group and the government remain stalled.

Khalid Balti, also known by the nom de guerre Muhammad Khorasani when he served as the spokesperson of the group, was killed in Nangarhar province, a security source told Al Jazeera on Tuesday.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media on the issue.

"It is clear that the person who was killed is Khalid Balti," said the official, while also confirming the killing took place in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province, along the border with Pakistan.

When asked about the circumstances of the killing, he said, "We are trying to get that information."

Local media in Pakistan reported that Balti had been shot dead by unidentified gunmen, but the source was unable to confirm those reports.

In a statement, the Pakistani Taliban, said that "investigations were ongoing" into the reports that Balti had been killed.

"It should be remembered that Mufti Khalid Balti did not currently have any responsibilities in [the Pakistan Taliban]," the statement said.

Balti's alias of Muhammad Khorasani became a moniker for each successive Pakistan Taliban spokesperson, and the group clarified that the current spokesperson was "alive and well".

Balti, said to be in his late 40s, hailed from the northern Pakistani region of Gilgit-Baltistan, and took over as Pakistan Taliban spokesperson from Sheikh Magbool - who went by the alias Shahidullah Shahid - in 2014. That year, the Pakistani military launched a security operation against the Pakistan Taliban in its erstwhile headquarters and stronghold of North Waziristan, displacing the group and many of its fighters into eastern Afghanistan.

France, U.S., Algeria Pile Pressure on Sanction-Hit Mali

BAMAKO (AFP) - Pressure on Mali's ruling junta increased Tuesday as France and the United States underlined their support for the West African bloc ECOWAS, which has slapped sanctions on the country over delayed elections following two coups.

In a sharp escalation after months of diplomatic tensions, leaders from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on Sunday agreed to shutter borders with the Sahel state and impose a trade embargo.

The move came after Mali's interim government last month proposed staying in power for up to five years before staging elections -- despite international demands that it respect a promise to hold elections on February 27.

As well as shutting borders and imposing a trade embargo, ECOWAS also agreed to halt financial aid to Mali and freeze its assets at the Central Bank of West African States.

Mali's junta has condemned the measures, and urged Malians to stage nationwide demonstrations against them on Friday. But France, Mali's former colonial power which also currently holds the European Union's rotating presidency, backed the sanctions.

"We are in complete solidarity with the region and with this very courageous and clear stance" by ECOWAS, French President Emmanuel Macron told reporters on Tuesday.

He added that the EU would seek to strengthen sanctions on the junta.

The U.S. also hailed the "strong actions" by ECOWAS and said it shared the bloc's "deep disappointment" over the election schedule.

"We urge the transitional government to keep its pledge to the Malian people to return their country to democracy," said the US ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield.

"A five-year transition is not in their interest and extends the pain of the people," she told a Security Council meeting.

The presidency of Algeria, which shares a long border with Mali, on Tuesday also called on the junta to negotiate with ECOWAS and "reach a plan to end the crisis, taking into account international demands and the legitimate demands of the Malian people".

So far, Mali's junta has remained defiant.

The country's strongman Colonel Assimi Goita, in an address late Monday, called the sanctions "illegitimate, illegal and inhumane", although he added that he remains open to dialogue with his West African neighbours.

The latest political crisis caps a period of steadily deteriorating relations between Mali and its neighbours and partners, which began after Goita led a coup in August 2020 that toppled president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita.



Kazakh President Fires Rare Criticism At Predecessor After Unrest

ALMATY (Dispatches) - Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev issued rare criticism of his long-ruling predecessor Tuesday, and said he expected Russian-led forces to leave the troubled Central Asian country in the next 10 days.

The oil-rich country's descent into chaos has laid bare infighting at the top of a government once dominated by Tokayev's mentor, 81-year-old Nursultan Nazarbayev.

The older man retains the constitutional status of "Leader of the Nation" despite stepping down from the presidency in 2019.

Addressing lawmakers in a video conference broadcast live, Tokayev fired an eyebrow-raising broadside at Nazarbayev as the post-Soviet country reels from unprecedented violence that began with peaceful protests over an energy price hike.

Tokayev, 68, said Nazarbayev's rule had created "a layer of wealthy people, even by international standards".

"The time has come to pay tribute to the people of Kazakhstan and help them on a systematic and regular basis," Tokayev added, noting that "very profitable companies" would be asked to pay money into a state fund.

"The current system is oriented towards major structures and is based on the principle: 'everything for friends and laws for everyone else'," he said.

Both Kazakhstan and Russia have framed last week's unrest that left dozens dead and almost 10,000 people arrested as a coup attempt assisted by foreign "terrorists", but have provided little supporting evidence.

Following a request from career diplomat Tokayev, the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) deployed troops to bring about order and shore up the authorities.

On Tuesday, Tokayev announced "a phased withdrawal" would begin in two days and take "no more than 10 days".

"The main mission of the CSTO peacekeeping forces has been successfully completed," he said.

The CSTO mission of more than 2,000 troops was deployed at the peak of the crisis, after armed clashes between government opponents and security forces and a looting spree trashed parts of the largest city Almaty.



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A large billboard is mounted on a tall metal structure, overlooking a city skyline. The billboard has a white background with the following text and graphics:
IRAN (in large, bold, green and red letters)
NEWS (in large, bold, black letters)
PUBLISHER OF NEWSPAPERS
ADVERTISING (in large, bold, multi-colored letters)
TEL: 44253448-50
FAX: 44253234
ADIRANNEWS@GMAIL.COM
The background of the billboard features a faint, stylized image of a rolled-up newspaper. The city skyline in the background includes several prominent buildings, with the Empire State Building being the most visible on the right side. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

Moldova Seeks to Postpone Gas Advance Payment to Gazprom

CHISINAU (Dispatches) - Moldova will pay its December gas bill to Russian supplier Gazprom in the coming days, but is in talks with Moscow to postpone the advance payment for January due to a shortage of funds, Deputy Prime Minister Andrei Spinu said.

Moldova and Gazprom have agreed a five-year contract that began on November 1. It requires a prepayment by the 20th day of each month.

Gazprom announced its readiness to halt supply in November after Moldova delayed a prepayment. To resolve the crisis, the Moldovan parliament amended the budget to pay the debt.



Global Growth Could Slow Sharply Due to Omicron

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Global growth will “decelerate markedly” this year, but the Omicron variant of Covid-19 that is spreading rapidly worldwide could make the situation worse and exacerbate labor shortages and supply chain snarls, the World Bank warned Tuesday.

In its latest Global Economic Prospects report, the Washington-based development lender cut its forecast for world economic growth this year to 4.1 percent after the 5.5 percent rebound last year.

The forecasts for growth last year and this year were both 0.2 percent lower than estimates released in June.

However, the bank warned, “Various downside risks cloud the outlook, including simultaneous Omicron-driven economic disruptions, further supply bottlenecks (and) a de-anchoring of inflation expectations,” the report said.

That could further reduce global growth this year to as low as 3.4 percent, a drop of 0.7 percentage points.

World Bank President David Malpass worries about the “huge toll” the pandemic is inflicting on people in poor countries, which could have ramifications for the future.

“We’re seeing troubling reversals in poverty, nutrition and health. The reversal and education or scope from schools closures will have a permanent impact,” he told reporters. “I’m very worried about the permanent scar on development.”

Ayhan Kose, head of bank’s forecast unit, told AFP the Omicron strain is causing fewer restrictions than the initial outbreak, which means the overall impact could be more benign.

However, he cautioned, “If it stays around much longer, and cases remain elevated and continue pressuring health systems, under that scenario, the global growth will be lower.”

That would exacerbate ongoing struggles with labor shortages and global production and transportation snarls that have fueled a wave of price increases. “The Omicron variant shows us once again, the pandemic is still with us and we need to learn how to live with the pandemic,” he said.

Faced with inflation at a 40-year high, the US Federal Reserve is expected to begin raising interest rates soon, and perhaps take more aggressive steps, which will raise borrowing costs for developing countries already burdened with record debt. That, in turn, could erode business and household confidence, lowering consumption and trade flows, a key engine of global growth.

Kose stresses that vaccination remains crucial, since the threat of new, more transmissible or more virulent variants will persist until a substantial part of the world’s population is vaccinated. “The share of vaccinated population in many economies is expected to surpass 70 percent by mid-2022, but the prospects for vaccination progress remain uncertain in some countries,” especially in the poorest nations, the report said.

Boeing Wins Annual Jet Order Race on Adjusted Basis

SEATTLE (Dispatches) - Boeing Co bounced back to win the traditional annual order race against Airbus SE on an adjusted basis, but its European rival remained the world’s largest planemaker based on the number of jets delivered, data showed.

Shares in Boeing rose around 2% after the closely watched data showed it ended 2021 with 535 net orders after cancellations and conversions that were partially offset by regular accounting adjustments. Gross orders were 909.

Excluding the upward accounting adjustments, which reflect a more positive view from Boeing on airlines’ ability to take delivery, Boeing fell behind its rival with 479 orders.

Airbus sold 771 airplanes in 2021, giving a net total of 507 after cancellations, almost twice its 2020 level.

After slashing production due mainly to the pandemic, planemakers are seeing more demand for medium-haul passenger jets and freighters, despite global concern over Omicron.

Boeing largely met analyst expectations on aircraft deliveries, handing over a total of 340 aircraft to customers in 2021, up from 157 in 2020, but down from 380 in 2019 and a record 806 jets in 2018.

Its 2021 numbers include a severely depressed delivery tally of 14 787 Dreamliner twin-aisles - compared to 41 in 2020 - as intensive inspections over production flaws compounded delays from the COVID-19 crisis.

By comparison, Airbus delivered 611 jets in 2021, retaining its crown as the world’s largest jetmaker for the third year running.

In December, the latest data showed Boeing delivered 38 planes to customers, including 32 of its 737 MAX jets, one P-8 maritime patrol aircraft to Norway, and five widebodies.



Boeing had 79 net orders for aircraft in December, after cancellations and instances where a buyer converted an order for one type of aircraft to another. That included an order for 50 737 MAX airplanes for Allegiant Air, seven jets for an unspecified customer, 19 767 freighters for United Parcel Service, and four 777 freighters for Atlas Air.

Boeing continues to dominate booming sales of freighters as lockdowns boost e-shopping. It notched 84 orders for new production freighters, surpassing its previous record of 83 set in 2018.

Airbus for its part booked the first orders for a new A350 freighter - albeit partially by swapping existing orders for passenger versions to the cargo planes.

Global Air Cargo Posts Slower Growth of 3.7% In Nov. 2021

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Global air cargo markets showed slower growth in November 2021 with demand, measured in cargo tonne-kilometres (CTKs) increasing 3.7 per cent compared to November 2019, which posted a 4.2 per cent growth for international operations.

According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), this was significantly lower than the 8.2 per cent growth recorded in October 2021 and in previous months.

It said capacity was 7.6 per cent below November 2019 and was relatively unchanged from October. “Capacity remains constrained with bottlenecks at key hubs,” it said in a statement today.

IATA said supply chain disruptions are slowing growth, despite economic conditions continuing to support the air cargo market.

Labour shortages, partly due to employees being in quarantine, insufficient storage space at some airports and processing backlogs exacerbated by the year-end rush created supply chain disruptions.

It added that several key airports, including New York’s John F. Kennedy, Los Angeles and Amsterdam Schiphol reported congestion.

“Air cargo growth was halved in November compared to October because of supply chain disruptions.

“All economic indicators pointed towards continued strong demand, but the pressures of labor shortages and constraints across the logistics system unexpectedly resulted in lost growth opportunities,” IATA director general Willie Walsh said.

Hence, he said governments must act quickly to relieve pressure on global supply chains before it permanently dents the shape of the economic recovery from Covid-19.

“To relieve supply chain disruptions in the air cargo industry, IATA is calling on governments to ensure that air crew operations are not hindered by Covid-19 restrictions designed for air travellers,” he said, adding it hoped governments can provide innovative policy incentives to address labor shortages where they exist.

Policymakers also need to implement the commitments governments made at the International Civil Aviation Organisation High Level Conference on Covid-19 to restore international connectivity, including for passenger travel.

Regionally, Asia Pacific airlines’ international air cargo volumes went up 5.2 per cent in November 2021 compared to the same month in 2019.

This was only slightly below the previous month’s 5.9 per cent expansion, while international capacity in the region eased 9.5 per cent in November compared to 2019.

Meanwhile, North American carriers posted an 11.4 per cent increase in international cargo volumes in November 2021 compared to November 2019.

Nokia Expects Strong 2022 As Supply Crunch Eases



HELSINKI (Dispatches) - Finnish telecoms giant Nokia performed better than expected last year and foresees further growth in 2022 as a supply chain crunch and inflation are set to ease, the network equipment maker said.

The announcement follows a string of quarterly earnings surprises for the network equipment maker, which last October managed to boost its third quarter profits despite a worldwide shortage of computer chips.

The group largely met expectations with €22.2 billion (RM105 billion) in net sales last year.

But it raised its 2021 operating margin guidance to between 12.4 per cent and 12.6 per cent, up from 10 per cent to 12 per cent.

The boost was related to venture fund investments, a one-off software contract in the second quarter, “bad debt provision reversals and some other one-time benefits,” the company said in a statement.

Nokia now expects an operating margin ranging between 11 per cent and 13.5 per cent in 2022, citing “estimated continued improvements in the underlying business, supply constraints and cost inflation.”

Nokia chief executive Pekka Lundmark said last year that the company expects to see a gradual improvement in 2022, though it was not “100 per cent” guaranteed.

Lundmark has been credited with turning around the fortunes of the network giant, which has been flagging in the race with Sweden’s Ericsson and China’s Huawei in the 5G network equipment market.

After taking the helm in mid-2020, Lundmark implemented widespread job cuts, with savings funnelled into developing more competitive technology.

The group has also partly benefitted from the misfortunes of rival Ericsson, whose China market share collapsed when Beijing retaliated against Sweden for banning Huawei from its 5G network rollout.

EIA Expects U.S. Power Use to Rise 1% in 2022 as Economy Recovers

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - U.S. power usage will rise about 1% in 2022 as the economy recovers for a second year from 2020’s demand slump caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) said.

In its Short-Term Energy Outlook, EIA projected power demand will climb from 3,932 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) in 2021 to 3,956 billion kWh in 2022 and 4,010 billion kWh in 2023.

That compares with a coronavirus-depressed eight-year low of 3,856 billion kWh in 2020 and an all-time high of 4,003 billion kWh in 2018.

The EIA projected 2022 power sales would ease to 1,451 billion kWh for residential consumers, but rise to 1,345 billion kWh for commercial customers as more people return to offices and 1,014 billion kWh for industrials.

That compares with current all-time highs of 1,483 billion kWh in 2021 for residential consumers, 1,382 billion kWh in 2018 for commercial customers and 1,064 billion kWh in 2000 for industrials.

The EIA said natural gas’ share of power generation will slide from 37% in 2021 to 35% in 2022 and 34% in 2023 as gas prices rise. Coal’s share will slide from 23% in 2021 to 22% in 2022 and 2023.

The percentage of nuclear generation will hold at 20% in 2022 and 2023, the same as 2021. Renewables will rise from 20% in 2021 to 23% in 2022 and 24% in 2023. The EIA projected 2022 natural gas sales would rise to 13.34 billion cubic feet per day (bcfd) for residential consumers, 9.25 bcfd for commercial customers and 23.22 bcfd for industrials, but fall to 28.84 bcfd for power generation.

Turkey’s Economic Woes Are Hurting Erdogan

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - More Turks now believe an opposition alliance is better suited than President Tayyip Erdogan and his ruling AK Party (AKP) to end the economic turmoil that has engulfed their country, according to a slew of opinion polls published this month.

Under pressure from Erdogan and despite high inflation, the central bank has slashed interest rates by 500 basis points since September, triggering a currency crisis that saw the lira plunge last month to 18.4 to the dollar, its weakest level ever.

Inflation has jumped to a 19-year high of 36%, seriously eroding earnings, especially of working and lower middle class Turks who form the electoral base of the Islamist-rooted AKP.

The government has introduced fiscal measures to ease the currency volatility, but the lira is still 46% weaker than a year ago and Erdogan, who wants to boost exports and credit, has refused to change course despite growing public discontent. Surveys by Metropoll Research show the approval rating for Erdogan, who has led Turkey for 19 years and faces elections by mid-2023, is its lowest since 2015, at 38.6%. His popularity trails that of three potential presidential rivals, they show.

A poll by Sosyo Politik Field Research Centre put support for the AKP at 27%, against 37% who said they voted for the party in the last parliamentary election in 2018. The AKP’s nationalist ally in parliament, the MHP, was on 6.3%, down from 7.3% who said they voted for the party in 2018.

The main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) had 22.9% support and its IYI Party ally had 10.3%, while the pro-Kurdish Democratic Peoples’ Party (HDP) had 9.4%. More than 11% were undecided.

An ORC Research poll conducted last week showed AKP-MHP support totalled 38.7%, lagging CHP-IYI on 39.5%. Support stood at 8.4% for the HDP, which informally backed the opposition coalition in 2019 municipal elections that saw the AKP lose control of Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey’s biggest cities.

Around two thirds of respondents told Sosyo Politik the economy was Turkey’s biggest problem. More than half said the government’s recent measures would not improve the economy.

A second Metropoll survey showed 36.7% believed the opposition coalition was best placed to manage the economy against 35.4% for AKP-MHP. Around 38% of respondents said they admired Erdogan - who received more than 52% in the 2018 presidential election - while Ankara Mayor Mansur Yavas and Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, both from the CHP, scored 60% and 51% respectively.

Iran Never Shies Away From Defending Its Borders

TEHRAN (MNA) – Emphasizing that Iran never shies from defending its borders, Deputy Commander of Iran Army Air Defense Force said that any attack on country’s airspace will be harshly responded.

Brigadier General Alireza Elhami Deputy Commander of Iran Army Air Defense Force made the remarks on Wednesday and

reiterated that country’s Army Air Defense is ready to deal with any violation of enemies to the airspace of the country decisively.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has proven in practice that it has no compliments with anyone in the world to defend its borders and airspaces, he said, adding that any attack on borders of Islamic Iran will be responded harshly.



Germany to Speed Up Green Energy Projects in Gigantic Effort

FRANKFURT (AFP) - Germany’s Climate and Energy minister Robert Habeck on Tuesday pledged to drastically ramp up renewable energy projects in the coming years, saying the country faced a “gigantic” task to meet climate protection goals.

Germany needs to become “more efficient and faster” in the fight against climate change, Green party minister Habeck said, as he unveiled an ambitious package of measures to help make Europe’s top economy carbon neutral by 2045.

Among the most eye-catching proposals was the pledge to set aside two percent of Germany’s land surface for wind energy projects, up from around 0.5 percent currently.

Habeck -- who heads a “super ministry” of energy, climate protection and the economy in the new German government -- promised to cut red tape to make it easier to get wind projects approved.

He also called on citizens and regional authorities to show greater acceptance for wind turbines, after local objections often blocked such projects in the past.

“Everyone needs to cooperate,” Habeck told reporters.

As part of a “solar acceleration” plan, solar panels will be mandatory on new commercial buildings and become the norm on new-build homes, Habeck added.

Germany’s coalition government -- which took over from Angela Merkel’s cabinet last month and is made up of the Social Democrats, the Greens and the pro-business FDP -- aims to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 65 percent by 2030 compared with 1990 levels.

Also by 2030, the country wants to exit coal and have renewables account for 80 percent of Germany’s electricity mix.

Habeck said the country was “significantly behind” in reaching those targets and faced a “task that is huge, gigantic” to get back on track.

The share of renewable energies currently hovers at just over 40 percent in Germany, in part because the country still relies heavily on coal as a result of Merkel’s decision to phase out nuclear power by the end of 2022.

Following a drop in carbon dioxide emissions in 2020 when the pandemic slowed



economic activity, Germany’s CO2 emissions actually jumped four percent in 2021, said Habeck, as demand rebounded and a lack of wind increased the use of fossil fuels.

Turning to other sectors, Habeck said Germany would help fund investment in hydrogen and offer financial support for industrial companies making the switch to greener production processes.

To boost the use of electric cars, Habeck said Germany would need to install 100,000 charging points annually by 2030.

Seeking to allay fears that a greener economy would upend Germany’s traditional industries, Habeck said climate protection would spur innovation “in a way we haven’t seen in this country in a long time”.

“We will renew our industries, and that means creating value and jobs.”

Habeck said he aimed for the necessary legislation for his proposals to be passed this year.

Gloomy Outlook for Global Recovery



LONDON (Dispatches) - Only one in 10 World Economic Forum members surveyed expects the global recovery to accelerate over the next three years, a poll of nearly 1,000 business, government and academic leaders found, with only one in six optimistic about the world outlook.

Climate change was seen as the number one danger by respondents in the WEF’s annual risks report on Tuesday, while erosion of social cohesion, livelihood crises and mental health deterioration were identified as risks which had increased the most since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Global leaders must come together and adopt a coordinated multi-stakeholder approach to tackle unrelenting global challenges and build resilience ahead of the next crisis,” Saadia Zahidi, WEF managing director, said.

Extreme weather was considered the world’s biggest risk in the short term and a failure of climate action in the medium and long term - two to 10 years, the survey showed.

Agreement at the U.N. COP26 climate conference in November last year was widely applauded for keeping alive prospects of capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius, but many of the nearly 200 nations had wanted to leave the conference in Glasgow with more.

Climate change is already seen contributing to more extreme weather patterns.

“Failure to act on climate change could shrink global GDP by one-sixth and the commitments taken at COP26 are still not enough to achieve the 1.5 (degrees Celsius) goal,” Peter Giger, group chief risk officer at Zurich Insurance (ZURN.S), which helped to compile the report, said.

The WEF’s report also highlights four areas of emerging risk - cybersecurity, a disorderly climate transition, migration pressures and competition in space.

The prospect of 70,000 satellite launches in coming decades, in addition to space tourism, raises risks of collisions and increasing debris in space, amid a lack of regulation.

“Who governs space?” said Carolina Klint, risk management leader for continental Europe at insurance broker Marsh which also helped produce the report.

The report is published each year ahead of the annual WEF meeting in Davos. However, the Geneva-based WEF last month postponed the January event until mid-2022 due to the spread of the Omicron coronavirus variant.

The report was produced together with Zurich, Marsh McLennan and South Korea’s SK Group, the universities of Oxford and Pennsylvania and the National University of Singapore.

Shipping Group Maersk Expects Cargo Delays to Persist



COPENHAGEN (Dispatches) - Top container shipping firm A.P. Moller-Maersk on Tuesday warned its customers it was still struggling to move goods around the world as the easing of congestion is taking longer than the Danish company had hoped for.

The pandemic has prompted shortages of container ships and logjams at ports at a time of very high consumer spending, meaning that hundreds of container vessels are lying idle outside ports.

“Unfortunately, 2022 has not started off as we had hoped,” Maersk said in an advisory published on its web page.

“The pandemic is still going strong and unfortunately, we are seeing new outbreaks impacting our ability to move your cargo,” it said, adding that it expects the constraints to continue “for some time still”.

The biggest waiting times for container vessels to discharge or pick up cargoes were on the U.S. West Coast where the waiting time at Long Beach port in Los Angeles currently is between 38 and 45 days, Maersk said.

However, it noted that there had been some recent easing in Northern Europe where the Port of Antwerp in Belgium was expected to reduce the wait to around two days this week from 10 days the week before.

Indonesia Considers Coal Levy as Easing of Export Ban Calms Markets

JAKARTA (Dispatches) - Chinese thermal coal futures fell on Tuesday after Indonesia, the world’s biggest thermal coal exporter, eased a ban on overseas shipments that surprised buyers at the start of the year, alleviating concerns about supply disruptions.

The export ban was introduced after state power utility Perusahaan Listrik Negara (PLN) reported critically low coal stockpiles amid complaints miners were not fulfilling their responsibilities to supply fuel to the company. Driven by concerns about the impact to their economies which depend on coal-fired power generation, Japan, South Korea and the Philippines called for the measure to be eased. Late on Monday, Indonesia agreed for 14 coal vessels to depart as soon as they get permits from authorities. To ensure PLN does not run low on coal again, the government is discussing new procurement policies, including a levy system for miners.

The ban, which came into force on Jan. 1, triggered a rally in Australian and Chinese coal prices last week. However, Chinese thermal coal futures fell more than 3% to 685 yuan (\$107.50) on Tuesday in reaction to the relaxation. “There is still demand for Indonesian coal from Chinese power plants,” said one China-based trader, adding that some may turn to Russian coal as an alternative.

Iran’s 1st Geothermal...

FROM PAGE 1

Back in October 2020, Deputy Energy Minister Homayoun Haeri had put the project’s physical progress at 71 percent, saying: “[implementation of] This project was put on the agenda in order to evaluate and exploit the geological resources in the northwest of Sabalan while indigenizing the technical knowledge

of design, construction, and commissioning of geothermal power plants, as well as capacity building and empowerment of skilled manpower.”

The first stage of the plant development is going to feature a five MW turbine, while a total of 50 MW is targeted to be reached at later stages.

Yemeni Forces Inflict...

FROM PAGE 1

They claimed that the UAE’s so-called crack al-Amaliqa Brigades had advanced into neighboring Marib province, recapturing most of the Harib district and turning around the fortunes of the battle.

Lebanon’s Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network reported on Sunday that the commander of the Third Brigade of the UAE-backed forces, 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 had 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.

S. Korea...

FROM PAGE 1

The ministry said the specific license, which is issued on a case-by-case basis, will allow the Seoul government to use the U.S. financial system to send money to the Dayyani family. The exact amount of money to be sent will likely be decided via follow-up consultations.

“The license is expected to serve as important grounds to promptly wrap up the ISDS case with the Dayyani family, one of the pending issues between South Korea and Iran, and it is expected to help improve bilateral relations,” the ministry said in a press release.

Still, the fate of \$7 billion of Iranian assets frozen in South Korean banks depends primarily on the outcome of negotiations between Iran and the world powers, Seoul officials noted.

Cooperation With Iran...

FROM PAGE 1

Wang retired that “Turkey and Iran are all China’s good friends. China has carried out productive cooperation with them in various sectors, delivering tangible benefits to our peoples”.

“Maintaining high-level exchanges with the above-mentioned countries will help to deepen bilateral relations and contribute to the peace, stability and development in the Middle East,” the Chinese official noted.

Amir Abdollahian has recently travelled to Oman and Qatar with the intention of advancing the Iranian administration’s policy of establishing closer ties with neighboring countries.

Crime of Assassinating...

FROM PAGE 1

Between 2010 and 2012, four Iranian nuclear scientists — namely Masoud Alimohammadi, Majid Shahriari, Darioush Rezaeinejad and Ahmadi Roshan — were assassinated, while another, Fereydoon Abbasi, was wounded in an attempted murder.

In June 2012, Iran announced that its intelligence forces had identified and arrested all terrorist elements behind the assassination of the country’s nuclear scientists.

In the latest case, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, who headed the Iranian Defense Ministry’s Organization of Defensive Innovation and Research, was assassinated on November 27, 2020.

Following the assassination, Iranian officials said that Israel had acted with US intelligence and carried out the targeted killing of the prominent nuclear scientist.

Gharibabadi said in November that Iran would soon announce the final verdict in the case of the assassinations of several senior nuclear scientists, adding that a case has already been filed and others are on the way.

Kashmir Apple...

FROM PAGE 1

He said this year the apple production has been better in the Union territory than last year due to the introduction of high-yield varieties by the government.

He said Iranian apples were selling for cheaper than Kashmiri apples, which has put more than 150 crore boxes of Kashmiri apples at risk.

“Our apples are fetching less than half the market price due to import of Iranian apples into India,” he said. “The profit margin on Kashmiri apples is less as we have to spend on fertiliser, labour and packing also.”

He said the import of Iranian apples will also impact apple growers in Himachal Pradesh and other states. “The Iranian apples are selling cheap because there is little duty on imports and the government also doesn’t charge taxes on cold storages in Delhi and Mumbai,” Bashir said.

“We are getting reports from Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Kerala that the price of Kashmiri apples has declined from Rs 1,200 per box to Rs 600, which will inflict huge losses on the growers. The production cost of one apple box is Rs 600; moreover, the transport charges costs Rs 300 per box,” Bashir said. “The GST has increased from 12 per cent to 18 per cent. Now, how can a grower sell his produce at such low rates?” he asked. Bashir said they have repeatedly requested the government to intervene and save the apple industry in Kashmir, which provides livelihood to lakhs of people in Kashmir and also outside.

“We met the Union agriculture minister, but he didn’t take any action to stop the supply. Then we wrote to the prime minister, L-G office, but to no avail,” he said.

“Modi stresses on Make in India, then why are we importing goods from outside when we have our own production?” he asked. “PM Modi should uphold his own slogan.”

Horticulture, especially apples, is the backbone of Kashmir’s economy. It fetches Jammu and Kashmir Rs 8,000 crore annually. More than 40 per cent of 80 lakh people in Kashmir, including seven lakh farmers, are linked to the trade.

Watson Joins Nicklaus, Player as Augusta Starter

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Two-time Augusta Champion Tom Watson will tee off alongside Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player as one of the three honorary starters at this year's Masters, tournament organizers said Tuesday.

The 72-year-old, winner of the Masters in 1977 and 1981, will get the 86th edition of the major under way on April 7, Augusta National chairman Fred Ridley said. Watson has a long history with the Masters, making his debut in the event as an amateur in 1970 before making 42 consecutive starts at Augusta between 1975 and 2016.

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Malaysia Keen to Host 2027 SEA Games

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Malaysia has expressed an interest in hosting the 34th SEA Games in 2027, said Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) president Tan Sri Mohamad Norza Zakaria.

He said this was after the South-east Asian Games Federation (SEAGF) contacted OCM regarding the possibility of hosting the Games following the withdrawal of Brunei, which was supposed to host the 2027 edition.

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SPORTS

THURSDAY JANUARY 13, 2022

Embiid Helps Sixers Win Seventh Straight Game

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Joel Embiid had 31 points and eight rebounds as the Philadelphia 76ers won their seventh straight game with a 111-91 victory over the Houston Rockets.

Embiid recorded his seventh straight 30-point game. He also had six assists and made all 13 of his free throws in front of a crowd of 13,600 at Toyota Center arena in Houston.

Embiid is the second NBA player in history to score exactly 31 points in four straight games. Bob McAdoo did it for the Buffalo Braves in 1973.

Embiid entered Monday's contest as the sixth highest scorer in the league, averaging 26.8 points per game.

Philadelphia has the longest winning streak in the Eastern Conference and the second-longest one in the league behind the Memphis Grizzlies who have won nine straight.

Elsewhere, LaMelo Ball scored 23 points as the Charlotte Hornets swept back-to-back games against the defending NBA champion Milwaukee Bucks with a 103-99 win.

Ball capped his performance with the eventual winning basket on a floater with 15 seconds left in the fourth for the Hornets, who also beat the Bucks 114-106 on Saturday.

Giannis Antetokounmpo finished with 26 points and 13 rebounds for the struggling Bucks, who have lost four of their last five games.

Milwaukee committed their 20th turnover after Ball's go-ahead basket. On the next possession Miles Bridges sank a pair of game-clinching free throws.

Ball scooted to his left, shooting across his body as he was falling away to break the tie.

"That is a highly difficult shot, but he makes it look effortless," Hornets coach James Borrego said. "Melo has that uncanny ability to be going 100 mph, get off-balance and still be poised when he raises up."

"That's tough to do for a player who has been in the league 15 years, let alone a guy who has been in the league two years."

Terry Rozier delivered 27 points, Bridges finished with 17 points and 11 rebounds and Gordon Hayward tallied 14 points as the Hornets won despite shooting just 13-of-44 shooting from three-point range.

Former Galatasaray, Turkey Defender Calik Killed in Car Crash

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Former Galatasaray and Turkey defender Ahmet Calik has died in a car crash, aged 27, his club Konyaspor confirmed today.

"We are in deep sorrow to have lost our player Ahmet Calik who earned our fans' and city's love since the first day he arrived at Konyaspor," the club posted on Twitter.

According to Turkish website Spor Arena the crash happened on a motorway near the capital Ankara where Calik was heading during a day off to finalise plans for his wedding.

Calik made more than 50 appearances for Galatasaray during a three-year spell before joining Konyaspor in 2020.

The centre back also played eight times for the Turkish senior team between 2015 and 2017 and was part of the Euro 2016 squad, although did not play a match.

In a statement the Turkish FA said: "It is with deep sadness that we learned that Ahmet Calik, football player of Ittifaq Holding Konyaspor, who also played in our national team, passed away as a result of a traffic accident."

"May Allah have mercy on the deceased."

Galatasaray also issued their own tribute.

"It is with deep sadness that we learned of the death of our former football player Ahmet Calik," the club said on its website. "We express our condolences to his grieving family, loved ones and Turkish sports community."

Bencic Downs Haddad Maia in Sydney Opener

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Olympic Champion Belinda Bencic made a solid start to 2022 with a 6-3 6-2 victory over Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia to reach the second round of the Sydney Tennis Classic on Tuesday, while local favourite Ajla Tomljanovic also advanced.

Swiss Bencic, who heads to the Jan. 17-30 Australian Open bidding to add a maiden Grand Slam singles title to her Tokyo Games gold, broke Haddad Maia three times in the contest on Ken Rosewall Arena.

World number 45 Tomljanovic beat Slovak Anna Karolina Schmiedlova 6-2 6-3 in her opener to set up a second-round match with Spanish fifth seed Paula Badosa.



Khris Middleton helped pace the Bucks offense with 27 points and a game-high 11 assists. Jordan Nwora added 18 points and Wesley Matthews had 13 points.

"You are definitely concerned anytime you lose four out of five," Middleton said. "And you never want to lose two in a row. You understand what the circumstances are (with players being out) and you never want to use that as an excuse. We understand what we're going through and everybody is going through. But we still have to go out there and compete."

In Detroit, rookie Cade Cunningham scored a career-high 29 points and the Detroit Pistons rallied from a 22-point deficit to defeat the Utah Jazz 126-116.

Cunningham, the top pick in the NBA entry draft, scored all but five of his points after halftime. He also dished out eight of Detroit's 30 assists.

"I have to give all the credit to my teammates, who kept encouraging me and getting me the ball," said Cunningham. "I'm new to this league, but I've been playing basketball for a long time. I know what I'm capable of doing to help a team win once I get into a rhythm."

Saddiq Bey matched Cunningham with 29 points, while Cory Joseph came off the bench to score 16 points. Trey Lyles added 14 points, six rebounds and five assists. Donovan Mitchell scored a team-high 31 points for the Jazz, who have lost three straight. Hassan Whiteside contributed 21 points and 14 rebounds and Jordan Clarkson chipped in 16 points.

Murray Reaches 2nd Round At Sydney Tennis Classic



SYDNEY (AP) - Five-time Australian Open finalist Andy Murray advanced to the second round of the Sydney Tennis Classic by beating Viktor Durasovic 6-3, 6-1.

Murray entered the tournament with a wild card and has also been handed one for next week's Australian Open. Since he last reached the Australian Open final in 2016, when he lost to Novak Djokovic, the 34-year-old Murray has only made it past the first round once at Melbourne Park.

Recurring hip injuries have meant he has played only one of the past four Australian Opens. The former No. 1-ranked player is now 135th.

The three-time Grand Slam champion forced Durasovic into numerous errors.

"I was hoping to get the matches in Melbourne," Murray said, referring to a first-round loss last week. "That didn't happen but thankfully Tennis Australia gave me the wild card to play here. I'm very grateful for that and hopefully I can be here for a few more days."

Murray will next face 23rd-ranked Nikoloz Basilashvili on Wednesday for a place in the quarterfinals.



Vlhova Continues Slalom Domination

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Petra Vlhova, winner of five of the first six World Cup slaloms of the season, set the fastest time in the first run under lights in Schladming, Austria, on Tuesday.

The Slovakian was 0.27 seconds ahead of German Lena Duerr with Canadian Ali Nullmeyer third another 0.08sec back in the last slalom before the Olympic Games

in Beijing in February.

American Mikaela Shiffrin, who is a distant second behind Vlhova in the World Cup slalom standings, was fifth.

If Vlhova remains on the podium at the end of the second run, scheduled for 1945 (GMT), she will clinch the small crystal globe for the speciality champion.

Shiffrin entered the race narrowly leading Vlhova in the race for the large globe for overall champion.

The race was moved to Schladming because the rate of Covid-19 contamination was considered too high in the resort of Flachau.

Salah Not Asking For Crazy Stuff in New Liverpool Deal

LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah says he is not asking for "crazy stuff" in any new contract he signs with the Premier League club but wants the deal to reflect his huge contribution at Anfield.

The Egypt international has fewer than 18 months remaining on his current deal and has reiterated whether he stays or goes remains in the hands of Liverpool.

Reports have suggested that Salah, who has won the Champions League and Premier League with Liverpool, is looking for a weekly salary of more than £300,000 (RM1.7 million).

That would smash the Reds' wage structure and would represent a significant policy change by the club, with the owners reluctant to hand out lucrative contracts to players once they reach 30, which Salah does in June.

Salah, who has scored 111 goals in 165 Premier League matches for Liverpool, and is on track for a third Golden Boot in five years, said he wanted to be appreciated.

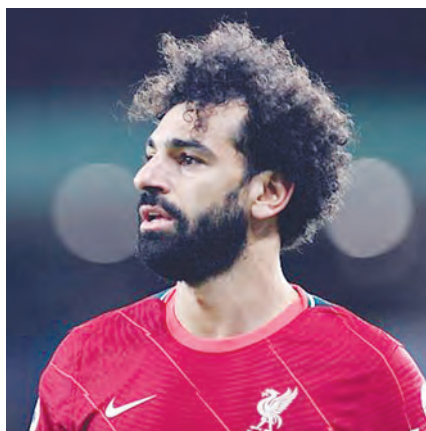
"I want to stay, but it's not in my hands. It's in their hands. They know what I want. I'm not asking for crazy stuff," Salah told GQ magazine.

"The thing is when you ask for something and they show you they can give you something (they should) because they appreciate what you did for the club."

"I've been here for my fifth year now. I know the club very well. I love the fans. The fans love me. But with the administration, they have (been) told the situation. It's in their hands."

Salah, currently playing for Egypt at the Africa Cup of Nations, has made the three-man shortlist, along with Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski and Paris Saint-Germain's Lionel Messi, for FIFA's best men's player of 2021.

He finished seventh in the race for last year's Ballon d'Or, but the Egyptian's ambition is to be the best in the world.



Conte Holds Productive Meeting Over New Signings

LONDON (Dispatches) - Antonio Conte hopes a "productive" meeting with Tottenham's hierarchy has laid the groundwork for the club to make signings during the January transfer window.

Conte laid out his views on how Tottenham's squad can be improved during talks with chairman Daniel Levy and director of football Fabio Paratici.

The Italian has been in charge of the north London club since November and believes changes are needed to lift Tottenham to the level of Manchester City, Liverpool and Chelsea.

Tottenham are currently sixth in the Premier League, 20 points behind leaders City, and were outplayed by his former club Chelsea in a 2-0 League Cup semi-final first leg defeat last week.

Speaking ahead of Wednesday's second leg showdown with Chelsea, Conte said: "It was a good meeting. A good meeting because the owner and Paratici, they started together this season from the start."

"I arrived in the middle of the season and for sure they know the situation much better than me. A good meeting, a good meeting to speak and tell them my thoughts after two months in Tottenham."

Conte clashed with Chelsea's board over their transfer policy during his two-year stay at Stamford Bridge. Frustrated by their failure to deliver his top targets the summer after he led Chelsea to the Premier League title, Conte spent much of his second season taking public swipes at the Blues hierarchy before eventually being sacked despite winning the FA Cup.

So far, Conte has steered the ship at Tottenham after arriving to find the team in turmoil following Nuno Espirito Santo's brief reign.

But he knows the current squad is not capable of rising to the standards set by City and their main title rivals.

Conte needed to bring Harry Kane and Lucas Moura off the bench to beat League One Morecambe in the FA Cup on Sunday after a much-changed team trailed until the 74th minute.

