

**Health Ministry Announced on Monday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic In Iran Increased to 132,095 With 20 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

# IRAN NEWS

**Iran's Embassy in Japan, In Cooperation With Chiyoda, Hosted a Two-Day exhibition of Iranian Hand-Woven Carpets in Tokyo Where More Than 4 Exquisite Carpets From Qom, Tabriz, and Kashan Were Displayed**

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## Tehran Urges U.S. To Focus on Plan A In Vienna Talks

TEHRAN (PressTV) - As the remaining parties to the Iran nuclear agreement prepare to continue negotiations in the Austrian capital to revive the deal, Tehran has dismissed Washington's attempts to set a deadline for the Vienna negotiations to bear fruit, calling it "fabricated".

Speaking at a press conference in Tehran on Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said the US would better focus on its Plan A rather than threatening Iran with a Plan B.

Days earlier, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken had said there were only "a few weeks left" to save the 2015 deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"We're very, very short on time," because "Iran is getting closer and closer to the point where they could produce on very, very short order enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon," Blinken claimed.

He added that the U.S. is "looking at other steps, other options" - often seen as a military threat - with allies including in Europe and the Middle East.

In response, Khatibzadeh said a Plan B is "not appealing for any country."

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## Iran's Homegrown Radars Can Track, Target Any Flying Object

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The chief commander of Iran's Air Defense Force has hailed his forces as the best in defense capability in the region, saying any flying object can be tracked and downed by the Islamic Republic's homegrown radars.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran Air Defense Force (IRIADF) is at the forefront of defensive power in the region, and any airborne object irrespective of the altitude at which it flies can be detected, tracked, and even dealt with by our radars," said Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard, addressing a group of Iranian military commanders and cadets at Imam Ali University in Tehran.

Sabahifard said the young experts of the Iranian army are developing indigenous three-dimensional radar systems and are trying to bring them into service.

"Our combat and defense capabilities are expanding continuously. All of the military equipment in our inventory are homegrown and are produced by Iranian youths," he added.

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## 3 Iranian Diplomats in Saudi Arabia to Take Up OIC Posts



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Three Iranian diplomats have arrived in Saudi Arabia to take up posts at the headquarters of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the kingdom, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman says.

"Three Iranian diplomats have arrived in Jeddah to start their work at the OIC," Saeed Khatibzadeh said at a weekly press conference on Monday.

Khatibzadeh described the latest development as "a good prelude for the two sides to visit their embassies."

"Iran has always expressed its readiness to open its embassy in Saudi Arabia," he added.

The spokesman also said paying attention to one's words and deeds is a prelude to a détente between Tehran and Riyadh, which, "God willing, our friends in Saudi Arabia are increasingly cognizant of."

On Saturday, a member of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee said Iran and Saudi Arabia are preparing to reopen embassies after five years of severed ties.

The restoration of ties between the two important countries of Iran and Saudi Arabia would play a substantial role in easing tensions in the region, Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi said in a tweet.

Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic relations with Iran in January 2016 after Iranian protesters, enraged by the Saudi execution of prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr, stormed its embassy in Tehran.

For years, the kingdom pursued a confrontational foreign policy toward the Islamic Republic, but since last year, the kingdom appears to have changed tack.

In an interview with Al Jazeera published on January 6, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said Tehran and Riyadh have so far held four rounds of "positive and constructive" talks in Iraq.

He expressed Tehran's readiness to restore relations with Riyadh at any time, adding that Iran welcomes the reopening of the two sides' embassies and consulates.

The top Iranian diplomat also noted that the country's representatives to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation would return to Jeddah soon, which is a "positive and good sign."

In an interview with the Financial Times published in October, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud signaled his country's desire to repair relations with Iran, saying the kingdom is "serious" about talks with the Islamic Republic.

Describing the negotiations as "exploratory" but "cordial", he said "we are serious about the talks. For us it's not that big a shift. We've always said we want to find a way to stabilize the region."

## World Bank Revises Up Iran's 2021 GDP Growth Rate to 3.1%

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The World Bank has revised up its estimate of economic growth in Iran for 2021 as figures provided in the Bank's latest report show Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) rose by 3.1% last year.

Tables provided in the Global Economic Prospects report published on Sunday showed that Iran's real GDP growth in 2021 was 1% higher than forecast provided by the World Bank in June last year.

Iran's GDP had risen by 3.4% in 2020 after a major contraction of 6.8% reported in 2019 that was mainly caused by US sanctions on the country's exports of crude oil.

The growth in GDP for two successive years comes despite the fact that Washington toughened its sanctions on Iran last year when the country was struggling under one of the largest outbreaks of coronavirus in the Middle East.

The figures confirm earlier reports by economic authorities in Iran suggesting that the country had technically emerged from the double impacts of the American sanctions and the pandemic.

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## Sri Lanka-Iran Pact Affects Indian Tea Exports

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's tea exports to Iran, which have halved compared to the pre-pandemic period in 2019 due to payment problems, are set to take a further hit this year as Sri Lanka has entered into a barter trade agreement with Iran to pay off its earlier debts against oil purchases.

Sri Lanka will send orthodox tea or whole leaf teas to Iran to pay off its oil purchase dues. Iran buys orthodox teas only for its domestic consumption and India has been one of the biggest suppliers of orthodox teas to the West Asian nation.

In 2019, India had exported about 53 million kg of teas to Iran. Tea exports to Iran plunged to 29 million kg in 2020 and fell to 21 million kg in the first ten months of 2021 due to the payment crisis.

"The barter trade agreement between Iran and Sri Lanka put India in a disadvantageous position. Exports to Iran may further come down by 15% in 2022," said Mohit Agarwal, director of Asian & Tea Exports, which exports tea to Iran.

A senior industry executive, who did not wish to be identified, said, "India was the largest tea exporter to Iran before the US sanctions, but after that the rupee-rial trade with Iran came to a grinding halt."

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## Yemeni Army Launches Retaliatory Drone Attacks Deep Inside UAE

SANAA (Dispatches) - Yemen's army says it has launched drone attacks deep inside the United Arab Emirates as Emirati officials say three tankers, carrying fuel, exploded in Abu Dhabi.

The Yemeni military conducts regular retaliatory attacks against targets in Saudi Arabia over its devastating war on Yemen. But, attack against the UAE, which is fighting alongside Saudi Arabia, has been rare.

Abu Dhabi police, in a statement published on the official Emirates News Agency WAM, said three fuel tankers had exploded in the Musaffah area, which lies southwest of the UAE capital and has been designated a special economic zone with numerous factories and ports.

The statement noted that the explosions took place near storage facilities of oil firm ADNOC.

A fire also broke out at a construction site at Abu Dhabi International Airport.

The statement added that initial investigations showed parts of a small plane, "possibly a drone", in both sites.

Meanwhile, spokesman for the Yemeni Armed Forces Brigadier General Yahya Saree said he will put out a statement within the next few hours to present details of a qualitative military operation against targets deep inside the UAE.

On January 3, Saree said Yemeni naval troops and Popular Committees fighters had managed to seize a UAE-flagged vessel off the port of Hudaydah as it was carrying military equipment and engaging in hostile acts.

The spokesman for the Yemeni Armed Forces stated that the Yemeni forces and their allies captured the vessel after it trespassed into Yemen's territorial waters and was acting against the security and stability of the country.

Hussein al-Azi, deputy foreign minister in Yemen's National Salvation Government, later said that the ship was carrying various munitions and military equipment when it was seized in Yemen's territorial waters.

"The Rwabee was neither loaded with dates nor children's toys. It was rather carrying weapons destined for extremist groups who jeopardize the lives of ordinary citizens," he pointed out.

Saudi Arabia, backed by the United States and regional allies, launched the war on Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing the government of former Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi back to power and crushing the popular Ansarullah resistance movement. The war has left hundreds of thousands of Yemenis dead and displaced millions more. It has also destroyed Yemen's infrastructure and spread famine and infectious diseases there.

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## Gov't to Pilot National Cryptocurrency Soon

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) plans to launch the national cryptocurrency in a pilot phase in the near future, an official with the bank announced without providing further details.

CBI Vice-Governor for IT Affairs Mehran Moharamian said the bank sees cryptocurrencies as a solution for resolving inconsistencies and decentralizing resources, something that many countries have started to benefit from recently.

In 2018, Informatics Services Corporation, the executive arm of the Central Bank of Iran in charge of operating the country's banking automation and payment services network, was tasked with developing a national cryptocurrency. The company's officials later said the Iranian cryptocurrency has been designed using the Hyperledger Fabric platform.

## President Calls for Facilitating Life of The Disabled

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Referring to the launch of special tourist tours for the disabled, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi said, "All bodies should work in their area of responsibility to facilitate the life and movement of the disabled in the city and offices, and providing a suitable vehicle for these loved ones is one of the duties".

Speaking on Sunday evening in the cabinet meeting, emphasizing the need for sincere service and comprehensive efforts to solve the problems of the people, Raisi said, "Members of the cabinet while explaining their strengths and successes in various fields, especially in the field of livelihood and provision of basic goods, should try not to have any weaknesses or inadequacies in performance".

The President continued stating that paying attention to and protecting the environment as a public duty and noted, "Observing environmental issues is necessary for all institutions, but the field of environment must also have a solution".

He added, "Cultural heritage is a precious treasure that should be preserved for future ages and generations, but paying attention to the preservation of cultural heritage in old urban structures should not disrupt people's lives".



Raisi further emphasized on strengthening cooperation and expanding foreign relations, especially with neighboring countries and Latin America, and said, "Now, wide capacities have been created to develop foreign relations with countries in the region and Latin America, which should be activated in the interests of the nation".

Later Sunday and at the meeting of the Cabinet's Economic Coordination Board, the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade presented a report containing written proposals of 28 articles to remove barriers to production.

At the meeting of the Cabinet's Economic Coordination Board that was held on Sunday night, President Raisi stressed the importance of continuous monitoring of all aspects of macroeconomics along with the analysis of the current situation and called for appropriate policies along with coordinated and rapid planning and implementation in various sectors.

Emphasizing the serious efforts of the government to implement the vision of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution in the field of removing barriers to production, the President said, "The package proposed by the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade in this field must be approved and implemented immediately".

## Iran Agreement With China Strategic Achievement

TEHRAN (MNA) - Referring to U.S. pressures to exclude Iran from engaging in the world's economy, a top Iranian security official termed the implementation of Iran's deal with China, the world's second-largest economy, as an achievement.

The implementation of the 25-year agreement between Iran and China, the world's second-largest economy is a strategic achievement for Tehran as Washington continues to pursue unilateralism and continued pressure to exclude Iran from economic engagement with the world, Iran's Secretary of Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani tweeted.

Iran and China signed a landmark 25-year comprehensive strategic partnership agreement in March 2021 in defiance of the U.S. unilateral sanctions to strengthen the long-standing economic and political alliance.

This comprehensive strategic partnership agreement sets the outlines of the two countries' cooperation in political, cultural, security, defense, regional, and international domains for the next 25 years. The deal also paves the way for Iran's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative, a massive infrastructure project stretching from East Asia to Europe.

## France's Statement on Jailed Iranian National "Unfounded"

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top human rights official has categorically rejected France's "hasty and unfounded" statements on an Iranian national sent to prison again after violating the terms of her house arrest, saying Tehran condemns interference of any country in its judicial affairs.

Kazem Gharibabadi, the Judiciary chief's deputy for international affairs and secretary of the country's High Council for Human Rights, made the remarks in reaction to a Wednesday statement by France's Foreign Ministry, which condemned a decision to re-incarcerate Iranian national Fariba Adelkhal, who also holds the French nationality, and called for her immediate release. Iran has frequently emphasized that it does not recognize dual citizenship and considers all Iranians with that status as its own nationals.

"Ms. Adelkhal is a national of the Islamic Republic of Iran and we strongly condemn the interference of other countries in the judicial process" involving an Iranian national, Gharibabadi said on Sunday.

As an Iranian national, a competent court has heard Adelkhal's charges through an independent judicial process, he added.

Gharibabadi said it was unfortunate that the prisoner "has knowingly violated the rules of her house arrest dozens of times and despite repeated warnings from judicial authorities, she has insisted on doing so."

"All across the world, when a judge, for any reason, sentences a prisoner to house arrest while wearing an electronic tag, it means that there are restrictions on the range of the prisoner's movement," the Iranian official said, adding that all prisoners know that in case of violating the rules, they would be returned to prison.

"So now, like any other prisoner who has violated the same rules and repeatedly misused the situation, she has been returned to prison."

He emphasized that it is "very unfortunate" that the French authorities, regardless of the goodwill shown by Iran's judicial system toward a country's citizen, are making "baseless and unfounded" remarks through hasty statements, which are "definitely unacceptable and not worthy of consideration" by Iran.

Adelkhal, a 62-year-old anthropologist and researcher at Sciences Po's Center for International Studies (CERI) in Paris, was arrested in Iran in June 2019 on espionage charges. She was sentenced in May 2020 to five years' imprisonment. In October of that year, she was placed under house arrest with an electronic bracelet.

In interventionist remarks, French President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday called the decision "entirely arbitrary," adding that "the whole of France" was "mobilized for her release."

## Russia Strategic Partner to Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Former Iranian ambassador to Moscow Mahmoud-Reza Sajjadi emphasizing that the situation in the world is not in a way that a country can live in isolation, said that Russia is a strategic partner to Iran.

According to reports, Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi 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.

Sajjadi said on Monday that joining unions and recruiting in the international arena is an economic principle.

Referring to Raisi's upcoming visit to Moscow, he said that we have had successful cooperation cases with the Russians in fighting terrorism and ISIS in Syria, adding that had it not been for the cooperation between Iran and Russia in Syria, ISIS would be behind Iranian's borders today.

Sajjadi said that therefore, it is a necessity for each country such as Iran to have a trustworthy partner, so in this time cooperating with our partner in critical situations, especially economic cooperation is a reasonable procedure.

## General Ghaani Meets Iraqi Shia Coordinating Council Leaders

TEHRAN (MNA) - The IRGC Quds Force commander Esmail Ghaani met and held talks with leaders of the Shia coordinating council in Iraq.

After holding a meeting with leaders of the Shia coordinating council in Iraq, which is a coalition of the Shia blocs formed after the recent parliamentary elections, the IRGC Quds Force commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani is scheduled to hold a meeting with the leader of the Sadrist bloc led by Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

Shia coordinating council released a statement on the recent political developments in Iraq. The council stressed the need to continue the political talks to get out of the current complicated situation in Iraq and stressed meeting the Iraqi people's demands and preserving the integral unity of Iraq.

Members of the Shia coordinating council have recently held a meeting with the leader of the Sadrist bloc Muqtada al-Sadr to review the latest developments in Iraq.

Muqtada al-Sadr tweeted after meeting with Hadi I-Amiri to stress the formation of a majority government.

## Implementing Iran-China Deal Not to Depend on Vienna Talks

TEHRAN (MNA) - Chairman of Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission said that the implementation of a 25-year deal between Iran and China does not depend on the outcome of the Vienna talks.

Vahid Jalalzadeh said that China invested in Iran in the sanctions period, so, implementation of a 25-year deal between the two countries does not depend on the outcome of Vienna talks.

Turning to the outset of the implementation of a deal between Iran and China, Jalalzadeh added, "Presently, Islamic Republic of Iran is negotiating with the P4+1 group of countries for the removal of anti-Iranian sanctions on the one hand and country's senior officials have important trips on the agenda to strengthen Iran's relations with the eastern countries on the other hand."

He referred to the historic visit of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to the Russian Federation in the coming days and stipulated that these measures indicate that Iran has not put all its foreign policy's capacities in Vienna talks and relations with the Western countries.

In reaction to some claims that the implementation of the Iran-China deal strictly hinges on the outcome of Vienna talks, Jalalzadeh said, "It is for years that the United States has imposed tough and oppressive sanctions on Iran but China bought oil from Iran during the sanctions period and invested in our country. When the US unilaterally imposed tough sanctions on Iran, China showed that it did not pay attention to these sanctions and increased its cooperation with Iran day by day. Accordingly, Iran is seeking to strengthen its ties with China within the framework of bilateral cooperation."

The most important point that should be taken into consideration regarding the Iran-China deal is that many parts of the 25-Year Strategic Deal do not require currency and financial exchanges and are enforceable, he added.

## President Raisi's Trip to Russia Aimed at Neutralizing Sanctions

TEHRAN (IRNA) - A member of National Security and Foreign Policy Commission in the Iranian Parliament said that President Ebrahim Raisi's upcoming trip to Russia is aimed at counteracting U.S. sanctions.

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi is going to make an official visit to Russia in days ahead. He will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin.

President Putin was the first head of country who congratulated Raisi on his presidency both through letter and on phone, Javad Karimi Qoddusi said.

He said that the developments in Iran leading to the Islamic Revolution and the developments in Russia in recent decades have led to establishment of new relations between Tehran and Moscow, which have further deepened in the last decade.

However, the MP said that as Raisi has emphasized the balance in foreign policy, Iran shouldn't link its interests in entirety to its relations with Russia and China.

He also said that Raisi's trip which is taking place at President Putin's invitation is being made in a good condition since the two have enjoyed good cooperation with each other in international and regional arenas in security, defense, military, economic, and political levels.

شناسه آگهی: ۱۲۶۱۱۰۷

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

**TENDER NO.: 08-38-0040003**

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

Items	Material Description	Quantity
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02	NOZZLES FOR DRILLING BITS, ONE SET CONSISTS OF 3 NUMBERS CONNECTION SIZE AS SPECIFIED, FOR SIZE 8 3/8 IN TO 12 1/4 IN NO. 16, 16/32 IN. ID.	15 ST
03	NO. 18, 18/32 IN. ID.	12 ST
04	NO. 20, 20/32 IN. ID.	3 ST

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tender are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no.2, available at: [www.nisoc.ir](http://www.nisoc.ir), not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 7,770 EURO or 2,087,100,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

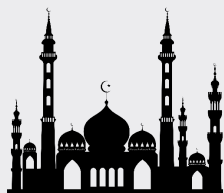
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## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:14
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:36
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:44
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:12

64. So they turned to themselves and said, "Surely ye are the ones in the wrong!"  
65. Then were they confounded with shame: (they said),  
"Thou knowest full well that these (idols) do not speak!"

Surah 21, The Prophets (64 - 65)

## Brazil Keen to Buy Urea, Petrochemical Products From Iran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN – Ambassador of Brazil to Tehran Laudemar Gonçalves de Aguiar Neto in the meeting with Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization Alireza Payman Pak announced readiness of his country for buying urea and petrochemical products from Iran and called for boosting trade between the two states.**

In the meeting, De Aguiar Neto expressed interest of his country for broadening all-out ties with Iran and pointed to the significance of Iran in the Central Asia and West Asia and called it an important trade partner in the region.

He then pointed to the interest of the Brazilian government for developing ties with Tehran and its readiness for imports of urea and petrochemical products from Iran and in return exporting corn and animal feedstock to Iran. De Aguiar Neto then pointed to the meetings with Iranian officials regarding expansion of cooperation in the fields of pharmaceutical and nanotechnology.

Payman Pak, for his part in the meeting, pointed to the grounds for broadening



economic cooperation with Brazil as the most important country in the Latin America and termed Brazil as one of the target destinations for Iran's exports as a market with high potentials for broadening trade cooperation.

He then pointed to the strong determination of current Iranian government for broadening trade with Latin American states especially with Brazil and expressed hope that with diversifying the exported goods, the trade relation between Iran and Brazil will broaden more than ever.

Payman Pak went on to say that Iran is ready for cooperation with Brazil in the field of creating regional and international chain for providing goods, developing banking cooperation and barter of goods between the two countries.

In the meeting, participants also pointed to the historic relation of Iran and Brazil and announced new financial and investment regulations in Brazil are under preparation and announced readiness for all-out cooperation.

The participants also called for interaction between Iran's Trade Promotion Organization with Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (Apex-Brasil).

## Iran-Australia SpikoGen COVID Vaccine Gets Authorized



**TEHRAN (IP) – Iran's Food and Drug Administration authorized the SpikoGen COVID vaccine as a booster dose of all vaccines, said the project's scientific director.**

In a meeting held on Monday, Saghar Barati stated: "The results of clinical studies on SpikoGen COVID vaccine indicate that the vaccine has produced a robust immune response in 87% of recipients."

"The vaccine has been proved to be safe with an acceptable degree of tolerability, according to the results of the second phase of clinical trials," she noted.

"As a booster dose, SpikoGen vaccine induced a re-immune response and an increase in the mean concentration of antibodies," she added.

She said the first phase of the tests on the SpikoGen vaccine had been carried out in Australia, and the second and third phases began simultaneously in Iran.

She went on to highlight that the vaccine did not show any severe or specific side effects in the second and third stages of its clinical trial and can be used as a booster shot.

"Iran has already granted emergency use authorization to PastroCoVac COVID vaccine, produced jointly by Iran's Pasteur Institute and Cuba's Finlay Institute," Barati reiterated.

SpikoGen is a recombinant protein-based COVID-19 vaccine developed by South Australian-based biotech company Vaxine, collaborating with the Iranian company CinnaGen.

The health official stated that the SpikoGen vaccine enjoys all European standards.

The project's lead researcher also pointed out that the vaccine has no age limits for people, either healthy or with any pre-existing diseases.

"The vaccine yet takes time to get WHO's approval," Payam Tabarsi highlighted.

## Belgian Companies Ready for Participation in Construction Projects in Iran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN – A member of the Iran-Belgium Joint Chamber of Commerce says in case the Iranian government decides to import modern and advanced technologies from European companies, the chamber will do its best to participate in the construction boom in Iran.**

Speaking to IRNA, Vahik Shahinian referred to the readiness of the Belgian construction industries for presence in Iran's construction market, adding that presence of Belgian construction industries in Iran's market dates back to 2008 with holding a seminar on construction based on Iranian-Belgian methods with the presence of the then Belgian Ambassador and concurrent with the launch of the Mehr Housing Project in Iran.

He added that Belgian companies have shown in action that they are willing to cooperate in the housing and construction projects in Iran with the advanced technologies and investment but at that time it was not welcomed seriously by the Iranian side.

Shahinian noted that the main task of the chamber is to set up several plants related to the construction and using advanced technologies to reduce the human error. He emphasized that in the field of participation for construction of housing units, the chamber is ready to study the offered requests by Iran.

He said currently using the modern technology in construction and ready-made industrial parts are the solution for construction industry in Iran and through using these methods, the country can construct huge amount of houses in the shortest time.

Shahinian who is the CEO of Iran-Belgium Construction Company added that through these technologies, it can insure the safety of the buildings against the earthquakes while the country is located on the earthquake belt.

He noted that using these technologies have many profits for this industry like increasing the longevity of the buildings.

He went on to say that the big country of Iran needs a genuine and direct cooperation with big powers of production and big successful technologists in the construction sector in order to manage at best its accumulated construction and housing demands and such a great opportunity should not be missed.

## Ministries in Talks With Chinese To Implement 25-Year Deal

**TEHRAN (MNA) – The Iranian economy minister said Sunday that Iranian ministries are negotiating with the Chinese side to reach shared deals to implement the 25-year strategic partnership signed between two nations last year.**

Iranian economy minister Ehsan Khandouzi pointed to the announcement by the Iranian foreign minister's statement that implementation of the 25 strategic partnership between Iran and China has begun and said on Sunday that the implementation the 25-year long-term memorandum requires deals at lower levels at the level of ministries and economic sectors.

"Now, each one of the ministries such as industry, energy, oil, ministries, have entered into negotiations with the Chinese side in areas related to them, in order to reach shared contracts," the economy minister said.

Khandouzi added after the beginning of these contracts the anticipated investment and growth will become a reality.

"To my knowledge, these deals have not yet reached the stage of final conclusion and implementation, and this issue required the initial negotiations that were made during FM Amir-Abdollahian's recent visit to China and the talks he had with his Chinese counterpart."



## Relief of the Deprivation Camp of the International Charity Foundation of the Waterfall of Emotions

### Empathy in the flood of Kerman province in January 1400

**T**he director of the deprivation camp, Ms. Fatemeh Choupani, explained in an interview about the latest situation in the flooded areas in the south of Kerman province and how the International Charity Foundation of the Waterfall of Emotions is taking care of this province in an interview: In the last few days, we have witnessed almost unprecedented rain in the southern regions of Kerman province, so that floods have occurred in the southern cities of this province, and this amount of rain could have caused great damage to the housing and life of the people in this area. Unfortunately, the deprivation camp of the International Charity Foundation, Abshar Atefeha, according to the announced mission, rushed to help the flood victims in the region. They sent warm clothes, etc., and it should be mentioned that this aid amounts to 20 billion.

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## Iran Unveils Over 55 Nano Products

**TEHRAN (IFP) – More than 50 Iranian nanotechnology products were unveiled during the opening ceremony of an exhibition in the Iranian capital of Tehran on Monday.**

Iran's Vice President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari and head of Iran Nanotechnology Innovation Council, Saied Sarkar, attended the inauguration ceremony of the exhibition displaying the country's latest achievements in the nanotechnology sector.

According to the IRIB reporter, more than 400 nano products have been put into display in the four-day exhibition.

The newly-unveiled nano products will meet the domestic needs in medical, industrial, aviation, and construction sectors.

More than 450 knowledge-based and industrial companies in Iran have so far produced over 800 types of nano goods. Parts of these items are exported to more than 40 countries.

## Iran's Exports Value Top \$40b in First 9 Months

**TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran's Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade said that country's export value has exceeded \$40 billion since the beginning of the current year in 1400 (started March 21, 2021) up to the present time (Jan. 15, 2022).**

Speaking at a meeting on Sunday, Seyyed Reza Fatemi Amin Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade put the country's exports value last year in 1399 (ended March 20, 2021) at \$35 billion.

He said that Iran exported more than \$40 billion worth of products overseas since the outset of the current year up to the present time, expandable to \$45 billion before termination of the current year (to end March 20, 2022).

With Almighty God's help, country's exports will boom next year (to start March 21, 2022), the minister emphasized.



## Suez Canal Expansion Due To Finish in July 2023

DUBAI (Dispatches) - A project to expand parts of the Suez Canal is expected to be completed after two years of work in July 2023, the chairman of the Suez Canal Authority (SCA) said on Sunday.

The SCA announced accelerated plans to extend a second channel of the canal and to enlarge an existing channel after the Ever Given container ship ran aground and blocked the waterway for six days last year.

"The project will be completed in 24 months. We started in July 2021 and God willing we will finish in July 2023," Chairman Osama Rabie said on the sidelines of an event in Dubai.



## Mali's Ousted President Keita Dies at 76

BAMAKO (Dispatches) - Former Malian president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, who was ousted by the military in 2020 after a turbulent seven-year rule, has died, officials said on Sunday. He was 76.

Known by his initials IBK, Keita ran the West African country from September 2013 to August 2020, when Islamist insurgents overran large areas, draining his popularity.

Disputed legislative elections, rumors of corruption, and a sputtering economy also fuelled public anger and drew tens of thousands of people onto the streets of the capital Bamako demanding his resignation in 2020.

He was eventually forced out by a military coup, the leaders of which still rule Mali despite strong international objections.



## Ukraine Has Evidence Russia Behind Cyberattack



KIEV (Dispatches) - Ukraine said Sunday it had "evidence" that Russia was behind a massive cyberattack that knocked out key government websites this past week, while Microsoft warned the hack could be far worse than first thought.

Tensions are at an all-time high between Ukraine and Russia, which Kyiv accuses of having massed troops on its border ahead of a possible invasion. Some analysts fear the cyberattack could be the prelude to a military attack.

On Friday, Washington also accused Russia of sending saboteurs trained in explosives to stage an incident that could be the pretext to invade its pro-Western neighbour. "All the evidence points to Russia being behind the cyberattack," the Ukrainian digital transformation ministry said in a statement. "Moscow is continuing to wage a hybrid war."

The ministry urged Ukrainians not to panic, saying their personal information was protected. The purpose of the attack, it added, "is not only to intimidate society. But to also destabilize the situation in Ukraine, halting the work of the public sector and crushing Ukrainians' trust in the authorities".

The Kremlin earlier rejected the claims and said there was no evidence Russia was behind the attack.

"We have nothing to do with it. Russia has nothing to do with these cyberattacks," President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, told CNN.

"Ukrainians are blaming everything on Russia, even their bad weather in their country," he said in English.

Kyiv said late Friday it had uncovered preliminary clues that Russian security services could have been behind the cyberattack.

Ukraine's SBU security service said the attacks in the early hours of Friday had targeted a total of 70 government websites.

The website of the foreign ministry for a time displayed a message in Ukrainian, Russian and Polish that said "be afraid and expect the worst."

Within hours of the breach, the security service said access to most affected sites had been restored and that the fallout was minimal.

But Microsoft warned Sunday that the cyberattack could prove destructive and affect more organisations than initially feared.

The U.S. software giant said it continued to analyze the malware and warned it could render government digital infrastructure inoperable.

"The malware, which is designed to look like ransomware but lacking a ransom recovery mechanism, is intended to be destructive and designed to render targeted devices inoperable rather than to obtain a ransom," Microsoft said in a blog post.

Microsoft said it had not so far identified a culprit but warned that the number of affected organisations could prove larger than initially thought.

"Our investigation teams have identified the malware on dozens of impacted systems and that number could grow as our investigation continues," it said.

## Hostages Freed After Standoff at Texas Synagogue, Gunman Dead

TEXAS (Dispatches) - All four people who were held hostage at a synagogue in the U.S. state of Texas have been safely released, more than 10 hours after a gunman disrupted a religious service and began a tense standoff with police.

Members of the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team stormed the Congregation Beth Israel on Saturday evening to free remaining hostages after one captive was released unharmed earlier in the day.

Local reporters said they heard the sound of explosions and gunfire, shortly before Texas Governor Greg Abbott announced the crisis was over.

"Prayers answered. All hostages are out alive and safe," Abbott said on Twitter.

Colleyville Police Chief Michael Miller said the gunman had died, but authorities declined to confirm the cause of his death.

The FBI said they had established the gunman's identity but said they would not disclose it.



## Somalia Gov't Spokesman Wounded in Blast in Capital

MOGADISHU (Dispatches) - Somalia's government spokesperson was wounded in an explosion in the capital in a suspected suicide bomber attack, state-run media reported.

A photographer at the scene of the blast on Sunday reported seeing body parts lying on the ground outside the house of Mohamed Ibrahim Moalimuu, who was rushed to a hospital.

State-run Somali National News Agency said the explosion at a junction of a Mogadishu road was from a suicide bomber.

"A suicide bomber targeted the government spokesman who is now being treated in hospital for his injuries from the blast," police spokesman Abdifatah Aden told Reuters news agency.

Nasra Bashir Ali, state media special correspondent in the prime minister's office, where Moalimuu is based, said on Twitter he did not suffer life-threatening injuries in the attack, which targeted him as he was passing in his vehicle.

Reporting from Mogadishu, Al Jazeera's Jamae Nour said it was not the first time Moalimuu, a former journalist, had been targeted in an assassination attempt.

"According to a statement from the national news agency, Moalimuu was attacked by a person wearing a suicide belt. The attacker detonated the belt near Moalimuu when he was leaving his residence," said Nour.

It was not immediately clear who was behind the attack.

Al-Shabab - an al-Qaeda-linked armed group fighting to overthrow the country's UN-backed government - often claims responsibility for attacks around Somalia.

It has been widely expected violence would increase as tensions rise in Somalia over a national election that has been delayed for almost a year.

"Such attacks are purely politically motivated actions," said Mohamed Abdulaziz Omar, a local civil society activist, adding it also occurred in past elections in the Horn of Africa nation.

Somalia's allies and international observers have expressed alarm over an escalating power struggle between the country's president and prime minister.

The incident was first reported to the Colleyville Police Department at 10:41am local time (16:41 GMT) on Saturday, during the Shabbat service, which was being broadcast online.

The police deployed SWAT teams and evacuated residents of the area.

FBI Dallas Special Agent Matt DeSarno said the four hostages - who included a local rabbi - did not need medical attention and would soon be reunited with their families.

"He did not harm them in any way," he said.

The officials said the hostage-taker was heard demanding the release of Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani neuroscientist who was sentenced in 2010 to 86 years in prison on charges that she assaulted and shot at U.S. military officers after being detained in Afghanistan.

The punishment had sparked outrage in Pakistan among political leaders and her supporters, who viewed her as victimized by the American criminal justice system. Siddiqui is in federal prison in Texas.

## Trump Rallies Faithful in Arizona

FLORENCE (Dispatches) - Donald Trump delivered a crowd-pleasing speech to thousands of adoring supporters in Arizona Saturday, insisting yet again that he won the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

Some of the faithful had arrived in the area days in advance from as far away as Florida or Texas, waiting to hear him trot out a familiar list of grievances.

They were soon rewarded. "We are done having our lives controlled by politicians in Washington. We are done with the mandates," he said. "The radical Democrats want to turn the United States into a communist country."

"We won those elections. We won them big. We can't let them get away with it."

Earlier speakers had kept to similar themes, slamming President Joe Biden as "weak" and "deranged," and taking aim at the "lamestream media," who were duly booed by the crowd.

It was a greatest hits of Trumpism, playing all the expected notes: a stolen election, the unfairness of the media, open borders and how the United States has become "a laughing stock all over the world."

There was a carnival feeling for much of the day.

Flags proclaiming "Trump 2020" and "Trump 2024" fluttered in the desert wind, as chants of

"Let's Go Brandon" erupted from the good-natured crowd.

The slogan has become code in right-wing circles after a news reporter mistook coarse anti-Biden chants.

"It's just a party atmosphere," said Jonathan Riches, who was attending his 40th Trump rally.

"It's almost like a MAGA Woodstock. It's patriots from around the country getting together for the common good of this country. We love our president."

Jennifer Winterbauer, who was first in line to get into the rally, said she had come to hear "the truth" from Trump. "He always gives the truth about everything. The economy, the state of the world, the United States."

Trump abandoned a pledged press conference on January 6 -- the anniversary of the invasion of the Capitol by his supporters -- and the rally is his first outing in front of a large crowd since October.

As is customary, Trump proclaimed it to be "the biggest" crowd that went "further than the eye can see," though accurate figures on attendance were not immediately available.

In the lead up to his election win in 2016, and throughout his presidency, tens of thousands of supporters would throng venues to hear him speak.

But crowds have since dwindled, and Saturday's turnout appeared to be far below those of earlier rallies.



## Portugal's Socialists Widen Gap Over Opposition Ahead of Election



LISBON (Dispatches) - Portugal's ruling Socialists extended their lead in a new poll on Sunday, two weeks before a snap election, widening the gap between them and the main opposition party, the Social Democrats.

The survey, carried out by pollsters Aximage for newspapers Jornal de Noticias, Diario de Noticias and radio station TSF, gave the current premier Antonio Costa's PS party a 38.1% share of the vote, up from 35.4% last month.

It still leaves PS short of a majority, which under the proportional representation system, equates to between 42% and 45% of the vote.

The poll put the Social Democrats (PSD), led by Rui Rio, at 28.5%, down from 33.2% in December. PS and PSD are now separated by around 10 percentage points, according to the survey.

In October, Costa's two former allies - the Communists and the Left Bloc - sided with right-wing parties to reject the minority government's budget bill, triggering the snap election set for Jan.30.

If PS fails to win a majority they will need the support of one or more parties to pass legislation.

The Left Bloc and the Communists saw support at 7.4% and 4.8% respectively in the Aximage poll.

In a debate last week, Costa said an alliance between the three was no longer possible but signalled he might seek support from the People-Animals-Nature party. Aximage's poll gave them 2.1% of the vote.

Analysts say the election alone might not solve the political impasse as no party or workable alliance is likely to achieve a stable majority.

According to the poll, which surveyed 807 people on Jan. 6 to Jan. 12 with a margin of error of 3.45%, far-right party Chega would become the country's third largest party, polling at 9%, up from 6.2% in December.



**Shanon**  
(adviser)

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fireplace  
Fully Furn

**Pasdaran Villa (\$2500)**  
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5bdrs, S/p, S  
J, balcony  
green yard  
Fully Furn

**Parsian**

**Kamranieh (\$2400)**  
230sq.m, 3bdrs  
S/p, S, J, & F.F

**Darrous (\$2600)**  
3bdrs, S/p, S, J, F.F

**Niavaran (\$2300)**  
3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F

**Jordan (\$1500)**  
3bdrs, balcony, F.F

**Zaferanieh Apt (\$2000)**  
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## UK Gov't to Cut Funding for BBC

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain's government will cut the BBC's funding by ordering a two-year freeze on the fee that people pay to watch the broadcaster, the Mail on Sunday reported.

The future of the license-payer funded British Broadcasting Corporation is a perpetual topic of political debate, with Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government most recently suggesting its funding needs to be reformed.

Set against an inflation rate expected to reach a 30-year high of 6% or more in April, freezing the license cost at its current 159 pounds (\$217.40) would provide some relief to consumers battling sharply rising costs of living.



## China's Economy Grew 8% In 2021

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's economy expanded at its fastest pace for 10 years in 2021, according to an AFP poll of analysts, but its strong recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic is threatened by Omicron and a property sector slowdown.

The eight percent growth would be well above the government's target of more than six percent, and comes on the back of a strong start to the year as a "zero-Covid" policy allowed the country to lead the global economic recovery.

China's exports surged nearly 30 percent last year on solid global demand as countries reopened from pandemic lockdowns, boosting its stuttering economy. But the country's recovery in the second half of 2021 was hobbled by a series of outbreaks -- with officials reimposing strict containment measures -- as well as power outages caused by an emissions-reduction drive, supply chain problems and surging energy costs.

While the forecast marks a healthy annual tick -- up from 2.3 percent in 2020 -- those issues put a dampener on factory activity and led to businesses shuttering.

They were compounded by a crackdown on debt in the property sector, which accounts for a huge part of the economy.

"Key factors... were the impact of power shortages, the residential construction sector slowdown and moderating retail sales," said Rajiv Biswas, Asia-Pacific chief economist at IHS Markit.

The analysts tipped growth of just 3.5 percent on-year for the fourth quarter, down from 4.9 percent the previous three months and 7.9 percent from April-June.

And headwinds from the construction sector slowdown, as well as the impact of Covid measures on consumer spending, will likely pose a "significant drag" on growth this year, Biswas added.

Beijing has been on high alert as it prepares to host the Winter Olympics next month, with its zero-Covid policy powering lockdowns, border restrictions and lengthy quarantines.

"The current coronavirus resurgence presents large downside risks to China's economic recovery... amid the government's zero-tolerance approach," said ANZ Research's chief economist for Greater China Raymond Yeung.

Yeung noted that Ningbo port, the world's third-busiest, faced disruptions as cases led to truck entry restrictions, suspended container freight operations and roadblocks.

"These delays and backlogs could exacerbate the inflation in shipping costs as well as exert pressure on export volumes," he told AFP.

Another major port city -- Tianjin -- was hit by an Omicron cluster in January, the first time the virus strain was found in the community in China.

Analysts expect that China will not ease up on its policy until after the Games conclude.

Stay-at-home orders in industrial hub Xi'an likely disrupted manufacturing activities too, said Citibank, with the city of 13 million placed under a harsh lockdown in December.

Uncertainties surrounding the property sector have also accelerated cooling in fixed-asset investment, said DBS Bank economists, adding that "strain will linger in the face of mounting financial stress".

## PGCC Economic Recovery Will Gather Pace in 2022

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Economic recoveries in the Persian Gulf region will continue to gather pace this year, driven by the oil sector as OPEC+ continues to raise its oil production quota, say economists.

"GDP growth in the Persian Gulf will be stronger than most expect this year on the back of rising oil output... With fiscal policy being kept tight and interest rates set to rise in line with the U.S. Federal Reserve, there will be some headwinds to non-oil sector recoveries. Even so, we think that GDP growth in the Persian Gulf will surpass consensus expectations," said James Swanston, economist for the Mena region at Capital Economics.

It's expected that global oil supply will increase strongly this year on the back of OPEC+ raising its output quota as well as some U.S. supply coming back online.

"Coming alongside only a modest improvement in global oil demand, this will probably push the oil market back into a surplus this year and put downwards pressure on prices. The result is that we expect Brent crude to drop from around \$84 per barrel now to \$60 per barrel by the end of the year," said Swanston.

Mohamed Damak, senior director of financial services at S&P, said (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) economies are recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, thanks to higher oil prices, still supportive government spending, and normalizing non-oil activity.

James Swanston added that governments in the Persian Gulf suggested that fiscal policy could be loosened if oil prices remained high. For example, Saudi Arabia hinted at a cut to the value-added tax (VAT) rate.



## IMF Official Urges Deep Reforms to Tunisian Economy

TUNIS (AFP) - Tunisia's crisis-stricken economy needs "deep reforms" such as slashing its vast public wage bill, the International Monetary Fund's outgoing country chief has said as the government seeks a new bailout.

Jerome Vacher, speaking in an interview at the end of his three-year term as the global lender's envoy to the North African country, said the coronavirus pandemic had helped create Tunisia's "worst recession since independence" in 1956.

"The country had pre-existing problems, in particular budget deficits and public debt, which have worsened," he said.

Tunisia's debts have soared to nearly 100 percent of Gross Domestic Product.

Its GDP plunged by almost nine percent in 2020, the worst rate in North Africa, only modestly offset by a three percent bounceback last year.

That is "quite weak and far from enough" to create jobs to counteract an unemployment rate of 18 percent, Vacher said. He said young graduates face particular challenges in finding work, despite the country being able to offer "a qualified workforce and a favorable geographic location".

Since dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was toppled by mass protests in 2011, Tunisia's troubled democratic transition has failed to revive the economy.

President Kais Saied sacked the government and suspended parliament on July 25 last year, and the government has since asked the IMF for a bailout package -- the fourth since the revolution.

Tunisian authorities say they are optimistic about reaching a deal by the end of this quarter.

Vacher said discussions are still at an early stage and that the IMF first wants "to understand what they're planning in terms of economic reforms".

## India Will Be World's Tech, Economic Powerhouse in 2047

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Jitendra Singh on Saturday said when India turns 100 in the year 2047, it would evolve beyond imagination "as the things have been moving so fast that in next 25 years, the country will be the world's technological and economic powerhouse".

Chairing the first-ever meeting of sectoral experts to deliberate on Vision India at 2047 from the Governance perspective, organized by Department of Administrative Reforms (DARPG), Singh further said that several initiatives, policies, schemes and programs during the last seven years have given rise to a new era, in what has been described as the dawn of New India, and the emergence of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's exhortation from the ramparts of Red Fort on August 15, 2021, the Minister said India's 'Can Do' generation can achieve every goal imaginable.

Pointing out that the government has tried to ensure digital infrastructure as a core utility to every citizen by providing unique digital identity, access to common service centres, he also said that it has provided thousands of services on Demand by seamless integration of services across Departments/Ministries.

"The unprecedented scale at which several programs have been implemented like One Nation One Ration Card, e-Office, Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS), Passport SevaKendras, e-Hospital reflect in the government's willingness to adopt 'Building to scale Building to last' approach where Reforms are deep rooted and long lasting.", Singh noted.

During the meeting, the DARPG Secretary V Srinivas informed that in 2021, DARPG has strived to adopt the Whole of Government Approach in implementing 3 critical campaigns aimed at deepening administrative reforms. The initiative for Increasing Efficiency in Decision Making envisaged reducing the channels of submission, financial delegation, operationalization of e-Office version 7.0, Digitization of Central Registration Units and Operationalization of Desk Officer System in all Ministries/ Departments.

## Turkey Will See Single-Digit Inflation by Mid-2023

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish Treasury and Finance Minister Nureddin Nebati has reiterated the view that Turkey's annual inflation will fall to single digits by the time presidential and parliamentary elections set for mid-2023 are held.

Nebati's remarks came two days after he said inflation would peak in January, months earlier than predicted, and start to fall from May, before reaching single digits by June 2023.

The consumer price index (CPI) surged to a 19-year high of 36.1% in December, the highest annual reading since September 2002, driven by last year's slide in the Turkish lira and rising global commodity prices.

Speaking to heads of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Istanbul, Nebati said Turkey's only problem now was high inflation, and the volatility in the lira's exchange rate had settled.

"With fiscal policies and the steps that we will take, we will enter the elections ... next year with single-digit inflation," Nebati said.

"We will all experience, see the change after the first quarter (of 2022)," he said about inflation.

Government officials have promised to bring inflation down quickly. Yet, some analysts see it remaining high through the year.

A central bank survey of market participants on Friday showed inflation would still be around 30% at the end of this year.

The survey showed annual consumer price inflation was expected to be 29.75% at the end of 2022.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan last week pledged to tame the surging consumer prices, stressing that inflation figures were not in line with economic realities in Turkey and he hoped to see the benefits of Ankara's economic policy in the summer.

Erdoğan stressed that the government's measures would soon soften the burden of "unjust" price hikes.

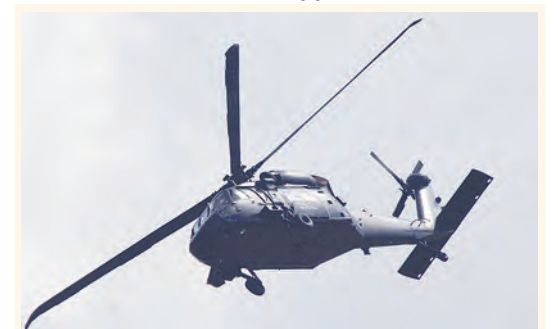
The lira depreciation and soaring global commodity prices have been the main drivers of the rise in consumer prices.

The currency weakened 44% last year, with volatility calmed last month after the government unveiled a scheme to safeguard lira deposits against currency volatility.

The lira had fallen to a record low of 18.4 against the United States dollar in December before rebounding sharply the week before last after Erdoğan announced the scheme to encourage savers to convert deposits from foreign exchange, compensating depositors for any losses due to lira depreciation.

Nebati said on Saturday the de-dollarization trend and conversion of foreign exchange holdings to the lira will accelerate in the coming weeks.

## Philippines to Buy 32 New Black Hawk Choppers in \$620m Deal



MANILA (Dispatches) - The Philippines will buy 32 S-70i Black Hawk helicopters, the country's defense chief said Sunday, in its latest big-ticket purchase to upgrade its aging military artillery.

For the past decade, Manila has been trying to modernize its run-down military equipment featuring Vietnam War-era helicopters and World War II naval vessels used by the United States.

The first of the 32 S-70i Black Hawks from Poland-based Sikorsky Aircraft subsidiary PZL Mielec, a firm owned by the U.S. defense manufacturer Lockheed Martin, will begin to arrive next year, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said on Facebook.

He said that the remaining units will be delivered in three batches, 10 units in 2024, 10 units in 2025 and seven units in 2026. The deal worth more than \$620 million will beef up the Philippines' existing fleet of 12.

Lorenzana said a notice of award was issued on Dec. 28 to purchase brand-new helicopters under a project that comes with logistics support and a training package for pilots and maintenance crew.

The aircraft was needed for humanitarian assistance and disaster response, he said.

"The lack of transport planes and helicopters have never been more acute during the pandemic and in the aftermath of Typhoon Odette," Lorenzana said, using the local name of Typhoon Rai, which left more than 400 people dead and caused widespread devastation when it hit the country in December.

"This was exacerbated by our aging Hueys that have become uneconomical to maintain."

Rai, last year's 15th and deadliest typhoon to hit the Philippines, caused widespread damage in central and southern regions of the country.

The United Nations' Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on Sunday said in a statement that hundreds of thousands of people still need food and clean water, shelter and protection support, one month after the world's second-deadliest disaster of 2021 hit the Philippines.



## Iran, UN Officials Discuss Latest Developments in Yemen

TEHRAN (IP) - Senior Advisor to the Iranian Foreign Minister, in a phone call with United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg, called lifting siege as a prelude to solve Yemen's crisis. Pointing out that the Yemenis make the final decision on the fate of their country, Ali-Asghar Khaji stated: "The lifting of the oppressive siege will be the prelude to a political solution to the Yemeni crisis."

He underlined the role of the United Nations in the Yemeni crisis, noting that "distrust" has hampered the progress of the talks. He pointed out that rebuilding trust should be accompanied by practical measures, especially in humanitarian affairs. Hans Grundberg also said that by assessing different points of view, he intends to consider the concerns of various Yemeni groups in his plans.



## Long Road to Malaysia's Tourism Recovery

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the tourism industry pumped some RM86 billion into Malaysia in 2019, providing 3.6 million jobs across the country.

But the coronavirus outbreak brought the whole industry screeching to a halt. Countries around the world raced against time to inoculate their population against the virus, and this has helped bring the number of cases down significantly.

But as tourism saw some signs of recovery, a highly contagious Omicron variant was detected, setting the industry further back on its road to recovery.

The Oriental Daily interviewed several tourism industry players to get a better understanding of the current state of this key sector in the Malaysian economy.

Mint Leong, the acting chairperson of the Malaysian Inbound Tourism Association, said the uncertainty of the pandemic has made the industry unable to chart the way forward.

According to her, the local inbound tourism operators had, at first, planned to roll out several promotional activities in 2022 for tourism. However, due to the rise of the Omicron variant, many of these projects had to be readjusted or put on hold.

Leong said although Malaysia's current tourism sector is experiencing some recovery, the climate is still far from conducive to a full recovery.

"Every stage of recovery has been short-lived. Progress flattens out and then recovery begins again before being flattened. This unpredictable state is far from conducive to the overall recovery of the tourism sector."

She said if the government does not aggressively push for the reopening of our borders, the inbound tourism industry will continue to suffer.

Malaysian Association of Hotels CEO Yap Lip Seng agreed that the hotel industry in the country is in urgent need of foreign tourists. The market demand from domestic tourists is not enough to sustain the local hotel industry.

According to the association, before the pandemic, the average occupancy rate of hotels in Malaysia in 2019 was 64 percent. After the movement control order (MCO) was implemented in 2020, the average occupancy rate for hotels nationwide plunged by half to just 32 percent.

"We were expecting a better recovery in 2021, not knowing that it would end up worse since another MCO was imposed from January to October and interstate travel was only recently allowed," Yap said.

He explained that at present, hotels in the country have high occupancy rates only on weekends or in areas with popular tourist attractions like Langkawi and Penang - but not elsewhere.

Malindo Air CEO Mushafiz Mustafa Bakri said all airline companies had been hit hard by this unprecedented pandemic.

Malindo Air's revenue in March 2020 had tumbled by 95 percent compared to that of the previous year.

He told the Oriental Daily that due to the sharp drop in revenue, the airline was forced to downsize and major adjustments were made, including the reduction of aircraft and employees to cut costs.

"We returned 20 Boeing 777s and three ATR-72s. Without these aircraft in service, we had to lay off some employees either through termination or a Voluntary Separation Scheme (VSS). This has had a significant impact on our operations since 2020," Mushafiz said.

He said the aviation industry is very concerned about the government's actions and response to the new Omicron variant.

The industry hopes the government and Asean will discuss the establishment of more Vaccinated Travel Lane (VTL) to unify the cross-border tourism policies of various countries, he added.

In an effort to control the spread of the coronavirus outbreak across borders, Malaysia shuttered its international borders for nearly two years.



The exceptions are the Langkawi tourism bubble, which was only opened to foreign tourists in the second half of 2021, and the VTL between Malaysia and Singapore.

Leong pointed out that the Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry must take the lead in the recovery of the industry.

"The policy has to start with the government... We hope that the travel bubble in Langkawi can be extended to other places, quarantine should be reduced from seven to five days.

"This safer environment will be able to help inbound tourism operators bring more customers in," she said.

On the other hand, Yap said the Malaysian Association of Hotels has repeatedly suggested that the Asean Tourism Association introduce a single visa for Asean countries to attract more foreign tourists.

He explained that tourists holding this visa should be allowed unimpeded travel to the 10 ASEAN countries without having to apply for separate visas, thus allowing more tourists to visit these countries.

Yap said that this strategy is similar to the one adopted in European countries and can be an excellent strategy for the Malaysian tourism industry which has been highly dependent on foreign tourists and their high spending power.

Tourism is inseparable from travel. As such, the recovery of the tourism industry is directly connected to freedom of movement.

Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Nancy Shukri said with Malaysia on the road to becoming one of the countries with the best vaccination rates in the world, the Langkawi tourism bubble and VTL can potentially attract foreign travellers.

In a written reply to questions from the Oriental Daily, Nancy pointed out that as of Dec 21, 2021, over 600,000 domestic and foreign tourists have visited Langkawi with tourism revenue reaching RM640 million.

As of Dec 22, 2021, 1,089 tourists have visited Langkawi via the tourism bubble, including tourists from the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, China, Germany, Indonesia and Thailand.

In the aftermath of the pandemic, health and safety will become important factors in attracting tourists who prefer destinations with good infrastructure, proper medical facilities and compliance with standards for cleanliness, health and safety, she said.

Citing Tourism Malaysia's survey on domestic travel in Malaysia last year, Nancy said most respondents revealed that Covid-19 had affected their travel behaviour.

### Tehran Urges U.S...

FROM PAGE 1

"Blinken knows better than anyone that every country has a B Plan for itself and that Iran's Plan B may not be very appealing to them. They need to make every effort to show that they have the necessary will and capacity for a Plan A," he remarked.

Khatibzadeh said that in the draft texts, "many of the tables and columns are ready and some of the parentheses were omitted," adding that the negotiators have reached agreements on most ideas, which are currently being turned into written words.

What remains, Khatibzadeh explained, are key issues that require specific political decisions. "Washington needs to announce its decisions on the remaining issues," he stated.

"If this happens, we will be heading toward a lasting agreement at a good pace," the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman added.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman also urged the United States to stop what he termed as its "bullying behavior" and fulfill its international obligations instead.

"Significant disagreements remain in Vienna, and the most important one is the insufficient speed of the other sides, especially the United States," Khatibzadeh said.

He added that great progress has also been made "on technical issues, but on the issue of sanctions removal, talks have been subject to political decisions that have been delayed on the other side."

Elsewhere during his Monday presser, Khatibzadeh touched upon President Ebrahim Raisi's upcoming visit to Russia, saying the trip will be of great importance and in line with his administration's balanced foreign policy.

He noted that Raisi will confer with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on political, economic, and social topics.

### Iran's Homegrown...

FROM PAGE 1

On September 1, 2021, the IRIADF unveiled a homemade state-of-the-art 3D radar dubbed Alborz, which is capable of intercepting and detecting long-range stealth flying objects designed to have a low radar cross-section.

The system reportedly boasts a range of 450 kilometers (248 miles) and can detect 300 targets simultaneously.

A few days later, the IRIADF unveiled a 3D phased-array radar system called Kashef-99 (Discoverer-99), which is capable of detecting small flying objects.

Kashef-99 is said to be able to detect dozens of targets at the same time within a range of 12 kilometers (7.4 miles).

### World Bank Revises...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran recorded a higher growth in GDP last year compared to Saudi Arabia, according to the latest World Bank report which showed the world's largest oil exporter had a GDP growth of 2.4% in 2021.

Iran's economic growth was on par with a regional average of 3.1% reported for the Middle east and North Africa, showed the report.

The report revised up its growth forecasts for Iran for 2022 by 0.2% to 2.4% while revising down the country's GDP forecast for 2023 by 0.1% to 2.2%.

### Sri Lanka-Iran...

FROM PAGE 1

The United Nations had imposed sanctions on Iran a few years ago but allowed Iran to import food products like tea, and India to import petroleum products. Later, India and Iran agreed on a Vostro payment mechanism, through which a portion of oil import proceeds was converted to rupees and then to rupees. UCO Bank was authorized to deal with all payments in rupees. Gradually, India established itself as the largest tea exporter to Iran, replacing Sri Lanka, which did not have any special payment mechanism in place with Iran.

The system was severely affected when the U.S. imposed further restrictions on Iran and oil imports were stopped after May 2019. The Vostro account thus shrank and since end-2019 payments were severely affected. The Central Bank of Iran restricted rupee allocations and all payments were delayed for a long time.

"The situation is unlikely to improve unless India starts importing oil from Iran. As of now, there is no clarity on the issue," said Agarwal.

India's tea exports in the first 10 months of 2021 fell 8.7% year-on-year to 157.20 million kg and the figure is unlikely to have crossed 180 million in the entire 2021, according to industry executives.

## Huge Tonga Volcanic Eruption Caused Significant Damage

WELLINGTON (Dispatches) - A massive volcanic eruption in Tonga that triggered tsunami waves around the Pacific caused "significant damage" to the island nation's capital and smothered it in dust, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said.

The eruption Saturday was so powerful it was recorded around the world, triggering a tsunami that flooded Pacific coastlines from Japan to the United States.

The capital Nuku'alofa suffered "significant" damage, Ardern said, adding there had been no reports of injury of death but a full assessment was not yet possible with communication lines down.

"The tsunami has had a significant impact on the foreshore on the northern side of Nuku'alofa with boats and large boulders washed ashore," Ardern said after contact with the New Zealand embassy in Tonga.

"Nuku'alofa is covered in a thick film of volcanic dust but otherwise conditions are calm and stable."

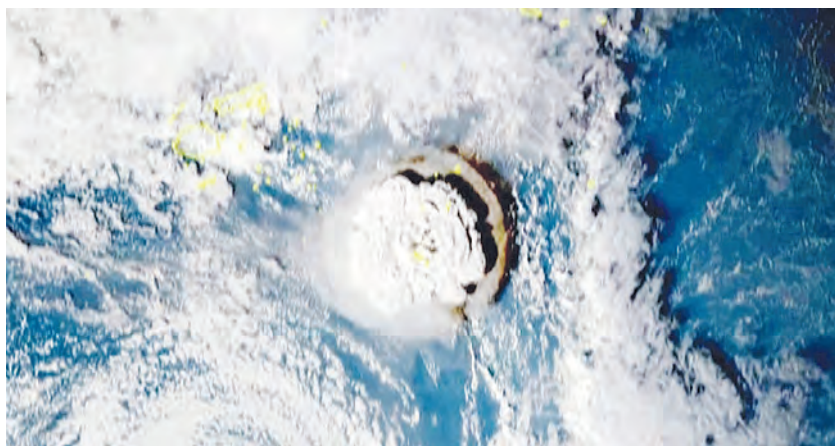
However, there has been no word on damage in the outer islands and New Zealand will send an air force reconnaissance aircraft "as soon as atmospheric conditions allow," the NZ Defence Force tweeted.

"We're working hard to see how we can assist our Pacific neighbours after the volcanic eruption near Tonga."

The United States was "deeply concerned for the people of Tonga," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, pledging support for the island nation.

A 1.2 metre wave swept ashore in the Tongan capital with locals reporting they had fled to higher ground, leaving behind flooded houses, some with structural damage, and with small stones and ash falling from the sky.

"It was massive, the ground shook, our house was shaking. It came in waves. My younger brother thought



bombs were exploding nearby," resident Mere Taufu told the Stuff news website Saturday.

She said water filled their home minutes later and she saw the wall of a neighbouring house collapse.

"We just knew straight away it was a tsunami. Just water gushing into our home.

"You could just hear screams everywhere, people screaming for safety, for everyone to get to higher ground."

Tonga's King Tupou VI was reported to have been evacuated from the Royal Palace in Nuku'alofa and taken by police convoy to a villa well away from the coastline.

Dramatic satellite images showed the long, rumbling eruption of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano spew smoke and ash in the air, with a thunderous roar heard 10,000 kilometres (6,000 miles) away in Alaska.

The eruption triggered tsunamis across the Pacific with waves of 1.74 metres (five and a half feet) measured in Chanaral, Chile, more than 10,000 kilometres away, and smaller waves seen along the Pacific coast from Alaska to Mexico.

Waves of around 1.2 metres (four feet) hit along Japan's Pacific coast.

By 0300 GMT Sunday, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii said the threat from the eruption had passed.

The U.S. Geological Survey recorded Saturday's eruption as equivalent to a 5.8-magnitude earthquake at zero depth.

The volcano's eruption lasted at least eight minutes and sent plumes of gas, ash and smoke several kilometers into the air.

New Zealand scientist Marco Brenna, a senior lecturer at Otago University's School of Geology, described the impact of the eruption as "relatively mild" but said another eruption with a much bigger impact could not be ruled out.

The eruption was so powerful it was even heard in Alaska, the UAF Geophysical Institute tweeted.

"A part of the pressure signal in Alaska was in the audible range. The very large signal is not that surprising considering the scale of the eruption, but the audible aspect is fairly unique," it said, citing Alaska Volcano Observatory scientist David Fee.

"He recalls only a couple other volcanic eruptions doing something like this: Krakatau and Novarupta," it tweeted. This referred to the 19th century eruptions of Indonesia's Krakatau and Alaska's Novarupta, the most powerful volcanic eruption of the 20th century.

The Fife weather station in Scotland tweeted it was "just incredible to think of the power that can send a shockwave around the world" after the eruptions produced a jump in its air pressure graph.

Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai, which lies about 65 kilometers north of Nuku'alofa, has a history of volatility.

In recent years, it breached sea level during a 2009 eruption while in 2015 it spewed so many large rocks and ash into the air that when they settled a new island had formed two kilometers long by one kilometer wide and 100 meters high.



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## Henley Leads Matsuyama By Two at Sony Open

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Russell Henley fired five birdies in a three-under par 67 to stay atop the leaderboard at the Sony Open, where Masters champion Hideki Matsuyama was two shots back. Henley, who won the first of his three US PGA titles in his tour debut at the Sony Open in 2013, couldn't match the fireworks of Friday at Waialae Country Club. But his 18-under par total of 192 was enough to stay in front of Matsuyama, who charged up the leaderboard with a seven-under par 63 that featured seven birdies.

## Russian Teen Valieva Wins European Title

LONDON (Dispatches) - Russia's 15-year-old Kamila Valieva won the European figure skating championships in Estonia, solidifying her status as the gold-medal favorite for next month's Beijing Olympics. Valieva finished with a total of 259.06 points -- achieving a 90.45 score in the women's short program on Thursday and 168.61 in the free skate event on Saturday. She fell on her triple Axel but landed two quadruple jumps -- a Salchow to open and a flip in combination with a triple toe loop -- in the free skate event after breaking her own world record with a nearly flawless short program.

# Serbia Rails Against Deportation of Djokovic

BELGRADE (Dispatches) - The deportation of Novak Djokovic sparked outrage in Serbia Sunday with political leaders and sports bodies rounding on the Australian authorities' decision to revoke the tennis superstar's visa on the eve of the Australian Open.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said Australia had "humiliated themselves", while the country's Olympic Committee called the move a "scandalous" decision as fellow Serbs added their voice to a chorus of disapproval over the court ruling that saw Djokovic deported.

"They think that they have by this, this mistreatment of ten days humiliated Djokovic, but they have humiliated themselves. Djokovic can return to his country with his head held high," Vucic told local media.

Vucic has remained steadfast in his support for Djokovic throughout the drama, calling the earlier detention of the unvaccinated tennis star a "political witch hunt".

The Serbian Olympic Committee also made their disgust clear.

"We are proud of Novak Djokovic and the way he coped with these extremely difficult and unpleasant circumstances. Despite this scandalous decision, we believe Novak came out as the winner again," the committee said in a statement posted online.

As Djokovic was deported, his family sought to rally support for the embattled tennis star.

"We are very disappointed by a federal court ruling and the fact that Novak has to leave Australia," the family said in the statement published by local media outlets.

"These are difficult moments, notably for Novak, but what we all have to do -- namely us, his family -- is to give him support more than ever," the family added.

Miomir Kecmanovic, who was set to face nine-time champion Djokovic in the first round of the Australian Open, called the incident a "bitter pill to swallow".

"Our little Serbian team here in Melbourne is upset and disappointed and I think we



have to make an extra effort to somehow avenge our best representative who was prevented from being here," Kecmanovic wrote on Instagram.

Earlier in Australia, Djokovic said he was "extremely disappointed" by the federal court's ruling that upheld the government's right to rip up his visa over fears he is stoking anti-vaccine sentiment and dashed his dream for the moment of an unprecedented 21st Grand Slam.

The ruling stoked resentment among Djokovic's fans in Serbia, where hundreds have rallied in support of their native son after he was first detained by authorities.

"It's a farce ... All this has nothing to do with the sport," Nebojsa Viskovic, a journalist covering notably tennis, told AFP.

"All the criticism about whether he was vaccinated or not doesn't hold water."

Many other Serbs echoed the view.

"The decision is not a surprise but is still shameful," said Jadranka Mistic, a 29-year-old sociologist from Belgrade.

For tennis fan Milovan Jankovic, Australia and the tournament itself had secured little more than a Pyrrhic victory.

"It's going to be ridiculous to hold the tournament without the defending champion and nine-time winner.

"If I were Djokovic I would never set foot in Australia again," the 57-year-old salesman added.

An "extremely disappointed" Djokovic said he would comply with the unanimous ruling.

## Benítez Sacked as Everton Manager



LONDON (Dispatches) - Rafael Benítez was sacked as Everton manager on Sunday after just 200 days in charge of the struggling Premier League club.

Benítez was an unpopular appointment in June last year after his long spell with Everton's Merseyside rivals Liverpool.

The Spaniard paid the price for a dismal run of nine defeats in Everton's last 13 league matches, culminating in a 2-1 loss at lowly Norwich on Saturday.

"Everton Football Club can confirm the departure of Rafael Benítez as first-team manager," a club statement said.

"Benítez, who joined Everton in June 2021, has left the club with immediate effect.

"An update on a permanent replacement will be made in due course."

Former Everton forward Wayne Rooney, currently impressing as manager of second tier Derby, is the bookmakers' favorite to replace Benítez.

Rooney is a boyhood Everton fan who had two spells at the club as a player either side of his successful time at Manchester United.

He has kept Derby competitive in the Championship despite dealing with a pair of points deductions and the club's descent in administration.

Rooney's former Everton team-mate Frank Lampard, sacked by Chelsea last year, is another contender for the job.

Brighton boss Graham Potter and Paulo Fonseca, whose last job was with Roma, could also be in the running.

## Nuggets Win Another Blowout

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Bones Hyland had career highs of 27 points and 10 rebounds, Nikola Jokic had 17 points, 13 assists and 12 rebounds, and the host Denver Nuggets routed the Los Angeles Lakers 133-96.

Jeff Green scored a season-high 26 points, Will Barton scored 12, Aaron Gordon and Davon Reed had 11 each and Monte Morris scored 10 for Denver, which has won two straight in blowout fashion. The Nuggets beat the Portland Trail Blazers 140-108 on Thursday.

LeBron James had 25 points and nine rebounds, Russell Westbrook scored 19 points and Dwight Howard had 13 for the Lakers, who have lost three straight.

The Nuggets led by five after the first quarter, and then opened up a double-digit lead in the second. They built a 102-79 lead after three quarters. It marked the second straight game the Nuggets have reached 100 points after three quarters after scoring just 85 in a loss to the Los Angeles Clippers on Tuesday night.

### Raptors 103, Bucks 96

Pascal Siakam notched his first triple-double of the season as Toronto took down host Milwaukee to complete a three-game sweep of the season series.

Siakam had 30 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists to lead the Raptors to their seventh win in the past nine games. OG Anunoby added 24 points on 9-of-23 shooting, and Fred VanVleet added 17 points.

Giannis Antetokounmpo paced Milwaukee with 30 points and six rebounds even though he shot only 6-of-17 from the field. Grayson Allen chipped in 18 points, and Khris Middleton had 16. Bobby Portis posted 11 points and 11 rebounds to tally his third double-double in his past five games.

### 76ers 109, Heat 98

Joel Embiid saved 11 of his game-high 32 points for the final 6:18 to win an entertaining duel with Omer Yurtseven and lift Philadelphia over host Miami in a duel of two teams playing for the second time in two nights.

Embiid completed a double-double with a game-high 12 rebounds, while Tobias Harris added 22 points and Seth Curry 21 for the 76ers.



## Brignone Edges Suter in Zauchensee Super-G

ZAUCHENSEE (Dispatches) - Italy's Federica Brignone notched up her second victory of the season when she won the women's World Cup super-G in the Austrian resort of Zauchensee. Brignone timed 1min 10.84sec to edge out Swiss rival Corinne Suter by four-hundredths

of a second, with Austrian Ariane Raedler rounding out the podium (+0.17).

The victory was the 18th on the World Cup circuit for the 31-year-old Brignone, who became the first Italian to win the women's overall title when she claimed that globe in 2020.

It was her second of the season after having previously won the super-G in St Moritz in December.

Swiss favourite Lara Gut-Behrami finished 10th, at 0.64sec, while Brignone's teammate Sofia Goggia, who fell heavily in Saturday's downhill, managed to take to the starting-gate but could only come in 19th.

## Braathen Stuns Field to Win Wengen Slalom

WENGEN (Dispatches) - Norway's Lucas Braathen recorded an astonishing history-making victory in the men's World Cup slalom in Wengen as first-leg pole-sitter Henrik Kristoffersen bombed out.

The 21-year-old Braathen, whose sole previous victory came in this season's giant slalom opener in Soelden, was lying a distant 29th after the first run, more than two seconds off his teammate.

But he held nothing back on the second leg, clocking 48.17sec, almost 1sec faster than the rest of the field.

His combined time of 1min 41.48sec was 0.22sec faster than second-placed Swiss Daniel Yule, with Italy's Giuliano Razzoli in third (+0.29).

Braathen's time marked the largest jump for victory in the second run ever in the men's slalom, bettering Swiss racer Marc Berthod's win in Adelboden in 2007 after he finished 27th in the first run.

Teammate Kristoffersen had set the pace on the first run, at 51.27sec, closely followed by Austrian Manuel Feller and Norwegian world champion Sebastian Foss-Solevaag.

But their time advantages were quickly eaten away on the second run, Feller and Foss-Solevaag eventually finishing fifth and sixth, while Kristoffersen skied out close to the bottom.



## Fernandes Urges Man Utd to Learn From Villa Meltdown

LONDON (Dispatches) - Bruno Fernandes has urged Manchester United to learn from their frustrating collapse in a damaging 2-2 draw against Aston Villa.

Fernandes had put Ralf Rangnick's side on course for victory with two goals at Villa Park on Saturday.

The Portugal star, serving as United's stand-in skipper, saw his free-kick trickle past Villa keeper Emiliano Martinez in the first half.

Fernandes blasted in United's second after the break, but Villa staged a late escape as Jacob Ramsey pulled one back before Philippe Coutinho marked his Villa debut with a dramatic equaliser.

Seventh placed United have now gone two Premier League games without a win and Fernandes admitted they must clean up their sloppy performances, putting their top four hopes in danger.

"I think everyone was really involved in the game, the game was being fantastic from us and we let the result escape at the end," Fernandes said.

"The frustration is there but it's now time to carry on because the next game is coming quick."

United head to Brentford on Wednesday and Fernandes underlined the need for swift improvements.

"I think when we played well was the moments that we played more compact, calmer, with clear ideas about what we are doing and everyone was following the ideas," he told MUTV.

