

**Health Ministry Announced on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Disease In Iran Increased to 132,230 With 28 More Iranians Killed by the Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

# IRAN NEWS

**Iran's Special Representative for Afghanistan Hassan Kazemi Qomi Says Permission Has Been Granted For the Cargoes of Diesel to Be Shipped From the Iranian Soil to Neighboring Afghanistan**

VOL. XXVII, No. 7420 TEHRAN Price 40,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

MONDAY JANUARY 24, 2022 - BAHMAN 4, 1400

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## Tehran Expects Its Non-Oil Exports to Reach \$45b by Yearend

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Deputy Industry, Mine and Trade Minister and Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Alireza Peyman-Pak says the value of the country's non-oil exports is expected to reach \$45 billion in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20), IRIB reported.

Speaking in a press conference on Sunday, Peyman-Pak pointed to the realization of the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry's goal for increasing the country's non-oil exports by \$5 billion in the second half of the current Iranian calendar year (September 23, 2021-March 20, 2022) and noted that the mentioned target has been realized sooner than scheduled.

According to the official, Industry Ministry has targeted yet another \$5 billion increase for the country's non-oil exports in the next Iranian calendar year.

"We plan to increase the total value of non-oil exports to \$50 billion [in the next year], however, this amount is also not proportional with the country's export capacities and we will continue to work to increase the figure," he said.

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## Leader Says Jihad Means Striving to Target Enemy



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has outlined various aspects of the struggle against the enemies of Islam enshrined in the principle of jihad.

"Jihad means striving to target the enemy, and the field of jihad must be correctly identified at all times," he told a group of eulogists on the birth anniversary of Hazrat Fatima Zahra (SA), the beloved daughter of Prophet Muhammad (Peace upon Him), in Tehran Sunday.

Ayatollah Khamenei touched on various fields of jihad in different periods such as military jihad, scientific jihad and jihad of social service.

"For instance, social service to the people in a situation where the enemy is trying to put them against the Islamic system by creating economic pressure is valuable jihad."

The Leader touched on the vast campaign of the enemies to upend the thoughts of the Iranian people and destroy their faith and beliefs through the mass media and using thousands of art and media experts and huge financial and security support, against which "the most important area of jihad is the field of explanation and enlightenment".

"In the face of this evil move, hay'ats must ask themselves where they stand on the front of truth and falsehood, and the confrontation between the narrative of falsehood and truth, and how they expand the main ideals and foundations of the revolution," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

Hay'ats are religious foundations which hold mourning or eulogy ceremonies for Prophet Muhammad (Peace upon Him) and his infallible Household known as Ahl al-Bayt.

Ayatollah Khamenei described hay'ats as "the center of the great jihad of enlightenment", saying they should be a place for providing convincing and correct answers to the current questions of the society, especially the young generation.

"The axis of the formation of hay'ats as a social unit has been the friendship of the Ahl al-Bayt and keeping alive the way and school of the Imams, which has been formed since the time of those nobles."

The Leader also touched on patterns inspired by the life and thoughts of Hazrat Fatima Zahra (SA) in the Iranian society, citing sincere services meted out to the needy and those hit by floods and other natural disasters as well as scientific services of Iran's nuclear experts assassinated in recent years as examples.

Ayatollah Khamenei also cited services provided to the public without pay during the COVID-19 pandemic as another example.

"Hazrat Fatima Zahra must be a role model in all aspects, especially social and revolutionary movements," he said.

## ViewPoint An Authorization to Kill

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Four years the Zionist regime has been supported by the Western countries and its allies to continue its fake life and this illegal regime since its emergence has been living on sucking the blood of Palestinians and bloodshed and on Thursday this bloodsucking regime got license from the United Nations to continue its crimes.

On Thursday, the United Nation's General Assembly adopted, by consensus, a resolution that condemns denial and distortion of the Holocaust.

The resolution was approved in the presence of a group of people who survived the Nazi genocide that killed around six million Jews, some two-thirds of the Jewish population of Europe, during World War Two.

The vote comes on the same day, 80 years ago, during the Wansee Conference, when top Nazi officials discussed and coordinated the genocide of the Jewish people, establishing the system of Nazi death camps.

According to the resolution, this genocide "will forever be a warning to all people of the dangers of hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice."

In the text, Member States express concern about "the growing prevalence of Holocaust denial or distortion through the use of information and communications technologies."

It also urges all Member States to "reject without any reservation any denial or distortion of the Holocaust as a historical event, either in full or in part, or any activities to this end."

This resolution is an official license for the Zionists to officially continue their crimes and mow nobody can dare even question this historic event.

When it comes to the religion or even weaker countries, the international bodies, above all, the Western countries claim they are defending the human rights issue and freedom of expression but when it comes to the Zionist regime's atrocities, they all forget that they should defend human rights and freedom of speech.

When Westerners and their media like the French weekly Charlie Hebdo with their cartoons attack the religious beliefs and sanctities, there is no UN resolution to condemn it and defend religious beliefs, and they jump to defend the issue of freedom of speech.

This double standard approach of the United Nations will turn it into a Divided Nations body and this body which is to bring unity and to work for all is gradually turning into a tool in hands of big powers, mainly the Westerners and their allies.

**See Page 7**

## Seoul Uses Frozen Assets To Pay Iran's Dues to UN

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian ambassador to the United Nations has confirmed that South Korea has used \$18million of Tehran's frozen assets to pay Iran's arrears to the UN.

Majid Takht Ravanchi said the payment would immediately restore the country's voting power at the world body.

He said Iran, as an active member of the UN, has always remained committed to paying its dues on time.

"But unfortunately, we faced problems with our payment for the second year in a row due to the United States' cruel and unilateral sanctions against Iran," he explained.

"The U.S. cruel sanctions have not only affected different domains such as the provision of medicines, humanitarian items, medical equipment, etc., but has also disrupted work at the UN," said the top diplomat.

The payment was made Friday after Iran made an "emergency request" to Seoul to pay the dues.

Iran has more than \$7 billion in funds for oil shipments frozen at two South Korean banks due to US sanctions.

Sokhan Gostar Institute

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## Iran, Pakistan to Do Trade by Barter Soon

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran and Pakistan will resort to barter soon, said a member of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA).

La'l Mohammad Baluchzei added that a Pakistani delegation has been scheduled to visit Zahedan, the capital of Iran's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, and hold talks on barter system and free trade with the ICCIMA officials.

The provincial official said Pakistan exports different products, including basic goods, clothes, bananas, and mangoes, to Iran while it imports various products from Iran such as petrochemical products, tiles, ceramics, apples, and dates.

According to Baluchzei, the two sides have already negotiated on barter and the necessary arrangements have been made.

He then pointed to the inauguration of Pakistan-Iran-Turkey train services which started its operation some 45 years ago from Pakistan to Iran and then towards Istanbul. He expressed hope this operation would continue constantly, adding that Pakistan is currently persistent.

He also reiterated that Iran has not faced any problem regarding its exports to Pakistan.

In November, Iran and Pakistan reached an agreement on barter trade aimed at expanding their transactions in the face of U.S. sanctions, Pakistani media reported.

The decision was announced by Pakistan's Commerce Secretary Sualah Faruqi in a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Commerce, reported the Pakistan daily Dawn.

Given the lack of banking channels with Iran, some issues existed in trading with Tehran and the barter trade agreement is expected to resolve the problems, said the commerce secretary.

The two neighboring countries have earlier announced that a free trade agreement would be implemented within the coming months, as Tehran and Islamabad are seeking to increase their annual trade volume to \$5 billion by 2023.

## Monthly Inflation Drops 1% to 42.2%

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The government has reported a further slight decline in the country's annual inflation rate in the calendar month to late January.

Figures by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) published on Saturday put the consumer price index at 42.4% for the calendar month to January 20, down 1% from the figure reported on December 21.

January CPI rose by 41.8% for households in urban regions and by 45.8% for families living in the countryside, showed the figures.

However, Iran's monthly CPI rose 0.7% against December to reach 2.4% in late January, said the statistics agency, adding that food, beverage and tobacco prices had increased 1.7% month-on-month while services and non-food prices had risen 2.7% against the previous month.

CPI calculated on a point-to-point scale, a measure used by the SCI for more than a decade, rose 0.7% to 35.9% in the month to January 20 against the similar period in 2020, said the statistics agency.

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# Majlis Speaker Approves Gov't Diplomacy

TEHRAN (IP) – Majlis Speaker says the government's realistic and multilateral approach to foreign policy has opened a new window to ensure national interests.

"Today, foreign relations are based on independence and national dignity, and pragmatic diplomacy is based on a realistic understanding of the multipolar systems that govern global relations," Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf noted.

He added: "I hope that the correct approach of the 13th government in using the capacity of neighboring countries and Look to the East policy will lead to an improvement in the economic situation."

## President Says Iran Eyes Long-Term Strategic Ties With Turkey

**TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi says the Islamic Republic seeks to promote long-term and inclusive relations with Turkey and welcomes plans to boost bilateral strategic cooperation.**

The Iranian president made the remarks in a phone call with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday, saying the two countries have potential to expand cooperation in mutual and regional issues.

"Tehran supports the establishment of lasting peace and stability in the region," Raisi added.

He emphasized that respect for the countries' national sovereignty and territorial integrity is the sole way to establish sustainable security and stability across the region.

During a telephone conversation with his Turkish counterpart in December, President Raisi had said the region does not need foreigners' meddling because its problems should be resolved through intraregional interaction.

"We insist that the region's problems should be resolved among the regional



countries themselves and through active participation of the countries [of the region]," the Iranian president had said.

Erdogan said Turkey regards Iran as a reliable supplier of its energy demands and seeks to increase cooperation with Tehran.

He added that Ankara has drawn up plans for strengthening economic cooperation with Tehran in various fields and voiced optimism that he will visit Iran soon.

Pointing to the Iranian president's recent meeting with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow, Erdogan expressed hope that the entire region would witness the useful outcomes of the trip.

The Turkish president also voiced his country's readiness to cooperate with Tehran on finding possible ways to increase regional security.

### Raisi Calls Fatemeh Zahra (AS) as Savior Of Contemporary Man

TEHRAN (IP) – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi said: "We should try to get to know the civilization-building culture called Fatemeh Zahra (AS) (Fatima the purest one) and a civilization called Fatimid civilization and the children of Fatemeh, peace be upon them, as the ones who can be called the savior of contemporary man."

Speaking to mark the occasion of Women's Day in Iran, Ibrahim Raisi said: "The character of Fatemeh, peace be upon her, is achievable, we have the sermon of Siddiqah Tahereh (Her nickname), we must understand and act accordingly."

President Raisi went on to elaborate further: "The sermon of Fatemeh Zahra (AS) speaks of four basic axes: One is the Qur'an, the second is justice, man and the salvation of man. If one studies all the aspects of this sermon, one will learn how to live."

He elaborated: "Today, what is considered as the duty is to know this great figure and this dear lady who is respected in all Abrahamic religions and is a role model for all human beings."

He called the holy existence of Hazrat Fatemeh (AS) as the source of all charity in the world.

The President emphasized: "Today, some people do not want that Fatemeh would be known, they do not want our women, men, and youth to take her as their role models, and they try very hard to distance human beings from the culture and the originality of the divine beliefs of this Lady."

'Mother's & Women's Day' is observed in Iran, commemorating the birth anniversary of Hazrat Fatemeh (AS), daughter of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) every year.

## Iran, Pakistan Envoys Discuss Afghanistan Stability

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Iranian ambassador to Kabul met with his Pakistani counterpart to discuss creating long-term security and stability in Afghanistan through economic cooperation.

Bahador Aminian, Iran's ambassador to Kabul met and held talks with Mansoor Ahmad Khan, the Ambassador of Pakistan to Afghanistan.

"Met Iranian Ambassador Excellency Bahadar Aminian and discussed efforts for long term stability in Afghanistan through economic cooperation and regional connectivity", the Pakistani envoy tweeted.

Earlier, Aminian met with Mette Knudsen, the Deputy Special Representative (Political) for Afghanistan in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to discuss stability and security, inclusive government, and economic development in Afghanistan.

Last week, Iran's ambassador to Kabul also met and held talks with former President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai.

During the meeting, Karzai praised Iran's constructive role in maintaining good relations with Afghanistan.

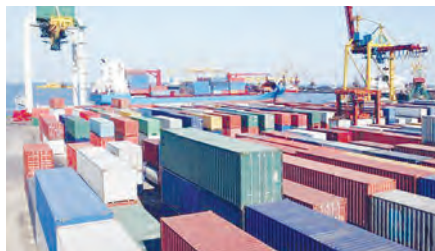
## Iran-Russia Annual Trade to Increase to \$10b From \$4b

TEHRAN - The head of the Russia-Iran parliamentary friendship group said, 'Currently, the volume of trade between Iran and Russia is \$ 4 billion it is expected to reach \$ 10 billion annually after President Raisi's visit.

Speaking to reporters, Ebrahim Rezaei, the chairman of the Russia-Iran parliamentary friendship group at the Iranian parliament pointed to the recent visit of President Ebrahim Raisi and his accompanying delegation to Russia and said, 'The two-day visit took place at the invitation of the Russian President in order to expand economic, political and cultural interactions between Iran and Russia, and President Raisi received a warm welcome by all Russian statesmen, especially president Vladimir Putin.'

The Russians, especially large oil companies, are expected to invest in Iran's oil fields, the lawmaker said.

### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



'The volume of Iran's trade with Russia is now \$ 4 billion, which will increase to at least \$ 10 billion with the agreements reached,' Rezaei added.

He said that exports of crops to Russia are expected to increase, he also pointed out, adding that 'Due to the fact that the route to Europe should cross Iran, it was decided to complete and launch the north-south corridor.'

He went on to say that the construction of a railway, the development of land routes and the sea line are among the agreements reached during the president's visit to Russia.

The chairman of the Russia-Iran parliamentary friendship group pointed to the removal of barriers to the export of Iranian products to Russia as another agreement reached during the visit, and said that customs barriers to speed up the export of Iranian goods and products to Russia are going to be removed.

## Gov't Cancels Divestment of Shares in Mega Petchem Firm PGPIC

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian government has cancelled plans for selling off its shares in the country's largest petrochemical company over lack of sufficient bids.

The Iranian Privatization Organization wrote in a letter to the country's stock exchange authority on Saturday announcing the cancellation of divestment plans for government shares in the Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Corporation (PGPIC).

The government had planned to sell its stakes in PGPIC, which amount to 18% of the total shares in the company, in three separate listings.

The Saturday letter by the privatization authority said that it had received a single bid for the largest block of share listing which amounted to over 40 billion shares or 15% of stakes in PGPIC. The listing was aimed at raising nearly 5,700 trillion rials (over \$2 billion) in new finances for the Iranian government as it tries to access

new funds to spend on key infrastructure projects in the country.

However, officials in the privatization authority indicated they were not happy with the price offered by the single bidder in the listing as they insisted they will do their best to maximize government revenues from major divestment schemes.

Sources said that the government could introduce a new divestment plan for PGPIC shares if it reaches a decision on the issue within the next weeks.

The Iranian government has relied on selling off its stakes in large companies, banks and crude refineries in recent years to ease the financial pressure caused by the US sanctions on the country's crude exports revenues. Those divestments have also triggered a major boom in the Iranian stock market where indexes have risen to record highs in the past two years.

## Iran, Russia Need Each Other in Face of Sanctions

TEHRAN (MNA) – Seyed Mahmoud-Reza Sajjadi, former Ambassador of Iran to Russia said Saturday that North-South Transnational Corridor and the oil and gas projects are two main priorities for Iran and Russia in new era after President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi's visit.

Speaking to the local media, Sajjadi pointed to the recent President Raisi's visit to Moscow and said that the implementation of the North-South Transnational Corridor is what the Russians see as a sign that shows how serious the Iranian government is in implementing bilateral projects.

"In my perspective, the most important issue is to pursue the implementation of the South-North and North-South corridor. This project has a very high economic value for us, and it has a security value for the Russians, and this project will link the interests of the two

countries for years," the former Iranian diplomat said.

Sajjadi added that the implementation of the North-South Transnational Corridor helps the Russians in their struggle with the west, and also helps Iran in implementing the development project in Iran.

He also said that another priority is the oil and gas projects "because the United States and the West are making their utmost efforts to destroy Iran's oil and gas industry, so the use of Russian technical and engineering capabilities is essential for the development of oil and gas infrastructure industries and the development of exports [of Iran]."

He added, "Needless to say that in the meantime in addition to these two priorities, other agreements reached during this trip must be seriously pursued and time lined."

## Iran Exports over \$3b Agricultural Products in Nine Months

TEHRAN (MNA) – An official in the Ministry of Agriculture said that 6,263,000 tons of agricultural products, valued at \$3.878 billion, were exported from the country in the first nine months of the current year (March 21-Dec. 22).

Mohammad Ghorbani, Deputy Ministry of Agricultural Jihad for Economic and Planning Affairs said on Sunday that \$3.878 billion worth of agricultural products were exported from the country in this period.

Referring to the import of agricultural products into the country, he stated that 6,893,000 tons of animal corn, 5,028,000 tons of wheat, 2,678,000 tons of barley and 1,823,000 tons of soybean were imported into the country in the same period.

He further noted that 443,000 tons of poultry, valued at \$406 million, 88,000 tons of fisheries, valued at \$159 million, \$1.409 billion worth of agricultural products and also \$1.707 billion worth of horticultural products were exported from the country in this period.

## FZs Determined in Empowering Women



### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Secretary of the Supreme Council of Free and Special Economic Zones Mr. Saeed Mohammad in a video conference on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Hazrat Zahra (AS) emphasized the determination of the free zones in empowering women in the areas.

Mohammad said over 1.5m women are living in the free zones of the country and they are active under impacts of the free zones and the zones should have a broader vision and plans regarding the women in these areas.

Mohammad felicitated the birth anniversary of Hazrat Zahra (AS) and Women's Day to all women in the free zones and said that today economic problems have affected the livelihood of the people and it has led to the rise in the social maladies especially divorce, addiction or living in the suburbs which should be identified.

He reiterated that it is necessary to launch a statistical community and to have plans for each of items in order to tackle the social maladies in the free zones especially in the field of women who are active in the free zones.

Mohammad reiterated that empowerment of the women is one of the top and important issues which is on the agenda of the secretariat and the free zones, adding that presence of investors in the free zone is an opportunity which should be made most out of it and through it the problems of the women in the areas are resolved.

He said there are some programs which will encourage investors to hire women when they get the license for beginning their activities in the zones.

He then pointed to the apparel producing factory in Maku Free Zone where some 600 breadwinner women are working.

## Iran Stands 11th in WIPO Rankings

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran has stood 11th in the rankings of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in 2021.

Amir Abbas Mohammadi Koushki, the head of the Iranian inventions team, said WIPO releases the indexes of intellectual property every year, adding the countries seek to gain higher positions by evaluating and upgrading their capabilities according to the indexes.

He said Iran ranked 21st in the world's invention registrations in 2021, 23rd in the trademark registrations, and 12th in the registration of industrial plans, including applications.

According to Mohammadi Koushki, China, the United States, and Japan are the top three countries in the WIPO standings, respectively.

China is also on top of the world rankings for the registration of trademarks, he continued and added the United States and Iran are in the second and third places, respectively.

The European Union is in the fourth position, Koushki said. He explained that the great number of start-ups in China has helped the Asian country achieve the success.

WIPO is the global forum for intellectual property (IP) services, policy, information and cooperation.

It is a self-funding agency of the United Nations, with 193 member states.

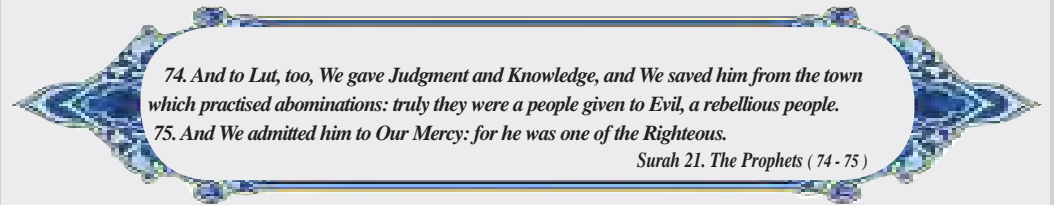
Its mission is to lead the development of a balanced and effective international IP system that enables innovation and creativity for the benefit of all its members.





## PRAYER TIME

	Noon (Zohr)	12:16
	Evening (Maghreb)	17:42
	Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:42
	Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:09



# Tehran, Brussels

## Explore Capacities for Bilateral Cooperation

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

**TEHRAN – Head of Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization Mr. Alireza Payman Pak and Ambassador of Belgium to Tehran Gian Marco Rizzo explored capacities for expansion of cooperation between the two countries.**

In the meeting, Head of TPO Mr. Payman Pak pointed to the existing economic ties and MoUs between the two states and called for expansion of cooperation in the fields of food industries, medicines, health, environment, pesticide and fertilizer and greenhouse cultivation.

Then new Belgian Ambassador to Tehran Rizzo emphasized the good and sustainable relations between Tehran and Brussels and called for cooperation in the fields of ports, technology, knowledge-based, biopharming, chemicals, medical and



the likes that both sides are interested in.

The Belgian diplomat also pointed to the existing capacities for cooperation between the two countries in the fields of machineries, machine carpet in the Flanders Region, medical equipment, medicines and food, industrial and agriculture machineries in the Wallonia Region and food industries, production of bread, sweet and chocolate in the Brussels Region of Belgium.

In the meeting, commercial attaches of Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels regions explained the capacities of their regions.

The trade between Iran and Belgium in recent years has mostly limited to trade in the fields of food industries, textiles, machine carpet, medicines, medical equipment, logistic and ports.

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

# IME Posts Trade Of 7.2m Tons of Commodities Last Month

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed trade of 7,297,000 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$2b on its physical market during last month of Iranian calendar month.

According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange sold on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor more than 1,529,000 tons of commodities worth more than \$856m.

On this floor the exchange traded 415,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 490,000 tons of bitumen, 306,534 tons of polymeric products, 171,000 tons of lube cut, 108,463 tons of chemicals, 26,285 tons of sulfur, 14,653 tons of oil, 450 tons of argon and 225 tons of insulation.

Next was the metals and minerals trading floor with trades of 5,724,000 tons of commodities valued at more than \$1b.

Commodities changing hands on this floor included 3,606,000 tons of cement, 1,332,000 tons of steel, 367,000 tons of iron ore, 241,000 tons of sponge iron, 35,090 tons of aluminum, 133,340 tons of zinc, 26,911 tons of copper, 630 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 500 tons of coke, 500 tons of lead, 42 tons of precious metals concentrate and 23 kg of gold bars.

On its agricultural trading floor the exchange saw offering of 50 kg of saffron strands.

It's worth noting that the IME also played host to trade of 43,899 tons of commodities on its side market.



**A member of the Board of Trustees of the Iranian Youth House of Industry, Mining and Commerce and the head of the Industry Committee of the Expediency Council announced:**

The country's industry and Mining do not feels good  
The last beats. If we do not reach him



Unfortunately, the culture of statistics between government institutions and some NGOs has been prevalent in our country for many years. As a result, statistics come out that are completely contradictory to reality. With a simple look at the industry, mining and trade of the province and the current situation of the elders in these areas in recent years, we can see that the situation is bad. Any statistic that

wants an explanation and a bad answer is definitely fake or inaccurate. Before the presidential election, I presented three national plans to Mr. Mohsen Rezaei and Mr. Sardar Ahmad Vahidi. Both dignitaries announced that the new government will be on the agenda when it comes to power. I suggested that he be the pilot of the project in Fars province. But now I myself doubt whether the climate of industry, mining and trade of Fars and the business environment that governs it has the capacity to implement this plan or not? And if this project is piloted in Fars, will it not be stopped like many other projects ?!

A member of the industry committee of the Fars Development Support Association announced the development of three plans to save the country's economic sphere and Fars. These three plans are in the final stages of approval, and with their implementation, part of the severe economic recession will be eliminated. Dr. Mojtaba Jibrili said: The economic recession in Fars is more than other parts of the country. If there is a discussion of foreign sanctions or strict domestic laws, it should include the whole country. How is it that industry and economy are flourishing in the neighboring province of Isfahan? Why does Fars face various challenges in this regard?

He believes that the reason for this problem should be found within the province. Linking it to foreign sanctions or existing laws is the wrong address some give.

Before we get into this detailed discussion, first get acquainted with this scientific and executive figure by reading a resume from Dr. Gabriel.Mojtaba Jibreili was born in 1969. He has a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Shiraz University, a master's degree in economics and a master's degree in executive management. He holds a doctorate in business management from the University of Nice, France. Since 1997, he has founded a private company active in the field of information technology. He succeeded in importing several fiber optic technologies and telecommunication switches to Iran. Currently, the only new generation Iranian telecommunication switch is produced by this company. Dr. Jibreili has received the gold medal of the best knowledge-based company in Asia and the first prize of Sheikh Baha'i and Kharazmi. The company that he established in 1980 is ready to be listed on the stock exchange with a value of over 100 billion Tomans. Dr. Jibreili has been the Director of Information Technology and

Economic Advisor for the Special Economic Zone since 2001. From 2004 to 2009, he was the CEO of Shiraz Electronic Tower. This project was the result of a partnership with the private sector and the Ministry of Industry and was inaugurated in the presence of the Minister of Industry. His honors include: Managing Director of Commercial Production Complex, Consultant of Large Industrial and Governmental Complexes in the Country, Selected by the First Festival of Hazrat Ali Akbar (AS) as the Country's Best Youth in 2006, Honored by the National Youth Organization and Supreme Leader of the Revolution, Iran's top young manager, Iran's top young entrepreneur in 2006 and 2007 by UNIDO and the United Nations Industrial Section. In 2004, Jibrili, along with several others, established the Fars Youth Industry and Mining House. To date, he has been a member of the board of directors and secretary of the Fars Youth Industry, Mining and Trade House. In addition, in the last 16 years and at various times, he has been a member of the Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors of the Iranian Youth Industry and Mining House. For over 20 years, he has been a member of the Industries Commission of the Chamber of Commerce on behalf of various groups, including the Shiraz Special Economic Zone, the Shiraz Electronic Tower, the Fars Youth House of Industry and Mining, and the Farasan Industrial Group. He is currently an advisor to the CEO of Farasan Industrial Group and several large industrial complexes in the country. He has taught at various universities, including the Industrial Management Organization, Malek Ashtar University, and the Higher National Defense University. Dr. Mojtaba Jibrili is currently a member of the Business and Industry Committee of the Expediency Council. In an interview with Khabar-e-Janoob, the university professor began: "Because of my more than 20 years in the industry, I have a good understanding of industry, mining and trade." For this reason, I am well acquainted with the potentials and challenges of this sector. Dr. Jibrili said: I must admit that at the macro level, the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade is responsible for more than 30 percent of the country's economy and 70 percent of the country's effective employment. The problem of this ministry is not foreign sanctions and not domestic sanctions. The root problem in this field is first in culture and then in management. I mean cultural problems, social culture. Unfortunately, sometimes neither the worker nor the employer is properly responsible for their cultural duties, including work conscience, conscientiousness, respect for the rights of others, and respect for the rights of society. In this regard, we need long-term and scientific cultural work. Dr. Jibrili said: "I have been teaching for about 10 years in addition to the mentioned activities in different universities of the country in the master's degree and doctorate of management." What I always say to my students as the main pillar of management is the culture of business and management. "The next problem is managerial weaknesses," he said. These problems have been reflected in the community due to lack of work conscience, skills, abilities and effective relationships in some managers. A member of the Board of Trustees of the Iranian Youth Chamber of Industry, Mines and Commerce stated: "I do not believe in any way that the problem of our economic enterprises is sanctions or lack of liquidity." For example, I remember in the period between 2004 and 2009, after the purchase of the electronic tower land by the partners, I implemented that \$ 20 million project without any funding from the shareholders. Therefore, if in an economic enterprise, management and branding issues are done well, financing is also possible. He referred to the formulation of three national and provincial plans to end the existing problems and said: "In the last three years, I have presented three plans at the national level; I first presented the first project called No Roish to the late Hashemi Rafsanjani and then to the Ministry of Silence and Mr. Nematzadeh. It was decided to run as a pilot in Fars. The summary of the plan is as

follows: New growth headquarters consisting of industrial and managerial elites should be formed as a managerial diagnostic clinic in the provinces. Any business requesting the use of government support and facilities, such as loans, must first contact these headquarters. After receiving a written report of the diagnosis, it is possible to use government support. He said: "The approval of this plan has already been obtained from the representatives of the government and the Supreme Leader." This plan will be implemented soon. Dr. Jibrili emphasized: For many years, we have provided facilities to companies that have no competitive advantage in terms of science and facilities. We have both made them miserable and wasted the country's resources. The new plan is to prevent this trend from continuing. The next plan is to attract Iranians abroad. This plan has recently been put on the agenda after receiving various approvals from representatives of the government, the judiciary, the Supreme Leader and various institutions. The aim of this project is to establish effective communication with successful Iranians abroad so that cultural, scientific and capital exchanges can be formed between them and Iranians inside the country. He pointed out: When more than 7 million Iranians, ie 5 times the population of the UAE, are scattered in the world and have more than one thousand billion dollars of capital, why do we need to beg and beg other countries to attract capital?

Regarding his third plan, Dr. Jibrili said: "The third plan is called the Soldier of Resistance Economy, which I presented to Seyyed Hassan Khomeini a while ago." He announced that he was ready to invite the country's officials to present this plan to Jamaran. The summary of this plan is such that every year a percentage of the first ranks of all academic disciplines can spend their service in the private sector instead of military service. This plan has two advantages. The first advantage is that it motivates students to be more diligent in their studies and as a result to be able to obtain higher grades and enjoy the benefits of this plan. The next advantage is that a series of scientific elites in all disciplines are provided to the industry for free. In addition to transferring their knowledge to the industry, they will most likely be attracted to the same industry after a two-year period. During these years, and especially the last seven years, we have faced the lack of courage, capability and effective communication of some managers. Unfortunately, the heads of the silence organizations in Fars province during these years considered themselves to be isolated and instead of establishing close relations with the craftsmen, they hardly opened the doors of their rooms to the clients. He added: "I believe that the main task of the managers of silence organizations in each province is to participate in macro and strategic plans, as well as bargaining in the country and even abroad to attract knowledge, facilities and capital for the industries of their province." Unfortunately, instead of this process, problems have been observed, including: self-perception, unprofessional comments, and spending time on stereotyped visits and so-called expert work. Dr. Jibrili stated: The alphabet of management requires that we know that the task of senior management is not the work of an expert. This should be left to the experts. Unfortunately, there is weakness in all three areas of industry, mining and trade in Fars province and many other provinces. In short, I consider weakness in management as daring and lack of effective communication with major stakeholders in the country. For example, in Isfahan and East Azarbaijan provinces, with the same conditions, domestic and foreign problems have far better real performance than the vast province of Fars. He stated: Fars province has rich resources of educated forces, special geopolitical position and the most powerful businessmen in the country. With the presence of craftsmen who have more than 70 years of experience in this province, it is not appropriate for it to suffer from today's conditions.



# Mahathir Admitted To Hospital Again

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Former Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad has been admitted to a specialist heart hospital for the third time in the space of a few weeks, a spokesperson said Saturday.

The 96-year-old is in the cardiac care unit of the National Heart Institute in Kuala Lumpur, a spokesperson who asked not to be named said, without giving further details.

Media descended on the hospital as news spread that Mahathir had been admitted again, about a fortnight after he had a procedure at the same facility.



# Berlin Not to Supply Weapons to Kiev for Now

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Berlin is ruling out arms deliveries to Ukraine in the standoff with Russia for now, German Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht said in an interview published on Saturday, a few days after Britain started supplying Kyiv with anti-tank weapons.

A bipartisan group of U.S. senators also promised weapons to Ukraine, which could include missiles, small arms and boats, to help the country defend itself from a potential invasion amid a Russian military build-up on its borders.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, however, has stressed Berlin's policy of not supplying lethal weapons to conflict zones.



# U.S. Military Aid Arrives in Ukraine Amid Russia Border Tensions



WASHINGTON (dispatches) - The first shipment of the United States' \$200m security support package for Ukraine has arrived in Kyiv, the U.S. embassy said.

The delivery followed U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to Kyiv this week amid concerns from Ukraine and its Western allies over tens of thousands of Russian troops amassed at the border with Ukraine. Russia denies planning a new military offensive.

Washington had approved the \$200m package in December.

"The United States will continue providing such assistance to support Ukraine's armed forces in their ongoing effort to defend Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity against Russian aggression," the embassy said on Facebook on Saturday. Ukraine's defense minister thanked the U.S. for the aid.

Meanwhile, the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will send U.S.-made anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles to Ukraine in a move that Blinken said Washington was fully endorsing. "I expedited and authorized and we fully endorse

transfers of defensive equipment NATO Allies Estonia Latvia Lithuania are providing to Ukraine to strengthen its ability to defend itself against Russia's unprovoked and irresponsible aggression," he tweeted.

"We salute them for their longstanding support to Ukraine."

Dmitry Peskov, spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, earlier this week described Western arms supplies to Ukraine as extremely dangerous and said they "do nothing to reduce tensions".

The West has rejected Moscow's main demands - promises from NATO that Ukraine will never be added as a member, that no alliance weapons will be deployed near Russian borders, and that it will pull back its forces from Central and Eastern Europe.

A meeting between Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Friday ended with no breakthrough.

In a joint statement published late on Friday, the defense ministers of the three Baltic states said they "stand united in our commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in face of continued Russian aggression".

They said Estonia would provide Ukraine with Javelin anti-tank weapons, while Latvia and Lithuania were sending Stinger anti-aircraft missiles and other related equipment to bolster Kyiv's defensive military capabilities.

"Today Ukraine is at the forefront of separating Europe from the military conflict with Russia. Let's face it - the war in Ukraine is ongoing and it is important to support Ukraine in every way we can so that they can resist the aggressor," Minister of Defence of Estonia Kalle Laanet said.

It was not immediately clear when the weapons and equipment would be sent to Ukraine.

# German Conservatives Elect Right-Winger Merz as New Party Leader

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany's center-right Christian Democrats (CDU) elected arch-conservative Friedrich Merz their party leader to follow the more centrist Armin Laschet, who lost September's national election to Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats.

Merz, who has promised a break with the CDU's centrist course pursued by Angela Merkel during her 16-year tenure as chancellor, got nearly 95% of the valid votes during a virtual party conference, party secretary general Paul Ziemiak said.

The official election followed an informal vote last month in which Merz beat party rivals Norbert Roettgen and Helge Braun, who had both positioned themselves as heirs of Merkel's more centrist line.

The 66-year-old succeeded on his third attempt to win the party's leadership. An emotional Merz accepted the vote, his voice cracking as he thanked the delegates for their support.

In his speech, Merz accused Scholz of lacking a clear stance in the stand-off with Russia over its military build-up near the Ukrainian border.

"Former chancellors would have shown leadership," Merz said.

The CDU could only win back its former strength by showing unity, Merz said. "What we experienced in the Union in 2021, this may and will not repeat itself," Merz said, referencing in-fighting among the party's senior leadership during the last election campaign.

A lawyer from western Germany, Merz was a senior legislator in the early 2000s before quitting to pursue a lucrative career with asset manager Black Rock. He returned to the German parliament in 2021.

Among the challenges facing Merz now is how to position the CDU and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), as the biggest opposition party in parliament and how to draw a clear line between them and the far-right AfD party.



# UN Urges Investigation Into Saudi-Led Coalition Air Raids

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The UN chief has condemned air raids by the Saudi-led coalition on Saada city and called for an investigation into the attacks that killed more than 70 people in Yemen.

"The Secretary-General calls for prompt, effective and transparent investigations into these incidents to ensure accountability," Antonio Guterres' spokesman, Stephane Dujarric, said.

A detention centre holding migrants in Saada city was bombed on Friday. Basheer Omar, a Red Cross spokesperson in Yemen, said rescuers continued to search for survivors. He said more than 100 people had been killed and wounded, according to the Red Cross count.

Yemen's Houthi rebels and an aid group on Saturday claimed that the death toll had climbed to at least 82.

Al Jazeera, however, could not independently verify the casualty figures.

Doctors Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres, or MSF) put the number of wounded alone at "about 200". Ahmed Mahat, MSF's head of mission in Yemen, said they had reports of "many bodies still at the scene of the air strike, many missing people".

Another Saudi air raid on Friday in the port city of Hodeidah - later confirmed by satellite photos analyzed by the AP news agency - hit a telecommunication centre that is key to Yemen's connection to the internet. Early on Saturday, the internet remained down. Yemen's Houthi Health Minister Taha al-Motawakel has appealed to the international community for medical aid. He accused the Saudi coalition of deliberately targeting civilians.

"We consider this a war crime against humanity. The world should take responsibility at this critical moment in human history," he said.

The Houthi Al Masirah TV satellite news channel said the strike on the telecommunications building killed and wounded an unspecified number of people. It released chaotic footage of people digging through rubble for a body as aid workers assisted bloodied survivors.

# Burkina Police Fire Tear Gas at Protesters

OUAGADOUGOU (Dispatches) - Security forces fired tear gas at protesters barricading the streets and throwing rocks in Burkina Faso's capital on Saturday, as anger grows at the government's inability to stop jihadist attacks spreading across the country.

Several hundred people marched through downtown Ouagadougou chanting for President Roch Marc Christian Kabore to resign.

"The jihadists are hitting (the country), people are dying, others are fleeing their homes. ... We want Roch and his government to resign because their handling of the country is not good. We will never support them," said protester Amidou Tientore.

Some people were also protesting in solidarity with neighboring Mali, whose citizens are angry at the West African economic regional bloc, ECOWAS, which imposed sanctions on the country after the ruling junta delayed this year's elections.

Burkina Faso's protest comes amid an escalation in jihadist attacks linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State that has killed thousands and displaced 1.5 million people.

The violence shows no signs of abating. Nearly 12,000 people were displaced within two weeks in December, according to the U.N. Four French soldiers were also wounded during a joint operation with

Burkina Faso's military, the first time French soldiers have been injured in the country since two were killed in 2019 during a hostage release operation, Pascal Ianni, spokesman for the chief of defense for the French armed forces, told The Associated Press.

France has some 5,000 troops in the region but until now has had minimal involvement in Burkina Faso compared with Niger or Mali.

This is the second government crackdown on protests since November and comes after the government shut down access to Facebook last week, citing security reasons, and after arresting 15 people for allegedly plotting a coup.

As tensions mount, the government is struggling to stem the jihadist violence. Last month the president fired his prime minister and replaced most of the cabinet.

The government's national security arm is also said to be preparing to reopen negotiations with the jihadists, according to a military official and a former soldier who did not want to be identified.

The last time the government negotiated secret cease-fire talks with the jihadists was around the 2020 presidential elections when fighting subsided for several months.

But locals say it's too late for talks and that the country is being overrun by jihadists who control swaths of land, plant their flag and make people abide by Shariah law.



# Taliban Warn Against Dissent, Women's Rights Activism

KABUL (Dispatches) - Afghanistan's new Taliban authorities warned they have the right to crack down on dissent and jail protesters, as concerns grew over the disappearance of two women activists.

Since storming back to power in August amid a hasty withdrawal of US-led foreign forces, Taliban authorities have forcefully dispersed rallies, beaten some Afghan journalists and arrested critics.

This week, women activists said two of their comrades were seized from their homes in the capital after taking part in a demonstration.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan called for the Taliban to "provide information" on the whereabouts of Tamana Zaryabi Paryani and Parwana Ibrahimkhel, reportedly abducted from their homes on Wednesday night.

Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid denied any women were being held, but said authorities had the right "to arrest and detain dissidents or those who break the law".

"Nobody should create turmoil, because it disrupts peace and order," he told AFP in an interview.

There have been a scattering of small protests demanding women's rights, which have improved marginally in the patriarchal Muslim nation over the past 20 years.

But the Taliban banned all unsanctioned protests after returning to power. "If this happened in any other country, such people would be arrested," Mujahid said. "We are not allowing illegal activities."

Desperate for international recognition to unlock frozen assets, the Taliban have largely refrained from issuing national policies that provoke outrage abroad.

But provincial officials have issued guidelines and edicts based on local interpretations of Islamic law and Afghan custom that have curbed women's freedoms.

Girls in most provinces have not been allowed to return to secondary school, public universities are shuttered, and women have been banned from most public sector jobs.

Women must also be accompanied on long journeys by a close male relative, while posters have gone up in Kabul ordering them to cover up -- illustrated by the all-covering burqa.







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## U.S. Suspends 44 Passenger Flights to China

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States announced Friday that it was suspending 44 Chinese passenger flights from America to the Asian giant in response to restrictive moves by Beijing on U.S. carriers under its Covid-19 protocols.

China maintains strict controls over border entry including slashed flights and a “circuit breaker” policy where routes are halted if too many infections are brought in on the flights.

China’s aviation authority used the circuit breaker policy to cancel flights by American, Delta and United airlines when passengers who tested negative for Covid before takeoff later tested positive once arriving in China.



## IMF Chief Warns World Economy Faces an Obstacle Course This Year

LONDON (Dispatches) - The head of the IMF said that the global economy would have to navigate an “obstacle course” this year with the ongoing pandemic and geopolitical tensions deepening a global inflation problem.

Speaking at the virtual World Economic Forum held instead of the normal in-person gathering at Davos, Kristalina Georgieva warned that the outlook for the global economy this year would be far from smooth.

“[The year] 2022 is like navigating an obstacle course,” the fund’s managing director said. “We anticipate the [global] recovery to continue but it is losing some momentum and it is faced with the renewal of [Covid-19] infections . . . much more persistent than anticipated inflation and . . . record high debt levels.”

With an eye to the worsening tensions between Russia and Ukraine, Georgieva said that many of the causes of inflation were not simply explained by levels of spending and demand being too high compared with global supply capacity.

Commenting that inflation was not just a problem that central bankers could fix, the IMF head added that “the pressure on prices comes from food prices shooting up [caused] to a certain degree because of [the] climate . . . and energy prices shooting up, and this is a very complicated story in which there is also an element of geopolitical tensions”.

Georgieva said the US Federal Reserve was “acting responsibly” in its tightening of monetary policy, and was balancing the need to fight rising prices and protect the recovery at a time when “inflation in the US is turning into an economic and social concern”.

However, higher US interest rates would hit some countries, especially those with high levels of dollar denominated debt, which “could throw cold water on what for some countries is already a weak recovery”.

Georgieva urged them to act quickly. “If you have currency mismatches, now is the moment to address them,” she said.

Noting China’s slowing economy, Georgieva said this was a concern for the rest of the world in 2022 and that Beijing should think about both loosening policy to encourage growth and whether its zero-Covid policy was still optimal given the more contagious Omicron variant.

“What Omicron is teaching all of us is that it is a highly transmittable variant of Covid and may be much more difficult to contain without a dramatic impact on the economy and our view is that this has to be taken into account,” she said.

“We will see how China integrates this message, both in terms of the policies they apply but also in terms of how they advance on the direction of what are the vaccines that are most effective and how that would be integrated [into] China’s [policies to control infections].”

## World Bank Grants S. Africa \$750m Loan for COVID-19 Recovery

CAPE TOWN (Dispatches) - South Africa will receive a loan of \$750 million from the World Bank to protect the poor and support economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Treasury said.

The continent’s second largest economy, South Africa has been hit hard by four waves of infection that killed close to 94,000 people and infected 3.5 million in Africa’s worst caseload.

Successive lockdowns meant to protect people have led to the closure of thousands of businesses, swelling an army of unemployed as South Africa’s jobless rate hit records in 2021.

“The World Bank budget support is coming at a critical time for us,” Dondo Mogajane, the director-general of the National Treasury, said in a statement.

Funds from the development policy loan would help bridge a financing gap stemming from additional spending on the COVID-19 crisis, he added.

The World Bank in Jan. 12 warned that high debt levels, growing income inequality and coronavirus variants threatened the recovery in developing economies. The forecasts for 2021 and 2022 – the first by a major international institution – were 0.2 percentage points lower than in the bank’s June Global Economic Prospects report, and could be knocked even lower if omicron variant persists.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is also expected to cut its growth forecasts in its update on Jan. 25. The bank’s latest semiannual forecast cited a big rebound in economic activity in advanced and developing economies in 2021 after contractions in 2020 but warned that longer-lasting inflation, ongoing supply chain and labor force issues, and new coronavirus variants were likely to dampen growth worldwide.

Developing countries are facing severe long-term problems related to lower vaccination rates, global macro policies and the debt burden, according to the World Bank President David Malpass, who also cited troubling reversals in poverty, nutrition and health data and permanent impacts from school closures.

## Exports Likely Buoyed S. Korea GDP Growth in Q4

BENGALURU (Dispatches) - South Korea’s economy likely accelerated in the last quarter, buoyed by strong exports and investments, but an economic slowdown in China and surging COVID-19 cases pose a significant risk, a Reuters poll found.

Asia’s fourth-largest economy is expected to have expanded a seasonally-adjusted 0.9% in the fourth quarter, according to the median forecast of 10 economists, up from a 0.3% rise in the preceding quarter.

However, the survey showed growth in annual terms likely slowed to a median 3.7%, based on a higher sample of 16 economists, from 4.0% in the third quarter, partly due to the above-trend expansion registered in the comparable period in 2020.

The data will be released on Jan. 25.

“It is highly probable private consumption has weakened somewhat due to the re-spread of the COVID-19 in Korea, but solid exports and investments supported growth in Q4,” said Chun Kyu-yeon, an economist at Hana Financial Investment in Seoul.

South Korea’s recovery from a pandemic-induced economic slump has been largely driven by robust exports, which expanded at their fastest pace in 11 years in 2021. By destination, exports to China, the United States and the European Union rose 22.9%, 29.4% and 33.9%, respectively.

But an upsurge in COVID-19 cases, the waning effects of pandemic-related stimulus and an economic slowdown in China, the country’s largest trade and investment partner, will weigh heavily on the economy this year and next.

“Exports have continued to be a pillar of strength, but are likely to provide a smaller boost to growth going forward. The ongoing slowdown in China poses another headwind,” wrote Krystal Tan, an economist at ANZ in Singapore.

A separate Reuters poll published a week ago showed growth averaging 3.9% in 2021. It was then expected to ease to 2.9% in 2022 and 2.5% in 2023.

## Japan’s Exports, Imports Hit Record High by Value in December

TOKYO (Dispatches) - The world’s No. 3 economy, Japan, saw its imports and exports hit record highs in December in terms of their value in yen as supply bottlenecks eased at the end of 2021 amid rising prices, government data showed.

However, a persistent semiconductor shortage remained a headache for Japanese firms such as automaker Toyota, which slashed its near-term output target this week, in addition to uncertainties around the omicron variant.

“There’re considerable uncertainties” from omicron, Takeshi Minami, chief economist at Norinchukin Research Institute said, adding it could derail various aspects of Japan’s economy from firms’ overseas supply chains to domestic consumption.

Exports in December rose 17.5% from a year earlier, Ministry of Finance data showed, outstripping a 16.0% gain expected by economists in a Reuters poll but below a 20.5% rise in November.

Yen-denominated exports and imports hit records of 7,881.4 billion yen (\$69 billion) and 8,463.8 billion yen, respectively, the biggest since comparable data became available in January 1979, largely as rising inflation affected both flows.

Steel exports rose 75.1% year-on-year by value, but the gain in export volume was 10.2%, suggesting soaring commodity prices pushed up values of made-in-Japan goods sold overseas. Exports to the United States rose 22.1%, with car shipments marking their first year-over-year rise in five months at 11.9% as Japan’s factory output rebounded.

Shipments to China, Japan’s biggest trade partner, grew 10.8% in December from a year earlier.

Imports by Japan surged 41.1% in December on higher raw material costs and a weak yen, versus expectations of a rise of 42.8% and growth of 43.8% in the previous month.

This led to a trade deficit of 582.4 billion yen (\$5.09 billion) in December, versus expectations of 784.1 billion yen.

For the full year 2021, Japan reported a trade deficit of 1,472.2 billion yen, the first in two years and following a 388.3 billion surplus in 2020, amid higher fuel import costs.

“The rise of import costs is common among advanced economies, but (Japan’s) problem is weak pass-through of import costs to domestic prices,” Norinchukin’s Minami said.

“The recent combination of a weak yen and high fuel costs has brought considerable damage to Japan’s economy.”



## China’s Economy Poised to Grow Around 5.5%

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China will be able to achieve economic growth of around 5.5% in 2022, an adviser to the government’s cabinet said, making a rosier prediction than markets expect as recent data have pointed to slowing momentum.

The world’s second-largest economy cooled over the course of last year and faces multiple headwinds as a property downturn hurts investment and China’s efforts to contain local cases of the highly contagious Omicron variant of COVID-19 weigh on consumption.

That has prompted policymakers to roll out an array of support measures, including Friday’s cut by the central bank in the rate on standing lending facility (SLF) loans by 10 basis points, a day after it cut benchmark lending rates.

Friday’s comments by Zhu Guangyao, a former vice finance minister, are more optimistic than those from private economists.

A Reuters poll of analysts published on Jan. 13 forecast China’s economy would grow 5.2% in 2022.

The government will unveil a growth target for 2022 at the opening of the annual parliament meeting in early March.

“I’m confident that China’s economic growth will be around 5.5% in 2022,” Zhu told a media briefing, adding that the potential economic growth rate was estimated at 5-6%.

Li Yang, former vice president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a top government think tank, said China has policy space to support the economy.

China was restrained on monetary policy and fiscal policy in 2021, leaving some space for this year, Li said during the same event on Friday hosted by China’s State Council Information Office.

On Thursday, Premier Li Keqiang said China will take more “practical and concrete measures” to boost effective demand and stabilise market expectations, state media reported.

China’s cabinet has pledged to speed the issuance of local government special bonds to boost investment, while the finance ministry has issued 1.46 trillion yuan (\$230.26 billion) in the 2022 advance quota for local special bonds.

Chinese policymakers, however, have ruled out “flood-like” stimulus for fear of reigniting debt and property risks.

China’s economy expanded 8.1% in 2021, the fastest in a decade due partly to the low base from 2020 when COVID-19 jolted the economy, comfortably beating an official target of “above 6%”.

Last year, Chinese policymakers focused on curbing property and debt risks, exacerbating the slowdown, but have eased back somewhat so as not to fuel job losses ahead of a key Communist Party Congress late this year.

Zhu also said that expected interest rate hikes by the U.S. Federal Reserve could have a big market impact, Zhu said, and said that the United States should strengthen its policy coordination with emerging economies, including China.

## Turkish January Consumer Confidence Rebounds From Dec. Low



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish consumer confidence rebounded in January, official data showed, after hitting its lowest level on record in December after a slide in the value of the Turkish lira.

The consumer confidence index rose 6.2% to 73.2 points this month, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) data, bouncing back after dropping 3.1% to 68.9 points in December.

Confidence declined in 2020 due to fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic before a rebound that began declining in October of last year.

The index is a vital gauge of the economy’s overall performance, indicating people’s sentiments on financial standing and the general economic situation, along with expenditure and saving tendencies.

A confidence level below 100 reflects a pessimistic outlook, while a reading above 100 indicates optimism.

All sub-indices improved in the month with the financial situation expectation over the next 12 months increasing the most.

The financial situation of the household index at present surged 3.6% month-over-month in January to 56.1, the data showed.

The general economic situation expectation index in the next 12-month period increased 11.8% month-over-month to 74.5.

Assessment on spending money on durable goods index over the next year rose by 1.4% to 90.9 in the month, compared to 89.6 in December.



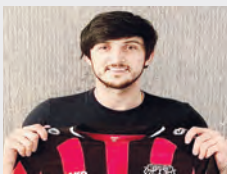
# Azmoun Joins Bayer 04 Leverkusen

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Bayer Leverkusen signed Iran forward Sardar Azmoun for next season on Saturday, announcing the transfer shortly after it scored five goals in a Bundesliga game.

The German football club announced that the 27-year-old Iran international would join on a free transfer after deciding not to extend his contract with Russian champion Zenit St. Petersburg. He

is getting a 5-year deal with the German club.

“Azmoun is one of the Russian league’s top scorers for years. He was champion three times in a row there with Zenit, has regularly played Champions League and shown his international class at the highest level there,” Leverkusen sporting director Simon Rolfes said. “He will bring more quality to our attack.”



# EU Nations Quarrel Over Whether Nuclear, Gas Are Green



AMIENS (Dispatches) - Hours before the window for lodging objections closes, EU environment and energy ministers meeting in France Friday differed sharply on a European Commission provision that would classify nuclear and natural gas energy as “sustainable”.

The controversy pits countries led by France -- where nuclear generates a world-leading 70 percent of electricity -- against Germany, Austria and others in the 27-nation bloc.

Debate over the Commission’s so-called “taxonomy” is not on the agenda of the informal, three-day talks in Amiens, but flared nonetheless.

In late December the European Commission unveiled a classification labelling investment in nuclear gas-based energy as sustainable, in order to favour sectors that reduce the greenhouse gas emissions driving global warming.

Nuclear power is carbon-free, and gas is significantly less polluting than coal.

Countries in the European Union had until midnight Friday to suggest modifications.

After that, the Commission -- taking these suggestions into account -- must “rapidly” publish a final text that will be definitely adopted four months later.

Passage in its current form seems more than likely: it would take a majority of deputies in the EU parliament or 20 of the 27 members states to derail it, and critical mass is lacking in both cases.

A letter to the executive European Commission from some European Parliament deputies protesting that the period for suggesting changes was too short has fallen on deaf ears.

And among EU member states, a dozen have backed France’s position and the Commission’s proposed taxonomy.

Many are central European nations looking to switch from carbon-intensive coal-fired power to natural gas.

“Nuclear is a decarbonised energy,” French environment minister Barbara Pompili told journalists in Amiens.

“We cannot deprive ourselves of it at the same time that we need to very rapidly reduce our carbon emissions.”

Despite the strong headwinds, anti-nuclear resistance has not subsided.

“It is neither sustainable nor economic”, countered Germany environment minister Stefan Tidow. “It is not a green energy.”

Luxembourg and Austria have gone even further, threatening to take the case to court if nuclear is certified as sustainable, citing the risk of accidents and the as-yet unresolved problem of nuclear waste.

“It would be greenwashing,” Luxembourg’s environment minister, Carole Dieschbourg, told AFP.

“And it would send a very bad signal: it is not a transition energy, it takes too long,” she added, alluding to the lag time for building nuclear reactors.

Her Austrian counterpart, Leonore Gewessler, said labelling nuclear power as sustainable will “undermine the credibility of the taxonomy” because it does not fulfil the legal criterion of “not causing damage to the environment”.

The EU Commission has proposed a measure requiring financial products to specify what percentage of the activities financed involve nuclear energy, a transparency measure that would allow investors to steer clear if they wanted to.

Berlin has expressed reservations about joining Vienna and Luxembourg in a legal challenge.

“For now, we’re working on our response, and when the Commission presents a new text we’ll analyse it from a legal standpoint,” said Germany state secretary for economic affairs and climate action Sven Giegold.

Austria has also objected to tagging gas as sustainable, with The Netherlands -- which backs the label for nuclear energy -- arguing “there is no scientific reason to include” gas.

Polish undersecretary of state for the environment Adam Guibourge-Czetwertynski disagreed.

“Gas replacing coal because there’s nothing better in the short term, that makes sense,” he said.

## An Authorization to Kill

FROM PAGE 1

The Islamic Republic of Iran which has been always supporter of the Palestine cause did not vote for this resolution to prove this point that it will not retreat any inch from its principles. Of course it does not mean that it denies the Holocaust but it means why nobody is allowed to ask any question on this historic event and when somebody conducts research and questions this issue, the Westerners get angry and start threatening. Several Western intellectuals and researchers have questioned this historic event and have faced with prison terms and bans. The most famous one was Roger Garaudy. He was a French philosopher, French resistance fighter and a communist author. He converted to Islam in 1982. In 1998, he was convicted and fined for Holocaust denial under French law for claiming that the death of six million Jews was a “myth”.

Nobody came to defend him under the claim of freedom of speech but at the same time Charlie Hebdo continues blasphemous cartoons against the prophet of Islam and the West defends it, claiming that it is defending the freedom of speech and it is an apparent double standard approach.



The Islamic Republic of Iran rejected an Israeli-initiated UN resolution against Holocaust denial, saying the document is a new manifestation of efforts by the occupying regime aimed at taking advantage of international mechanisms to cover up own atrocities.

In a statement released on Friday, Iran’s Foreign Ministry dissociated Tehran from the resolution, which was sponsored jointly by Israel and Germany and was adopted by consensus at the UN General Assembly the previous day.

“This measure is another attempt by the Zionist regime to abuse the UN mechanisms in order to cover up its daily crimes. These days, unfortunately, this attempt has been accompanied by the West’s unreasonable support. As it is clear to everyone, the crimes of World War II took place due to the two motives of racism and expansionism. The Zionist regime is now an inheritor and flag bearer of the two evil temperaments,” it said.

“The regime’s racist approach has been clarified in numerous international documents, and despite the strong will of the international community, Israel remains the only racist regime with an expansionist ideology. The Islamic Republic has always condemned genocide under any circumstances and considered it unjustifiable. That is why during World War II, Iran hosted refugees from some European countries, while the fake Zionist regime has constantly tried to use World War II victims and the Jews as an excuse for its shameless and aggressive actions.”

The Iranian Foreign Ministry also denounced the crimes committed by Tel Aviv against the Palestinians

“By violating international law over the past seven decades, this regime and its leaders have committed all kinds of crimes, especially crimes against humanity, against the Palestinian people and the people of the countries in the region. Genocide, assassination, racial cleansing, house demolition and siege are among the atrocities that the Zionist regime is constantly perpetrating,” it added.

“The Islamic Republic reiterates that preventing the recurrence of historical catastrophes requires historical research, which should be done without political judgments and prejudices. Therefore, such constrictive approaches are not acceptable, and such a resolution is not deemed based on consensus, and is thus rejected.”

So with such resolutions, big powers and despotic regimes as well as fake state Israel are emboldened to continue their existence and crimes and the independent and weaker states are gradually losing their hopes towards the international powers to help them in case of dispute and problems because they do not expect bodies like the UN to help them when there is a dispute with Zionist regime or arrogant powers.

The resolution once again proved the people in the world that the Zionist regime has full support of the arrogant powers to continue their bloodshed and they should not seek justice and assistance from such bodies which are under influence of some certain states.

# Global Energy Transition To Cause Short-Term Economic Pain

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The transition to clean energy required to prevent temperatures from rising swiftly could shave 2 per cent off global GDP by 2050 but is likely recoverable before the end of the century, a report by natural resources consultancy Wood Mackenzie said.

While investments in technologies like solar and wind farms, advanced batteries will generate jobs, the transition will also likely cause a loss of jobs and tax revenues in fossil fuel production, said the report called “No Pain, No Gain: The economic consequences of accelerating the energy transition”.

“It’s by no means a way to say that we shouldn’t pursue transition or slow it down,” said Peter Martin, WoodMac’s chief economist. “This pain in the short-term will pay off in the long-term.”

Benefits from limiting the rise in temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius, as called for by the United Nations, could boost global GDP, on aggregate by 1.6 per cent in 2050, the report said. But actions required to spur the transition to keep temperatures from going above that level could cut 3.6 per cent from GDP in 2050, resulting in the 2 per cent hit, the report said.

The impacts will not be felt evenly. China will feel about 27 per cent of a cumulative US\$75 trillion (RM313 trillion) economic hit to global GDP by 2050, while the United States will see about 12 per cent, Europe will experience 11 per cent and India about 7 per cent.

Economies such as Iraq that do not have financial reserves to invest in non-fossil fuel sectors could suffer the biggest losses in economic output, it said.

Wealthy economies with deep capital markets that already have big investments in energy transition technologies, or a propensity to invest in new technologies, will be better positioned. France and Switzerland, for example, will likely enjoy a modest boost to economic growth.

## Monthly Inflation...

FROM PAGE 1

An Iranian administrative government that took office in early August has boasted of its ability to tame inflation by introducing tighter fiscal and monetary policies while relying more on home-grown capacities of the Iranian economy through encouraging more manufacturing and non-oil export activities in the country.

The annual inflation rate reported by the SCI in late August was around 45.2%, up one percentage point against the month to late July.

The Iranian government has promised inflation rate will drop further in the near future as the economy finds new ways of coping with the American sanctions and the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

# Rio Vows to Revitalize Two Crime-Racked Slums

RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - The governor of Brazil’s Rio de Janeiro state announced plans Saturday for massive investments aimed at revitalizing two long crime-infested slum districts.

The announcement came just three days after 1,300 police swept through the Jacarezinho and Muzema favelas in a “reconquering” operation that authorities said aimed to wrest control back from organized crime groups.

Governor Claudio Castro told reporters the state would spend 500 million real (about \$90 million) over coming weeks to attack social problems in the two districts after decades of governmental neglect.

“It’s a program to reconquer the territory and return it to its rightful owners: the people of these favelas,” Castro said.

He promised efforts both to improve sewage in the two favelas and to establish social and educational programs aimed primarily at young people and families.

Castro told reporters that work on other favelas would come only after the revitalization effort in Jacarezinho and Muzema is “functioning fully.”

# Iran, Iraqi Red Crescent Societies Sign MoU

TEHRAN (IRNA)- Iranian and Iraqi Red Crescent Societies inked an MoU with emphasis on good neighborliness and in line with developing joint humanitarian cooperation.

The MoU is mainly aimed at creating a framework for joint cooperation and bilateral coordination between Iranian and Iraqi Red Crescent Societies in training, exchanging rescue experiences, rehabilitation and health field.

The MoU will be valid for 10 years and in seven articles.

Accordingly, the Iraqi Red Crescent Society will cooperate with Iran in the highest level for finalizing the situation of the lost people, presenting medical aid during religious events.

Training the human resources in the Iraqi Red Crescent Society at various levels of management regarding crisis management, erecting camp, water and sanitation, treatment, logistics and warehousing based on available facilities are among the articles of the MoU.

## Tehran Expects...

FROM PAGE 1

Peyman-Pak pointed to the increase of export incentives and the number of commercial attachés in target markets as other measures set to be taken by the Trade Promotion Organization to increase non-oil exports.

The TPO head further referred to the president’s recent visit to Russia, and said: “We have planned to increase our non-oil exports to Russia to \$7.5 billion by [the Iranian calendar year] 1404 (begins in March 2025).”

Russia imports \$250 billion to \$300 billion of commodities annually, of which our share has always been less than \$500 million, the official regretted, adding: “This year we plan to increase this figure to \$750 million.”

According to Peyman-Pak, considering Russia’s imports in various areas including import of \$8 billion of agricultural products, \$44 billion of foodstuff, \$1.5 billion of marine industry equipment in addition to other imports like tiles, ceramics, cement, petrochemicals, bags, shoes and textiles, Iran can easily realize the target of \$7.5 billion of exports to Russia.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Peyman-Pak pointed to the facilitation of the process of re-injecting export revenues into the country’s economic system, and noted: “In the last quarter, with the diversification of the ways for returning foreign currency and the alignment of forex and trade policies, the rate of export revenue return has increased by 15-10 percent.”

During these few months, we have tried to accelerate the growth trend of exports by facilitating the process of export revenue returns and supporting exporters, while moving towards the export of goods that have a better competitive advantage and more added value.

He noted that various measures were taken during this period to improve the trade balance and increase non-oil exports, including the special attention of senior government officials to export and trade issues through reviewing the problems of traders and solving challenges by holding various meetings with other officials and with traders.

“We tried to make decisions in coordination with the representatives of the chambers of commerce, guilds, cooperatives, unions and associations, and this process while creating empathy with exporters, also had a positive effect on the country’s foreign trade balance,” he said.

Touching upon the Industry Ministry and TPO’s plans for increasing exports to the neighboring countries, Peyman-Pak said: “Despite the challenges in the two markets of Afghanistan and Turkey, with the follow-up and cooperation between the government and exporters, exports have accelerated in recent months, and we hope that this upward trend will continue.”

He also referred to the TPO’s programs for diversification of export methods, saying that 620 cases of barter trade have been sent to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).



## Brazil to Stop Unvaccinated Footballers

SAO PAULO (Dispatches) - The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) said players must be vaccinated against Covid-19 to take part in this year's league championship. The CBF said it was in constant contact with health bodies and had sent an updated list of requirements to member clubs. "One of these is the obligation to present a full vaccination certificate against Covid-19 to the CBF's Medical Commission," it said in a statement. The top four national divisions kick off in the second week of April.

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<b>Public Relations Tel:</b> (+98)(21) 44253450	<b>ISSN 1024-6053</b>
Editorial Board: 44253449	<b>P.O. Box:</b> 15875-8551
<b>Public Relations Fax:</b> (+98)(21) 44253395	<b>Address:</b> No 13, Pajouhesh St., Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzadaran Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
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<b>Website:</b> http://www.irannewsdaily.com	<b>Distributed by:</b> Cities of Iran Cultural and Artistic Institute
	<b>Managing Director:</b> Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

## Korda Takes LPGA Tournament of Champions Lead

MIAMI (Dispatches) - World number one Nelly Korda fired seven birdies in a six-under par 66 yesterday to take a one-shot lead in the US LPGA Tournament of Champions in Orlando, Florida. After a roller coaster 68 on Thursday that left her one off the pace, Korda looked dialled in, bouncing back from her lone bogey of the day at the fifth with birdies at the seventh and ninth to make the turn three-under for the day.

# Medvedev, Tsitsipas March Into Last 16 In Australian Open

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - World number two and title favourite Daniil Medvedev won over the Australian Open crowd as he eased into the last 16 along with Stefanos Tsitsipas. After the drama of yesterday, when defending champion Naomi Osaka exited Melbourne in the third round, the women's seeds were also mostly untroubled on day six. Second seed Aryna Sabalenka overcame the serving yips and Simona Halep was an emphatic winner, the former number one now playing self-described "dinosaur" Alize Cornet on Monday for a place in the quarter-finals. Russia's Medvedev, the de facto men's top seed after the deportation of defending champion Novak Djokovic on the eve of the Grand Slam, said some fans at Melbourne Park had a "low IQ" after they booed him in his second-round victory over Australian showman Nick Kyrgios. The reigning US Open champion needed four sets and a large dose of composure to see off Kyrgios and silence Rod Laver Arena, but it was altogether more comfortable as he dismissed unseeded Dutchman Botic van de Zandschulp. The 25-year-old Medvedev kept his cool in sweltering conditions on Margaret Court Arena to roll through 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 in 1hr 55min and faces American Maxime Cressy in the fourth round. "I'll put it this way, it's easier to play a guy from the Netherlands than a guy from Australia in Australia in Melbourne," said Medvedev, who has a similar love-hate dynamic with the crowd in New York.



generation coming up fast behind the "Big Three" of Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer, could meet in the semi-finals.

Felix Auger-Aliassime sent home the last Briton left standing, the 21-year-old Canadian thrashing Dan Evans 6-4, 6-1, 6-1.

There is an intriguing clash later Saturday between fifth seed Andrey Rublev of Russia and 2018 Melbourne Park finalist Marin Cilic of Croatia that has the potential to be a late-night classic on Margaret Court Arena.

Cilic pushed Roger Federer — who is injured and not in Melbourne — to five sets in the final four years ago and the big-serving 27th seed is capable of upsetting anyone.

In the women's draw, Halep swatted aside Danka Kovinic — conqueror of US Open champion Emma Raducanu — 6-2, 6-1 in just 64 minutes to set up a date with Cornet of France.

The fit-again Halep came into the tournament full of confidence after her first title in 16 months earlier this month at a Melbourne warm-up event and was always in charge.

"I feel great that I can play the fourth round again. I always love to play in Australia so that's why maybe I play good matches," said Halep, seeded 14.

Unseeded Cornet celebrated her 32nd birthday by slugging it out with Slovenia's 29th seed Tamara Zidansek for a 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 victory.

The crowd serenaded her by singing happy birthday.

World number two Sabalenka overcame the serving problems that have been plaguing her early season, but still needed three sets to get past 31st seed Marketa Vondrousova.

The Belarusian had served 70 double faults in her previous four matches in 2022, but only tallied 10 as she beat the Czech 4-6, 6-3, 6-1.

## Lakers Get Needed Win Over Magic

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - The beleaguered Los Angeles Lakers bounced back from an embarrassing loss to the Indiana Pacers with a 116-105 NBA victory over the Magic in Orlando. Superstar LeBron James scored 29 points, his last two coming on an alley-oop dunk off a pass from Russell Westbrook to seal the victory. Carmelo Anthony added 23 points off the bench, 19 of them in the second half for the Lakers, who opened the third quarter on a 19-2 scoring run and out-scored the Magic 31-16 in the period. Westbrook, who was benched late in Wednesday's loss to Indiana -- in which the Lakers blew a 15-point lead -- scored 18 points with 11 rebounds and seven assists. "Russ is a high-character guy, we knew he was going to respond," Lakers coach Frank Vogel said. Westbrook said he had no trouble moving on. "My job as a player and professional is to do what's asked of me and continue to find ways to help impact winning."

On Friday, Vogel used reserve Stanley Johnson alongside the starters in the second half, the 10-day contract player making a confident pair of three-pointers as the Lakers gradually took control over a Magic team with the worst record in the league.

The Lakers, losers of four of their previous five games, improved to 23-23. Vogel said that despite their inconsistencies, which have sparked criticism from the likes of former Lakers great Magic Johnson and led to speculation his job is in danger, they believe they can be title contenders.

"We're all committed to this group getting the job done," Vogel said of a team that is also counting on further progress when Anthony Davis returns from a knee injury. "We still believe in what we can be."

As the Lakers clawed their way back toward playoff position the Brooklyn Nets regained the Eastern Conference lead with a 117-102 victory over the Spurs in San Antonio -- along with Milwaukee's 94-90 victory over Chicago that knocked the Bulls out of the top spot.



# Xavi Maintains Tough Barcelona Stance on Dembele

MADRID (Dispatches) - Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez said the club would not soften their stance on Ousmane Dembele's contract situation, despite the Frenchman's angry riposte on social media on Thursday. Dembele wrote he would not "give in to blackmail" after Xavi left him out of his squad to face Athletic Bilbao in the Copa del Rey on Thursday night, following a breakdown in talks over a new deal.

The winger's contract expires in the summer, when he will be able to leave Barcelona for free. The club's director of football Mateu Alemany said on Thursday morning "it seems obvious to us that the player does not want to continue at Barcelona" and "therefore we

hope that a transfer will take place before January 31".

"Dembele's situation hasn't changed. He knows what the options are and he has to decide," Xavi said in a press conference ahead of Sunday's game away at Alaves.

"There is no alternative. There are still days left (in the transfer window)," Xavi added.

It remains to be seen if Barcelona can find an exit for Dembele mid-season, either for a transfer fee or on loan. Shifting the 24-year-old's wages would help free up space for signings.

"We are working to bring players in. We'll see what we can do," Xavi said.

With Dembele exiled, Barcelona could have done without Ansu Fati picking up a hamstring injury against Athletic on Thursday, with reports suggesting the 19-year-old could be out for two months.

Fati has only just returned after two months out injured, having come back in September following 10 months absent with a knee problem.

"He is very upset, it's a difficult situation," said Xavi.

## Ryding Makes British History With Kitzbuehel Win

KITZBUHEL (Dispatches) - Dave Ryding, who honed his early skiing on a dry slope, pulled off a massive shock when he won Britain's first World Cup race with victory in the men's slalom in Kitzbuehel.

Ryding clocked a combined total of 1min 41.26sec, finishing 0.38sec ahead of Norway's Lucas Braathen, with his teammate and two-time Olympic medallist Henrik Kristoffersen in third (+0.65).

"This place is a special place for me," said Ryding, whose second-placed finish on the same Ganslern course in 2017 had matched Britain's previous best alpine skiing result achieved by Konrad Bartelski in the 1981 Val Gardena downhill.

Ryding didn't start ski race training on snow until he was 21, honing his technique instead on dry slopes in the north of England and content with the family's annual ski holiday.

"It takes us (Britons) longer, I didn't grow up on snow, but on a plastic slope that took 11 seconds to ski down," he recalled.

A hugely popular fixture on the World Cup circuit he was last week named in the British team for the upcoming Beijing Olympics, which will be his fourth.

"I'm 35 now but I never stopped believing, I never stopped trying," said the slalom specialist who finished 27th at the 2010 Vancouver Games, 17th in Sochi four years later and ninth in Pyeongchang in 2018.



## Nigeria's Super Eagles To Face Ghana in 2022 World Cup Play-Offs

YAOUNDE (Dispatches) - Nigeria, the top performers so far in the ongoing Africa Cup of Nations in Cameroon, were paired with arch rivals Ghana in the African World Cup play-offs draw in Douala.

Ghana will have home advantage first and both legs will be played between March 21 and 29 with the aggregate winners securing a place at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

Egypt face Senegal, Cameroon meet Algeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo play Morocco and Mali tackle Tunisia in the other ties.

Only Mali among the 10 contenders have never qualified for the world football showpiece while Cameroon hold the record for appearances by an African team with seven between 1982 and 2014. Nigeria brushed off a troubled build-up to the Cup of Nations, including the sacking of German coach Gernot Rohr, to be the only team among the 24 in Cameroon to win all three group matches.

While the Super Eagles look forward to a last-16 clash with Tunisia on Sunday, Ghana were shock first-round casualties, finishing bottom of a group after a stunning 3-2 loss to minnows the Comoros.

Serbia-born Ghana coach Milovan Rajevac, who guided the Black Stars to the 2010 World Cup quarter-finals, insisted he would not resign after the humiliating loss.

"My primary ambition from the time I took over as coach last October was to qualify Ghana for the World Cup in Qatar," he said, amid rumours that he faces the sack.

