

Health Ministry Announced on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic In Iran Increased to 132,424 With 44 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Disease Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Iran and South Korea Reportedly Plan to Hold Working-Level Consultations Next Month in Seoul to Discuss Resolving Disputes Over Tehran's Assets Frozen in the Asian Country

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Iran, Russia To Ditch Dollar In Bilateral Trade

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Chairman of the Iran-Russia parliamentary friendship group says that Tehran and Moscow have reached good agreements in various fields.

Ebrahim Rezaei told local media on Sunday that in the field of energy, the two sides agreed to cooperate in the development of Iran's oil and natural gas fields.

In the monetary and banking sector, Iran and Russia agreed to take positive steps to ditch the US dollar as the dominant currency in bilateral trade, particularly in the transportation sector, he said. **See Page 7**

Leader Urges Officials Not to Condition Economy



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the enemies are waging a war against Iran's economy in order to bring it to collapse and pit the people against the establishment.

"The goal of the enemies in this war has been the collapse of the Iranian economy; that was their intention. Now, the collapse of the economy was, of course, a prelude in order to set the people against the Islamic Republic by destroying the Iranian economy and to carry out their malicious political intentions in this way," the Leader said in an address to a group of Iranian producers and entrepreneurs in Tehran Sunday. **See Page 7**

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ViewPoint
 By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

COVID-19 a Serious Headache for the Globe

It seems the COVID-19 saga does not want to reach its finish line and its death toll is increasing every day and it has brought back concerns among the nations and this time through its new mutation Omicron.

According to the latest data released by the World Health Organization (WHO) on Thursday, the cumulative number of global COVID-19 cases had exceeded 360.5 million, with the death toll surpassing 5.62 million and any second the number is on the rise in the world.

Specifically, there had been 360,578,392 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 5,620,865 deaths, as of 16:37 Central European Time (CET) on Thursday, according to the WHO.

A total of 9,679,721,754 vaccine doses had been administered as of Jan. 25, according to the WHO.

The cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases in the United States exceeded 73.39 million as of Thursday, with the death toll surpassing 878,000, according to the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University.

Specifically, the country's case count rose to 73,397,025 and the death toll reached 878,325 as of 19:21 Eastern Standard Time (EST) Thursday.

A total of 533,570,351 doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in the country, according to the CSSE tally.

On Tuesday, the World Health Organization also said the pandemic will not end as the omicron variant subsides in some countries, warning the high levels of infection around the world will likely lead to new variants as the virus mutates.

"We're hearing a lot of people suggest that omicron is the last variant, that it's over after this. And that is not the case because this virus is circulating at a very intense level around the world," Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO's Covid-19 technical lead, said during a coronavirus update in Geneva. **See Page 7**

Founder of Gaj International Publishing:

The Need to Create an Economic Deputy in Education



The founder of Gaj International Publishing explained the need to reconsider existing attitudes in the field of education. He came up with ways to save money as well as increase efficiency in education. The need to create an economic deputy in education. The founder of Gaj International Publishing explained the need to reconsider existing attitudes in the field of education and offered solutions to save costs as well as increase efficiency in the field of education. Abolfazl Jokar stressed the need to change attitudes in the construction and renovation of schools. "The old view of building and renovating schools needs to change so that schools become more attractive places for children and adolescents," he said. The new generation needs more attractive spaces for education. Due to the expansion of communication and easier access to the features of schools in other countries of the world, students compare their educational conditions with those countries. This creates a kind of frustration in the students. Most of our educational spaces are not suitable.

Many large public schools are located on the main streets and squares of major cities," he said. These are not suitable for school due to their long history and the state of noise and traffic pollution, but they are well priced anyway. At the same time as selling these properties, in a quiet environment, schools can be renovated with a new attitude and the surplus income can be invested in the infrastructure of education. "We can also put the construction of schools in different environments on the agenda," said the founder of Gaj International Publishing. For example, build schools in parks so that students can study in a lively atmosphere. The size of some parks allows the establishment of several schools. After the Islamic Revolution, many parks have been built throughout the country. Naturally, students learn more calmly when they get to school in a quiet and peaceful environment and away from the noise of the street and the crowded environment. Jokar stressed the need to save money in high-yield areas. "The constant changes in textbooks lead to increased costs for reprinting textbooks," he said of the disadvantages of constant textbook changes. The cost of used paper for these is staggering. In most developed countries, textbooks are revised at intervals of several years. When textbook changes are limited to time intervals of, for example, five years or more, a textbook can be used for up to several years. This will reduce the cost to families. The founder of Gaj International Publishing said that Education publishes more than 135 million textbooks annually. If textbooks are published every 5 years, the resulting savings can be invested in education infrastructure. This is especially important in the current context where paper prices have risen sharply. He added: "In many countries, students have to hand over their books to the school for the use of next year students after the end of the school year." If they damage their books, they will both damage and have a negative effect on their discipline score, which is very important. In fact, the textbook is a trust in the hands of students. Referring to another aspect of the benefits of not constantly changing textbooks, Jokar said: "If textbooks do not change over and over again, there will be no need for in-service classes for teachers to teach modified subjects, and this will save on teaching costs and is raised. On the other hand, teachers will become more proficient in the concepts of textbooks and, as a result, will hold their classes more productively. Regarding the need to increase the quality of education, he said: "Education should be more attractive so that students learn quality." In our country, quality education is less considered. One of the reasons is the lack of training hours and working hours for teachers. Teachers in Iran do not have long

working hours and their living expenses are not covered. They have to turn to other jobs that are sometimes not commensurate with the dignity of the dear teachers. Teachers' working hours can be doubled and teachers' salaries can be quadrupled in return. In this case, they will not be challenged in terms of providing living expenses and will be engaged in educational and research affairs during overtime hours. This will undoubtedly have a great impact on improving the quality of education and training dynamic and active students. The founder of Gaj International Publishing continued: "I know the government is also facing difficulties in securing the current salaries of teachers." The view of honorable presidents on education must change. They should allocate more funds to this important and infrastructural area. "The government's use of private sector capacity is one of the keys to success in education," Jokar said. Privatization of education, in addition to reducing pressure on government budgets and greater efficiency in the use of financial resources and facilities, will increase the quality of education. Private sector activity should not be limited to the establishment of non-governmental schools. In the field of education, research and mental education, students should be able to have a freer field of activity. The ground must be prepared for creativity in this field, which has been captivated by years of traditional and uncreative thinking. He continued: "Contrary to popular belief that non-governmental schools serve the privileged and affluent class of society, most private education and most privatization methods in the world target low-income families." This issue is spreading day by day in different countries. Governments have only a supervisory and supportive role. For example, the establishment of non-governmental schools with a capacity of admitting 5,000 students with low tuition instead of the establishment of non-governmental schools with a capacity of 150 students and very high tuition. Those in charge of education must have control over the economy in this area, unfortunately, otherwise, the people will pay the price for this weakness of economic management. This issue is also raised at the macro level in the Ministry of Education. In a 2015 interview, I stated that the establishment of an economic deputy in education is essential. This need is felt more today. More importantly, of course, this post should be run by one of the ministers of good economics in previous governments or one of the heads of the program and budget organization of previous periods, not dear educators. These measures are necessary if we are to solve the economic problems of education, from teachers' salaries and livelihoods to the renovation of schools. In the end, he pointed out: The economic problems of education can be solved by expert economists.

Pakistan Traders Invited To Invest in Iran

LAHORE (Dispatches) – "Iran-Pakistan Tourism Promotion and Investment Opportunities Session" was organized by Khana Farhang Iran-Lahore.

The session was held under the supervision of Director General, Khana Farhang Iran-Lahore, Jafar Ronas. Mohammad Reza Nazeri, Consulate General Iran-Lahore, heads and members of motorcyclist clubs of Lahore and members of business community were present.

Addressing the session, Jafar Ronas said: "Iran has become one of the most attractive countries for tourism and investors. Trade relations between Pakistan and Iran can be closer than any other country." Iran is still the cheapest country in the world where all basic necessities of life are affordable as compare to other countries and fuel prices are really low, he added.

He said, "There are vast bilateral trade and investment opportunities for the two countries and traders of both sides should take advantage of it. I invite the Pakistani businessmen to trade with Iran and we will provide them all facilities." **See Page 7**

Two International Drug Trafficking Gangs Dismantled

TEHRAN (IP) - Police and security forces destroyed two international drug trafficking gangs in the southwestern province of Khuzestan and arrested three people.

According to Iranian Police, 140 kg of methamphetamine and 170 kg of opium were seized from the gangs. As the front line in the fight against drug trafficking in the world, Iran holds the record for narcotics confiscation.

Drugs are a source of many social harms, including divorces, crimes, infectious diseases, so if drugs are controlled, many of the social harms will also be prevented. The United Nations has officially announced that 90 percent of opium, 70 percent of morphine, and 20 percent of world heroin have been discovered by Iran.

Iranian, French Presidents Discuss Lifting Sanctions, JCPOA Guarantees

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi discussed the need for lifting of anti-Iran sanctions, verification and valid guarantees for proper implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in a phone conversation with his French President Emanuel Macron on Saturday night.

During the phone call, which was made by the French President, they also reviewed ways of strengthening Tehran-Paris relations.

Both sides also condemned the military attacks on the Yemeni people.

Saying that the U.S. has admitted the failure of its maximum pressure policy, President Raisi said that the Islamic Republic of Iran has already demonstrated will and seriousness to reach an agreement at the end of the negotiations.

He said any efforts by the other sides in this regard should aim at removal of sanctions, verification and valid guarantees.

President further emphasized that the regional security and stability can only be achieved



via regional solutions, and not foreign interference and called on the international community to pay attention to the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Yemen.

He stressed the need for an immediate end to the siege of the oppressed nation.

The French president, too, said Iran is right not to trust the US, because the present crisis is due to America's behavior.

President Macron also slammed the military attacks against the Yemeni people, particularly the recent air raids.

The two presidents also exchanged views on a number of regional topics including the current status in Lebanon.

Iran Eyes Closer Ties With Kazakhstan

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - President Ebrahim Raisi called for the promotion of ties between Tehran and Nur-Sultan in messages to the Kazakh leaders.

Raisi hailed the 30th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Iran and Kazakhstan in separate messages for Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has been granted the honorary status of elbasy -leader of the Kazakh nation.

In the message for Nazarbayev, Raisi referred to the positive and neutral view of Kazakhstan in resolving the Iranian nuclear issue, and said, "I am confident that the path of relations between the two countries, with mutual will and efforts, will continue for the welfare of the two nations and in order to ensure and strengthen regional and international peace and stability."

In another message for Tokayev, Raisi noted that the relations between the two countries cover a wide range of issues, resulting in the signing of 114 documents on the development of cooperation, especially in the economic and trade fields.

"During the thirty years of diplomatic relations, the Islamic Republic of Iran has considered Kazakhstan as a reliable partner in the Central Asian region and the Caspian Sea, and has made serious efforts to expand bilateral relations," the Iranian president added.

Iran, Poland to Shore Up Sports Cooperation



TEHRAN (IP) - Polish ambassador to Tehran said that his country and Iran were examining ways to expand sports cooperation.

Maciej Falkowski said on Sunday after meeting with the Iranian Minister of Sports and Youth Hamid Sajjadi: "One of the most critical schedules for meeting with the Minister of Sports and Youth of Iran was examining the fields of sports trade."

"Professional sports education and the generalization of sports were also examined," he added, highlighting: "To achieve this, we agreed to reach practical steps for an agreement."

The Polish ambassador to Tehran said the discussions were very constructive and expressed hope that tangible results would come out of such meetings.

Earlier on January 18, the Chinese Ambassador to Tehran and the Iranian Minister of Sports and Youth met to discuss expanding joint sports cooperation between the two countries.

Says Iran Can Build 500,000 Homes in Syria

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - A member of parliament has said Iran is ready to build up to 500,000 residential units in Syria as part of that country's reconstruction projects.

Mohammad-Reza Rezaee-Kuchi, who is the chairman of parliament's construction committee said he was in Syria recently with a delegation of Iran's ministry of roads and urban development to discuss how Iran could participate in the reconstruction of the war-ravaged country.

Two years ago, Iran signed an agreement with Syria to build 30,000 residential units, but a deputy minister later said the government could build 200,000 units.

Government officials had said earlier that Iran does not intend to pay for the projects but wants to secure a role for its companies in Syria's construction. This would undoubtedly include the Revolutionary Guard construction arm, Khatam ol-Anbia, which has a dominating position in Iran due to its political clout.

Negotiating Team Urged to Observe Redlines in Vienna talks

TEHRAN (MNA) - Referring to the U.S. failure of adhering to its commitments, an Iranian MP said that lawmakers expect the Iranian negotiating team to observe the country's redlines strictly and continue their talks in Vienna cautiously.

Speaking in a session of the Parliament on Sunday, Seyyed Ali Mousavi addressed the Iranian negotiating team and said that the U.S. has proved that they cannot be trusted because of breaching their commitments openly.

Under such circumstances, lawmakers at Iranian Parliament request the negotiating team to observe redlines of the Establishment strictly, he said, adding that the Parliament will throw its weight behind the negotiating team.

The eighth round of Vienna talks on the removal of anti-Iranian sanctions is underway in the Austrian capital of Vienna with the participation of Iranian delegations and P4 + 1 group of countries including the UK, France, Russia, China and Germany.

MP Raps Afghanistan Over "Water Rights" Commitments

TEHRAN (IFP) - An Iranian lawmaker has lashed out at Afghanistan for failing to make good on its obligations with regards to the supply of water.

"Despite the concessions we give to Afghanistan, they have not fulfilled their promises regarding the supply of water," said Mohammad Sargazi.

"We are now exporting electricity to Afghanistan, supplying water to the town of Zaranj and providing the country with fuel," the legislator explained.

"Transportation routes in our country are the major paths for sending commodities and fuel to Afghanistan, but unfortunately, despite Iran's engagement with the Afghan side, they fail to deliver on their commitments with regards to water rights of the Helmand river," he said.

Under a 1972 agreement between Tehran and Kabul, Afghanistan must open the gates of the river to flow a certain volume of water toward the southwestern Iranian province of Sistan-Baluchestan on a regular basis.

However, Afghanistan has failed to fulfill its commitments in that regard.

This comes as locals in the province have staged protests over water shortage and Kabul's breach of promise.

Cumulative Rich Gas Output from South Pars at 2,000 bcm

TEHRAN (Shana) -- Director of Production and Operations of Pars Oil and Gas Company announced the cumulative growth of gas production from South Pars since the beginning of operation in 2002 at about 2,000 billion cubic meters.

The value of this cumulative production is estimated at 360 billion dollars, said Alireza Ebadi.

The duties of Pars Oil and Gas Company are divided into two areas of development and production, which are in the field of development, construction and operation of South Pars projects and in the field of production, according to the operation and management of the offshore sector, currently, more than 70% of the country's gas is extracted from the South Pars field," he said.

He added: "The South Pars joint gas field is blocked in such a way that it has the highest efficiency and exploitation, and considering that Qatar has about 60% of the total area of the field, the amount of recovery should be measured taking into account this issue."

Call for Foreign Investment in Chabahar Port

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Director General of Ports and Maritime Organization of Sistan and Baluchestan Province announced a call for investment in the developmental and infrastructural projects of Chabahar Port for the neighboring member countries of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), CIS and Afghanistan.

Behrouz Aqaei announcing this call for investment said that one of the concerns of the managers of the industries in the developing countries and especially managers of the Ports and Maritime Organization is to the financing of projects finance in order to overcome the problems of the projects.

He reiterated that today having only underground resources (oil, gas and mines) and efficient human resources do not suffice development and a strong and smart management to attract international investments for implementing the defines projects and to import knowhow is considered an effective and determinative factor.



Aqaei went on to say that attracting investors needs plans and various models of contracts that one of them is the contract for building and exploiting or transferring which is known as build-operation-transfer (B.O.T) which is today welcomed by the investors.

He added that one of the main reasons that this type of the contract is welcomed is the limited responsibilities of the entrepreneurs regarding the risks of the projects (financial, executive and operation) so that most part of the risks return to the investors.

Aqaei said that Chabahar Port is the gateway to the IORA member states, Afghanistan and the CIS countries and it is very special and significant, adding that closeness of this port to the west of India makes it the best transit route to India for the mentioned countries for marine or even land trade with the lowest cost and security concerns.

He said the port welcomes and calls on any foreign investment from IORA member states, CIS countries and Afghanistan for investment in the developmental projects and operating in the infrastructures of the port.

U.S. Seeks to Build Deterrent Power Against Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps said that the U.S. and its allies are seeking to build deterrent power against Iran.

Speaking at the 39th martyrdom anniversary of General Hassan Bagheri, Brigadier General Ali Fadavi said that during the Sacred Defense, Iranian soldiers were able to overcome the enemy with the help of God.

"The U.S. military budget is \$80 billion, and even higher in terms of science and technology, but in terms of results, it has had an adverse effect," Fadavi said.

Recalling a comment made by the U.S. former president Obama administration's last Secretary of Defense while standing at the Al Dhafra Air Base in the UAE when he said the U.S. and its regional allies try to build deterrent power against Iran, Fadavi said, "This implies the power that the Islamic Republic of Iran has gained, which has led the enemies to seek to create deterrent power against Iran."

OIG, NIGI Officials Visit Chadormalu Company

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Senior officials of Omid Investment Group (OIG) and National Investment Group of Iran (NIGI) paid a visit to Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company' complexes and during their visit they got acquainted with the latest developments in the company.



According to reports, some experts and senior officials of OIG and NIGI as well as some activists in the capital market paid a two-day visit to the mining and industrial complexes of Chadormalu Company and during their visit they were kept in the track of activities and future plans of the company.

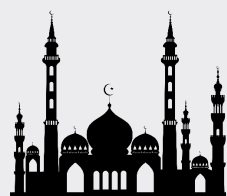
Managers of the complexes in the meetings briefed the guests of the latest activities and programs of their units.

Manager of the industrial complex of Chadormalu Company Eng. Khalili in the meeting said that despite some problems because of severance of gas flow to industrial units and closure of steelmaking units which are currently functioning with 50 percent of their capacity is still ahead of its annual production schedule.

He went on to say that despite promises for not power outage, the plants of the Chadormalu Company due to having its own power plant station continued its activities but still the power outage continues while the company has tried to materialize the Supreme Leader's slogan of the year for production through removing hurdles.

Then manager of the mining complex of the company Eng. Hamid Jahani pointed to the plans of the company for production of 12m tons of iron ore concentrate in the current year and reiterated that the growth in the production of the company is indebted to the supports and efforts of the CEO of the company and board of directors as well as non-stop efforts of the personnel of the company.

Then the visitors hailed the team work spirit as well as high spirit of the personnel of the company for the achievements of the company.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:17
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:49
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:38
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:04

86. We admitted them to Our mercy: for they were of the righteous ones.
87. And remember Zun-nun, when he departed in wrath: He imagined that We had no power over him! But he cried through the depths of darkness, "There is no god but thou: glory to thee: I was indeed wrong!"

Surah 21, The Prophets (86 - 87)

Direct Shipping Line to Boost Iran-Bangladesh Trade Ties

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Ambassador of Bangladesh to Tehran Gousal Azam Sarker during his visit to Tabriz met with Head of Tabriz Chamber of Commerce Younes Zhaeleh and during the meeting both sides explored ways of boosting economic cooperation.

In the meeting, Zhaeleh called for the launch of direct shipping line between Iran and Bangladesh and said it will definitely ease the bilateral trade.

He then referred to the necessity of increase in trade ties between East Azarbaijan Province of Iran with Bangladesh, adding that the trade volume between the two countries is currently low and it needs all-out cooperation to see the rise in trade volume between the two states.

Zhaeleh also said besides rise in bilateral trade, the issue of cooperation in production is very important, noting that Tabriz has high potentials in different industries that he can mention some like steel, handicrafts, dried fruits, shoes and leather, textile, food industries, candies and chocolate and other advanced industries.

He pointed to the existence of petrochemicals plant in Tabriz, stating that this plant can meet Bangladesh's petrochemical needs. He added that joint investment in the field of textile and leather can be taken into the consideration between the two countries.

Zhaeleh also called for exchange of trade delegations and bilateral trade meetings and said that Bangladesh can announce its needs for investment and in return in



Tabriz economic activists can announce their requirements.

He also called for creating better transportation routes for restoring trade communication, noting that direct shipping line between Iran and Bangladesh can reduce the cost of transportation of goods and ease the communication grounds between the two states.

Then Bangladesh Ambassador Mr. Sarker, for his part, pointed to the necessary capacities for joint production between the two states, noting that there is possibility for production in Bangladesh and re-export and due to the zero tariff rate in Bangladesh for exporting goods to Europe, this country can be an advantage for export to Europe.

Sarker then pointed to the special potentials of Bangladesh and said Bangladesh has very good lands for cultivation and it is suitable for any kind of cultivation because it has enough land and water for cultivation. He noted that one of the most important advantages for investment in Bangladesh is low wage and high quality of production.

The Bangladesh diplomat went to say that carpet of Tabriz is famous in Bangladesh and called for boosting cooperation between East Azarbaijan with Bangladesh.

Registering Plan for Descriptive, Location Information of Facilities 90% Materialized

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company (ABFA of Isfahan) honored 45 experts of GIS department of the company for materialization of 90% of registering plan of descriptive and location information at the Najma System.

Deputy Head of the company on human resources and researches Mr. Mojtaba Qobadian announced that now it is possible to register and to have access to the descriptive and location information of the facilities of ABFA of Isfahan at the Najma System, stipulating that currently there exists 100% of local and descriptive information of the wells, 100% of the water reserves, 95% of the disinfection stations and water pumping stations, over 90% of pressure relieve valves and fireplugs, over 90% of the volumetric meters and approximately 80% of flow measuring devices at the Najma system.

Pointing to the implementation of the devised scenario of descriptive and location information at the Najma System in the current year, adding that the upgrading operation of the location information of the areas of cities, completing location and descriptive information of facilities like the wells, reserves, pumping stations, water and wastewater treatment plants, cisterns in towns and villages at the Najma system has ended, adding that completing information on fireplugs, volumetric meters and pressure relieve valve are on the agenda. He went on to say that in the current year registration of the areas of villages at the system has ended and other information on the villages have also been registered.

Qobadian then pointed to the other activities of human resources and researches department of the company, noting that the work on registering information of the new subscribers at the Najma System has begun and upgrading GIS of water and wastewater network as well as the subscribers in the areas enjoying the GIS has been carried out in the past and it goes on.

After honoring the experts of the company who are implementing this project, a workshop was held for the participants in the ceremony.

Tea Cultivation Area Expanded by a Half in 8 Years

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has seen the amount of land dedicated to tea farming expanded by nearly a half in the past eight years, according to an official from the country's agriculture ministry who says tea production will increase in Iran in the upcoming years with more government support and investment.

President of the Tea Organization of Iran Habib Jahansaz said that tea cultivation area in the country had expanded to 22,000 hectares from around 15,000 hectares reported in 2013.

Jahansaz said that the expansion in tea farming had been made possible through providing cheap loans to farmers in the northern province of Gilan where a bulk of Iran's tea production comes from.

He said special funds were earmarked to revive more tea farms in Gilan during a recent trip by President Ebrahim Raisi to the province.

During his visit, Raisi hailed the special flavor of the tea produced in Gilan and said that his government is intent

on providing more investment to support tea farming and processing facilities in the region. "If someone drinks Gilan tea he'll never use another tea variety," said Raisi in a speech to local officials and entrepreneurs.

Iran produced 31,000 metric tons of tea over the calendar year to March 2021, up 4% against the previous year.

The government spent over \$27 million to buy 137,000 tons of tea leaves from farmers in Gilan and elsewhere over the same period.

Khuzestan Steel among the top 20 companies in the country

Since the top companies in the IMI-100 list have a large share in national production, the mission of the top companies ranking center in the Industrial Management Organization has been to identify and introduce these companies. Therefore, as in previous years, the Industrial Management Organization prepared the 2021 ranking of Iran's top companies for the twenty-fourth consecutive year. Inspired by the mission of the organization, this list provides a clearer atmosphere of the country's economic business by providing clear and useful statistics and information about the country's economic enterprises. This helps managers, policymakers and researchers to gain a more accurate understanding of the financial and economic structure of the country's major industries and enterprises.

The Industrial Management Organization prepared a list of top companies based on 33 indicators, in 6 groups including «company size and growth», «profitability and performance», «export», «liquidity», «debt», and «market». This organization has tried to provide an annual picture based on quantitatively reliable statistics of how changes in the arrangement of large enterprises in the country and different industries and economic activities together.

Therefore, according to the latest report submitted by this organization based on fiscal year 2020, Khuzestan Steel Company (Holding) has climbed 4 steps among the top 500 Iranian companies compared to the previous period. The company is ranked 19th in terms of sales. According to the announcement of the Industrial Management Organization of Iran,

for the selection of the top companies in Iran, the sales criterion is the basis for selection. The effectiveness of an enterprise in the dimensions of the national economy has a direct relationship with the sales of the company. In fact, the sale of the company shows the degree of interaction of the firm with the economic structure of the country and is the most important final output of a commercial company. Entering the arena of global competition is only possible for large companies with high sales. In addition to this superior position, the company of Khuzestan Steel Inclusive Development Group (Holding) in the Commercial Services Group was also recognized and honored as the first of this group.

It is worth mentioning that the twenty-fourth year of this ranking of the «Conference of Top Iranian Companies» was held with the presence of state officials and managers of top Iranian companies. The conference was attended by representatives of Khuzestan Steel Company, which include Bahman Tajlizadeh, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Mehran Abbaszadeh, CEO of Khuzestan Steel Inclusive Development Group, and Ahmad Behdadinia, Strategic Planning Expert. This conference was held on February 25, 2014, in accordance with the health protocols of the Corona Disease Control Headquarters, in the conference hall of the Radio and Television. On the day of the conference, the ranking of the sales index of the top Iranian companies as well as the leading companies will be announced. The rest of the indicators will be announced in the coming days through the IMI-100 system of the Industrial Management Organization of Iran.



One Injured in Multiple Bomb Attacks in Thailand

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - At least one person was injured in multiple bomb attacks in Thailand's southern province of Yala, police said.

At least 13 small explosions struck the town of Yala late yesterday, mostly on roadsides in front of convenience stores, shops, a market, an animal hospital and a car care shop, said deputy police spokesman Kissana Phathanacharoen.

Police today found at least three unexploded improvised explosive devices, made of spray cans and metal pipes with timers attached.

Kissana said police suspect the explosions were aimed at causing a disturbance more than damage or injuries.



Cambodia to Host Summit of ASEAN FMs

PHNOM PENH (Dispatches) - Foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will meet next month to discuss humanitarian aid for Myanmar, the current chair of the grouping, Cambodia, said.

Cambodia's foreign minister, and ASEAN special envoy, Prak Sokhonn, is preparing for his first visit to Myanmar, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

"His priorities are to implement the five-point consensus which was agreed unanimously and will be discussed during the upcoming ASEAN foreign ministers' retreat," it said, adding that the event was scheduled for February 16 and 17.



Russia Moves Blood Supplies Near Ukraine

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Russia's military buildup near Ukraine has expanded to include supplies of blood along with other medical materials that would allow it to treat casualties, in yet another key indicator of Moscow's military readiness, three U.S. officials tell Reuters.

Current and former U.S. officials say concrete indicators — like blood supplies — are critical in determining whether Moscow would be prepared to carry out an invasion, if Russian President Vladimir Putin decided to do so.

The disclosure of the blood supplies by U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, adds another piece of context to growing U.S. warnings that Russia could be preparing for a new invasion of Ukraine as it masses more than 100,000 troops near its borders.

These warnings have included President Joe Biden's prediction that a Russian assault was likely and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's remarks that Russia could launch a new attack on Ukraine at "very short notice."

The Pentagon has previously acknowledged the deployment of "medical support" as part of Russia's buildup. But the disclosure of blood supplies adds a level of detail that experts say is critical to determining Russian military readiness.

"It doesn't guarantee that there's going to be another attack, but you would not execute another attack unless you have that in hand," said Ben Hodges, a retired US lieutenant general now with the Center for European Policy Analysis research institute.

The Russian Defense Ministry did not immediately respond to a written request for comment Ukraine's deputy defence minister Hanna Malyar denied the information.

"This information is not true. Such 'news' is an element of information and psychological war. The purpose of such information is to spread panic and fear in our society," she said on Facebook.

Yesterday, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy criticised a "feeling abroad" that a war had already started. "We don't need this panic," he told reporters in Kyiv.

A White House spokesperson did not immediately comment on any Russian movement of blood supplies but noted repeated public U.S. warnings about Russian military readiness.

The Pentagon declined to discuss intelligence assessments.

The three U.S. officials who spoke about the blood supplies declined to say specifically when the United States detected their movement to formations near Ukraine. However, two of them said it was within recent weeks.



Mattarella Stays on As Italian President

ROME (Dispatches) - President Sergio Mattarella had already signed a lease on a new apartment and called in the packers, making it clear he wanted to leave the Quirinale Palace the minute his seven-year mandate expired on Feb. 3.

But instead, the 80-year-old Mattarella unexpectedly agreed to stay in place on Saturday and prevent a power vacuum, with Italy's fractious parties unable to pick an alternative figure capable of winning a majority in parliament.

"I had other plans, but if needed, I am at your disposition," parliamentarians quoted the snowy-haired Mattarella as telling them after they went cap-in-hand to his official Quirinale residence to ask him to remain in office.

A former constitutional judge and one-time centrist lawmaker, Mattarella was initially elected president in 2015, becoming the first head of state from the island of Sicily.

Little known to many Italians, Mattarella had a reputation for being introverted and austere, but he quickly won over his compatriots with his quiet, unassuming manner and calm handling of repeated political crises and the COVID-19 health emergency.

On the eve of the parliamentary ballot to find his successor, polls showed that most Italians wanted him to stay.

Mattarella appeared destined for a life as a law professor, but plunged into politics after his brother Piersanti, the then-governor of Sicily, was shot by the Mafia in 1980. A photograph showed Mattarella holding him shortly before he died.

Joining the Christian Democrat party that his father had helped found, Mattarella was elected to parliament in 1983 and served, among other things, as education minister, defence minister and deputy prime minister over the next two decades.

In his inaugural speech as president in 2015, he promised to fight corruption and to help reform Italy's flailing economy, saying he saw himself as an impartial political "referee".

His refereeing skills have regularly been called on.

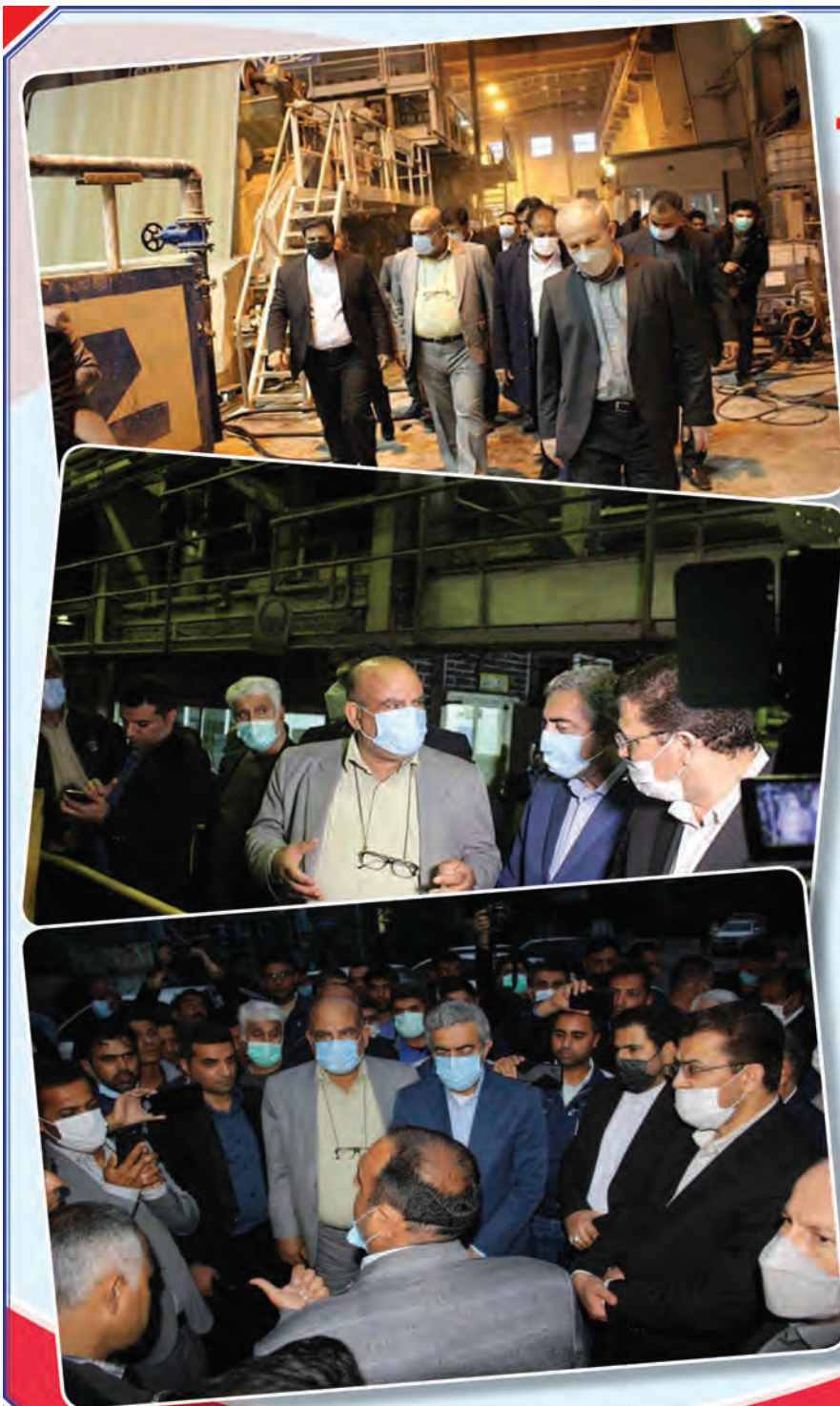
He has overseen the creation of four governments in seven years, including his surprise move last year to call on the former European Central Bank President Mario Draghi to put together a government of national unity.

The mild-mannered Sicilian was never afraid to stand up for his pro-European ideals, threatening to sink a proposed government in 2018 after the coalition partners put forward a eurosceptic for the post of economy minister.

The anti-establishment 5-Star Movement threatened to impeach Mattarella, but the president stood firm and the parties involved finally backed down.

In many ways he has been a highly traditional president, sticking to the old playbook of delivering speeches, laying wreaths and saluting the national flag.

Slightly hunched, he is never seen without a tie and jacket and won plaudits during the COVID crisis, refusing to queue jump when vaccines were released. Instead, he was photographed at a vaccination clinic, waiting in line with everyone else.



Members of the Parliamentary Social Commission are satisfied with the performance of the Sugarcane Development Company in the reconstruction of Haft Tappeh;

The stability and calm of the week is the result of a smart transfer

During the visit, the CEO of the Sugarcane and Ancillary Industries Development Company presented a report on the measures taken to return Haft Tappeh to production. He demanded that the support and assistance of the leaders of the forces for the prosperity of production in this company be continuous.

The head of the Social Commission of the Islamic Consultative Assembly called «the tranquility of Haft Tappeh sugarcane» and «workers' satisfaction» the result of «smart handovers» to seven projects. He stressed the commission's support for the management of the Sugarcane Development Company. According to the public relations of the Sugarcane and Ancillary Industries Development Company, Vali Ismaili visited Haft Tappeh Agriculture and Industry on Thursday (December 17th) with members of the Social Commission of the Islamic Consultative Assembly and a group of officials. He was in the process of rebuilding the company after the divestiture.

Haft Tappeh is ready to return to the golden age

During the visit, the CEO of the Sugarcane and Ancillary Industries Development Company presented a report on the measures taken to return Haft Tappeh to production. He called for continued support and assistance from the heads of forces to boost production at the company. Dr. Abdolli Naseri emphasized: «Today, with the creation of a plan and the empathy of the workers, a new breath has been breathed into the body of Haft Tappeh» With the revitalization of the sugarcane lands and the overhaul of the sugar factory, Haft Tappeh is ready to return to the golden age.

Appreciate the stability and tranquility of Haft Tappeh

Furthermore, the head of the Social Commission of the Islamic Consultative Assembly appreciated the stability created in this company. He said: «With the changes made, calm has been established in the Haft Tappeh sugarcane factory and the workers are

busy with work and production.» In the meeting and conversation with the workers, Ismail emphasized on following up on their demands and demands.

Workers' satisfaction with the management of the sugarcane development company

During the meeting, Haft Tappeh workers expressed satisfaction with the payment of arrears, updated salaries and attention to welfare. They demanded the support of the Parliamentary Social Commission for the management of the Sugarcane and Ancillary Development Company and the full transfer of Haft Tappeh to the company.

The transfer of Haft Tappeh to Shasta was denied

During this visit, the representative of the people of Shush and Karkheh in the Islamic Consultative Assembly also denied the rumors of handing over Haft Tappeh to Shasta and said: The Social Commission of the Islamic Consultative Assembly will not allow Haft Tappeh, which has now calmed down, to be handed over to Shasta. Kaab Omir praised the management of the Sugarcane Development Company and ancillary industries in pursuing the problems of Haft Tappeh, adding: «Since taking over the responsibility of Haft Tappeh, the Sugarcane Development Company has had an acceptable performance and has been able to establish peace and stability in this sugarcane company.» This member of the social commission of the parliament announced that the demands of Haft Tappeh will be followed up. He emphasized: the social commission of the parliament is trying to raise the

issue of Haft Tappeh and the continuation of its activities under the supervision of the Sugarcane Development Company at the summit of the forces. The aim is to allay the concerns of the employees of this complex about handing over Haft Tappeh to Shasta Company.

According to the report, members of the parliament's social commission at the end of the visit appreciated the efforts of Dr. Naseri, the director of sugarcane development, managers and staff of Haft Tappeh sugarcane. They stressed the need to facilitate and expedite the final transfer of the company to the Sugarcane Development Company. With the establishment of Haft Tappeh to the week of the sugarcane development plan from 18 September of this year, not only the arrears of workers' salaries were paid, but also the salaries were updated and the workers were covered by supplementary insurance. The company returned to the production cycle after a long period of protests.

The return of Haft Tappeh Company to the Sugarcane Development and Ancillary Industries Company has created a spark of hope in the workers. At present, in addition to the activities of downstream industries, overhaul operations and reconstruction of the sugar factory have also been completed. The company is ready to produce sugar at the same time as harvesting sugarcane.

Shanon
(adviser)

Parsian

Velenjak Apt (\$3500)
350sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, Sauna, J
L.balcony
yard, & pkg
fireplace
Fully Furn

Fereshteh Villa (\$5000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p, S
Jacuzzi, pkg
large balcony
marbl e floor
Fully Furn

Elahieh Apt
200sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, S, J, pkg
Large balcony
(\$2300) F.F

Farmanieh Apt
250sq.m, 3bdrs, S/pool
Sauna, Jacuzzi, balcony
fireplace, marble floor
(\$2500)

Niavaran bldg
5stoery, 15bdrs
S/p, S, J, & pkg
Large balcony
new (\$10000)

Sa`adat abad Apt (\$1800)
160sq.m, 3bdrs, yard, & F.F

Cell: +989121907875
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Farmanieh Villa (\$4500)
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Fuel Demand Rebound Powers Phillips 66 Profit Beat

LONDON (Dispatches) - Phillips 66 posted quarterly earnings that powered past Wall Street estimates on Friday, as the U.S. refiner capitalized on mounting demand for fuel due to a loosening up of coronavirus restrictions. Although refiners had to deal with surging crude oil costs, gasoline and jet fuel demand rocketed in the last three months of 2021 as domestic and international travel opened up in the United States. Products supplied by refineries surged in the second week of December to 23.2 million barrels per day. Tudor, Pickering, Holt & Co (TPH) analysts said in a note that Phillips 66's earnings mostly benefited from refining and marketing.



Erdogan Fires Statistics Chief After Inflation Data Shows 19-Year High

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has sacked the head of the state statistics agency, according to a decree published Saturday, after releasing data showing last year's inflation rate hit a 19-year high of 36.1 percent.

Sait Erdal Dincer was just the latest in a series of economic dismissals by Erdogan, who has sacked three central bank governors since July 2019. Erdogan has railed against high interest rates, which he believes cause inflation – the exact opposition of conventional economic thinking. The 2021 inflation figure released by Dincer angered both the pro-government and opposition camps. The opposition said it was underreported, claiming that the real cost of living increases were at least twice as high. Erdogan meanwhile reportedly criticized the statistics agency in private for publishing data that he felt overstated the scale of Turkey's economic malaise.

Dincer seemed to sense his impending fate. "I sit in this office now, tomorrow it will be someone else," he said in an interview with the business newspaper *Dunya* earlier this month.

"Never mind who is the chairman. Can you imagine that hundreds of my colleagues could stomach or remain quiet about publishing an inflation rate very different from what they had established?"

"I have a responsibility to 84 million people," he added. Erdogan did not explain his decision to appoint Erhan Cetinkaya, who had served as vice-chair of Turkey's banking regulator, as the new state statistics chief.

"This will just increase concern about the reliability of the data, in addition to major concerns about economic policy settings," Timothy Ash of BlueBay Asset Management said in a note to clients.

The agency is due to publish January's inflation data on February 3. In December, opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu was refused an appointment with Dincer and turned away by security guards when he sought to enter the statistic agency's headquarters in Ankara.

He had accused the agency of "fabricating" the numbers to hide the true impact of the government's policies and slammed it as "no longer a state institution but a palace institution", in reference to Erdogan's presidential complex.

Also on Saturday, Erdogan appointed a new justice minister, naming former deputy prime minister Bekir Bozdag to replace veteran ruling party member Abdulhamit Gul.

"I have resigned from my duties at the ministry of justice, which I have been serving since July 19, 2017," Gul wrote on Twitter.

"I would like to express my gratitude... for accepting my request," he added, without explaining his decision.

Ali Babacan, former deputy prime minister who left the ruling AKP party and founded the Deva Party, took to Twitter to vent fury over the changes.

"The justice minister is being replaced, (statistics agency) TUIK chairman is being dismissed before the inflation data is published. Nobody knows why," he said.

Gold Demand Soars on Economic Rebound, Inflation Surge

LONDON (Dispatches) - Global gold demand soared in the fourth quarter of 2021 as inflation rocketed, helping to recoup much of the drop triggered by the pandemic, industry data showed.

Viewed as a haven investment in times of economic unrest, gold saw demand surge 50 per cent in the final three months of last year compared with the October-December period in 2020, the World Gold Council said in a report. Overall last year, "demand recouped much of the Covid-related losses sustained during 2020", the WGC said, adding that total physical purchases jumped 10 per cent to 4,021 tons.

Gold demand "in the consumer-driven jewellery and technology sectors recovered throughout the year in line with economic growth and sentiment, while central bank buying also far outpaced that of 2020", the Council added. Looking ahead, it said expansion of 5G telecoms infrastructure should help support demand for gold in the sector. "But demand faces some risks from a slowdown in China as well as Covid-related restrictions," the WGC warned. Gold jewellery demand jumped by more than half in 2021 on strong buying in India and China, as celebrations including marriages postponed by Covid finally took place.

In India, "millions of people get married, and that involves a certain amount of gold", WGC spokesman John Mulligan told AFP.

Elsewhere, global bar and coin investment reached an eight-year high.

"Inflation concerns were a key driver, especially in the US and Germany, which both saw record annual demand," the report said.

Struggling Air India Sold After 69 Years in Gov't Hands

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - India's beleaguered national carrier landed back in the hands of its founders Thursday, decades after it was nationalized and following years as a monumental burden on the public purse.

Tata, a sprawling family-owned conglomerate with interests ranging from tea to software, is back in charge of Air India after concluding the 180 billion rupee (RM10 billion) deal.

Thursday's handover marked the end of a long search for a buyer by India's government,

which has spent nearly US\$15 billion propping up the airline since 2009.

"We are totally delighted that this process is complete and very happy to have Air India back," Tata Sons chairman N. Chandrasekaran told reporters after meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"We look forward to working with everyone to create a world-class airline."

Air India was founded in 1932 and its maiden flight was piloted by J.R.D. Tata, then-chairman of the eponymous firm.

The airline offered a slice of the high life, showcasing Bollywood actresses in its advertisements and even commissioning Spanish surrealist Salvador Dalí to design its ashtrays.

India's newly independent government bought a majority stake in 1953 but by the end of the century the venture was struggling to compete with Gulf carriers and no-frills airlines.

Successive Indian governments tried to privatize the company but its huge debts and New Delhi's insistence on retaining a stake — since abandoned — put off would-be buyers.

Tata will take on around a quarter of Air India's 615 billion-rupee debt, while the remainder will be transferred to a special-purpose vehicle.

In return it gets a fleet of around 120 aircraft, 6,200 airport gate slots in India and a further 900 overseas for a carrier that operates half of all international flights from India.

Analysts believe the deal will give the struggling airline a much-needed lift.

"Air India is one of the most neglected government organisations ever. Now that freshness will come back," aviation sector analyst Mark Martin told AFP.

"We'll see an Air India which is more bright, more chirpier, more customer-friendly, more people-oriented."

Tata Group is one of India's biggest and oldest companies with a workforce of more than 800,000 people across steelmaking, automobiles and tech.

Qatar Looks to Profit From Europe Gas Fears Over Ukraine

DOHA (Dispatches) - Europe's fears of losing Russian gas supplies in the Ukraine crisis will loom large when Qatar's emir meets the U.S. president on Monday but the powerful Persian Gulf ruler has no "magic wand", analysts say.

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani will ensure some kind of assistance, however, as he seeks a bigger share of the European market for Qatar's burgeoning offshore gas production and to score valuable points over its neighbours in becoming the key U.S. ally in the Persian Gulf.

The sheikh, whose tiny country has increased its diplomatic initiatives to match its status as an energy colossus, has the Ukraine crisis, efforts to engage the hardline Taliban administration in Afghanistan and backroom talks on reviving a nuclear accord with Iran on the agenda for his White House meeting with President Joe Biden, officials said.

Gas supplies are one of the key areas that Europe fears could be cut if Russia decides to take military action in Ukraine.

The United States is also in contact with Australia about providing alternative supplies and could send more of its own production, diplomats said.

Australia, Qatar and the United States are the world's biggest gas exporters.

"Talks are going on" over diverting some liquefied natural gas from Asian markets to Europe if President Vladimir Putin cuts supplies to western Europe, a Qatari official told AFP ahead of the meeting.

There are precedents for Qatar helping friends in need.

It sent supplies to Japan after the 2011 tsunami and four special cargoes to Britain in October to address sudden shortages. But as Qatar has long-term contracts with huge customers in South Korea, Japan and China, there is little it could do to replace all Russian gas supplies to western Europe.

The Persian Gulf state has "maxed out" supplying existing customers, Energy Minister Saad al-Kaabi said in October when gas shortages were already starting to bite in Europe.

"Qatar has no magic wand to fix shortfalls in European gas," said Bill Farren-Price, director of intelligence for the Enverus energy consultancy.

"It does not have any spare capacity to supply additional LNG. It is not the same as Saudi Arabia, which maintains spare capacity in oil," he added.

Qatar, which is also in talks with the European Union and Britain, could redirect a number of shipments.

"Any shortfall in European gas is going to ripple out and have impacts on the Asian LNG market as well," Farren-Price said.

And European consumers -- already facing record gas bills -- would have to pay an even higher cost. "Price wise it could be quite challenging," he predicted.

Malaysia's External Trade Surpassed RM2t Last Year



KUALALUMPUR (Dispatches) - Malaysia's external trade registered another historic performance in 2021, surpassing RM2 trillion for the first time, as well as recording the fastest growth since 1994.

Senior Minister cum International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali said Malaysia's exports hit RM1.24 trillion, achieving 99 per cent of the 12th Malaysia Plan 2021-2025 (12MP) export projection for 2025 — four years ahead of the target.

"Trade surplus was posted for 24 consecutive years since 1998. These remarkable achievements were driven by robust external demand and higher commodity prices," he said in a statement today.

Azmin said exports to major trading partners, namely ASEAN, China, the United States, and the European Union recorded new high with strong double-digit expansion, while exports to Japan recovered with double-digit growth after declining for three consecutive years.

"Significant export expansion was also registered to emerging markets such as Costa Rica, Kenya, Egypt, Nigeria, Ghana, and Iraq. Exports to free-trade agreement (FTA) partners showed an upward trajectory with a new high value after two consecutive years of contraction.

"Exports of the manufactured, agriculture and mining sectors registered double-digit expansion with manufactured goods reaching RM1 trillion mark for the first time," he said.

Mohamed Azmin said the resilient growth was boosted by strong exports of electrical and electronics (E&E) products, petroleum products, manufactures of metal, palm oil and palm oil-based agriculture products, rubber products, and chemicals and chemical products, each posted a record high value with double-digit expansion.

Australia Seeks to Join WTO Talks on China-EU Trade Row

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Australia will seek to be included in consultations about a trade dispute between the European Union and China launched by the EU at the World Trade Organization, the Australian trade minister said.

Thursday's EU challenge accuses China of discriminatory trade practices against Lithuania, saying they threatened the integrity of the single market.

"Australia has a substantial interest in the issues raised in the dispute brought by the European Union against China ... and will request to join these consultations," Trade Minister Dan Tehan said in a statement.

China, which regards self-governed Taiwan as its own territory, has downgraded ties with Lithuania and pushed firms to sever links with the Baltic nation of 2.8 million people after it allowed Taiwan to open a de facto embassy in Vilnius.

Its strictures include a refusal to clear Lithuanian goods through Chinese customs, rejection of import applications from Lithuania and pressure on EU firms to remove Lithuanian content from supply chains when exporting to China.

Relations between Australia and China, its top trade partner, soured after Canberra banned Huawei Technologies from its 5G broadband network in 2018, toughened laws against foreign political interference, and urged an independent investigation into the origins of COVID-19.

Beijing responded by freezing ministerial contacts and imposing tariffs on several Australian commodities, such as coal, beef, barley and wine.

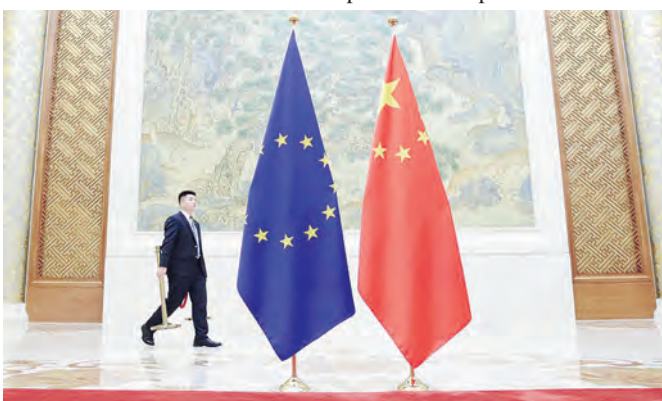
Australia has filed two WTO complaints in the past 18 months over China's duties on imports of bottled wine and barley.

In a statement on Saturday, the foreign ministry said Australia "welcomes" an invitation from France to take part in a February meeting of Indo-Pacific foreign ministers.

"Australia greatly values cooperation with France and with Europe, including in the Indo-Pacific," it said in an e-mailed statement, without saying if Foreign Minister Marise Payne would attend.

Australia's relations with France, which holds the rotating six-month presidency of the EU Council, have also soured after Canberra signed a security pact last year with Britain and the United States, dubbed AUKUS, scrapping a multi-billion-dollar submarine deal with France.

The pact, widely viewed as an attempt to shore up regional military muscle in the face of China's growing presence, riled Beijing, but also caused fury in France.



Iranian Film Week To Be Held in Greece

TEHRAN (MNA) – Different Iranian films are going to be displaced in an Iranian film week that is to be held in Greece amid Fajr Decade.

On the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, an Iranian film week will be held in Greece.

In the event, different Iranian films such as “Sara and Aida”

directed and produced by Maziar Miri, “A House on 41st Street” directed by Hamidreza Ghorbani and produced by Seyed Mahmoud Razavi, “Leaf of Life” directed and produced by Ebrahim Mokhtari, “Villa Dwellers” directed by Munir Gheidi and produced by Saeed Malekan and “Appendix” directed by Hossein Namazi and produced by Maghsoud Jabbari will be screened.



Afghanistan's Economy Is Collapsing

KABUL (Dispatches) - The U.S. can allow some money of the Afghan national reserves to be used for economic stabilization under strict control.

As an Afghan American, I have worked for the last 20 years to try to help the people of my home country overcome economic woes and build a more prosperous economy for all.

Right now, those hopes are in jeopardy. Afghanistan faces one of the most acute crises I have seen in my career – and the antidote remains locked in New York.

In August, the United States froze \$9.1bn of Afghanistan's national reserves held at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. As a result, the economic situation in the country has deteriorated rapidly. The people of Afghanistan are increasingly unable to afford basic goods, its currency is facing hyper depreciation, and its already fragile economy is on the brink of collapse.

Make no mistake, a catastrophe is imminent. The Central Bank of Afghanistan is supposed to conduct monetary policy operations to control the US dollar to the afghani exchange rate and keep inflation at bay. It has historically leveraged this auction process to produce remarkably stable exchange rates and inflation for a developing economy, in the single digit percentages. But with no access to its dollar-denominated reserves, the Central Bank is not able to perform this critical market stabilising function.

Due to a heavy reliance on imports, the Afghan economy is dependent on the US dollar to function even in normal times. With rising demand for foreign currency and reports of 30 percent depreciation of the afghani against the dollar, the effective price of imported goods has increased by at least 20-30 percent over the last few months.

In a country already devastated by the twin crises of war and COVID-19, the desperate lack of dollars in the market is leaving importers unable to pay for their shipments. Food is becoming scarce and grocery stores are unable to fully restock. As prices rise, people are rushing to withdraw and spend their savings before the banking sector collapses. Private businesses are not able to fund operations, shutting down and laying off the privileged few who still have jobs. A growing number of Afghans are suffering from hunger, poverty, and a lack of access to basic goods and services. In short, the country is in a total humanitarian crisis.

While this will devastate every Afghan, the Taliban government in Kabul will avoid the worst of it. They will blame the U.S. for the country's economic woes – and so long as they can point to the assets held frozen under U.S. control, the people will believe them.

The choice for the U.S. government is simple: continue down the path that would lead to total economic devastation for millions of people or do what is needed to help the Afghan people.

I propose that the U.S. allow the Central Bank of Afghanistan limited, monitored, and conditional access to \$150m per month from Afghanistan's foreign reserves – roughly half of what the Central Bank would auction off monthly in the past.



This common-sense policy would unfetter the bank to fulfill its role of maintaining price stability and prevent this imminent crisis.

The U.S. would have the ability to verify how these funds are used via one of the independent international auditing firms that are still operating in Afghanistan. The transactions between the Central Bank and commercial banks take place on an electronic exchange where each transaction and its value are automatically recorded. If the US finds any misappropriation, it can cut off the funds at any moment. After all, the vast majority would still be deposited at the New York Federal Reserve. This type of leverage is a win-win for the US.

The Central Bank is an entity independent from the Afghan government. For decades, it has helped to achieve and maintain price stability and advance the economy, all the while remaining a beacon of hope and prosperity for Afghanistan. But if it is not allowed access to its reserves, that could all be lost.

As the recent U.S. engagement with the Taliban on the peace deal has shown, Washington has the power to negotiate many issues of national interest without hurting the economic future of the people of Afghanistan.

Afghans deserve to be safe and prosper in their land. But right now, US policy is holding them back. The U.S. must allow the Afghan people access to their own reserves in a monitored, common-sense way, or the country will collapse. We have the power to lift the Afghan people out of this crisis. For the sake of both my home and my adopted country, I hope we act on it.

COVID-19 a Serious...

FROM PAGE 1

New infections have increased by 20% globally over the past week with nearly 19 million total reported cases, according to the WHO. But Van Kerkhove noted that new infections that go unreported would make the real number much higher.



Dr. Bruce Aylward, a senior WHO official, warned high levels of transmission give the virus more opportunity to replicate and mutate, raising the risk that a new variant will emerge.

“We don't fully understand the consequences of letting this thing run,” Aylward said. “Most of what we've seen so far in areas of uncontrolled transmission has been we paid a price for the variants that emerge and new uncertainties we have to manage as we go forward.”

Van Kerkhove said now is not the time to relax public health measures, such as curtailing mask wearing and physical distancing. She called on governments to strengthen those measures to bring the virus under better control and head off future waves of infection as new variants emerge.

The World Bank has also warned that global growth will “decelerate markedly” this year, but the Omicron variant of Covid-19 that is spreading rapidly worldwide could make the situation worse and exacerbate labor shortages and supply chain snarls.

This deadly virus for almost three years has shattered the global economy and affected the lives of global, and there is still controversy over the origin and main cause of this global calamity.

The developed countries despite their claims and producing vaccines have been unable to curb this disease and the death toll in those countries has returned to the upward trend and sometimes is bigger than the under developing states.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has been one of the successful countries in controlling this disease comparing to the boastful developed countries but it needs a sincere and collective cooperation by the whole people in the country to surmount this nasty virus which has disrupted many social and economic activities.

Iran despite sanctions has done great in minimizing the death toll of this disease but any indifference and easy-going attitude by the people may help the resurface of this deadly virus as many epidemiologists in the country have warned.

As President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi and other health ministry officials have asked the people, observing the COVID-19 related health protocols and vaccinations can bring peace and health to the public and especially to the medical staff who are really exhausted of almost three years of efforts to treat the COVID-infect patients but each time one negligence causes the re-emergence of the disease which costs dear for the country either in terms of medical or human life cost.

It is time for the nation to work together to overcome this disease which is only possible through observing health protocols and vaccinations otherwise this cycle of concerns will continue in the country and will paralyze lives and economy in the country like what we have so far seen even in the developed countries.

So far according to the official statistics more than 132,000 Iranians have lost their lives because of this disease as the figure of infected people is rising again, and we should not let it rise because it will have negative impact on any realm of activities in the country. Negligence and indifference regarding the protocols will once again pull the detonator of devastating “virus bomb” in the country and the number of casualties would rise.

Pakistan Traders...

FROM PAGE 1

Iranian Consul General Mohammad Reza Nazeri, Mukarram Tareen, Omar Ch, Brig (retd) Fazal, Mansoor Khan, Saad Mahmood Khan and Bilal Ahmad addressed the session.

At the beginning of this session a warm welcome was given to the bikers who recently returned from Iran after completing their 32-day Pakistan-Iran Friendship Biker's Rally. Sixty-five motorcyclists under the leadership of Mukkaram Tareen, chairperson of Cross-Route

Motorcycle Travellers Club, were welcomed by DG Khana Farhang Iran-Lahore.

U.S. Plans to Reroute \$67m in Aid for Lebanon's Armed Forces

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States plans to reroute \$67 million of military assistance for Lebanon's armed forces to support members of the military as the country grapples with financial meltdown.

According to a notification sent to Congress, the State Department intends to change the content of previously appropriated foreign military funding for Lebanon to include “livelihood support” for members of the Lebanese military, citing economic turmoil as well as social unrest.

“Livelihood support for (armed forces) members will strengthen their operational readiness, mitigate absenteeism, and thus enable LAF members to continue fulfilling key security functions needed to stave off a further decline in stability,” said the notification to Congress, seen by Reuters.

Washington is the biggest foreign aid donor to Lebanon. US officials had pledged additional support in October.

The news was praised in Washington. “It is in the United States' national security interest to help these servicemen make ends meet and continue supporting the Lebanese people, and I'm really glad to see the administration putting our security assistance dollars to Lebanon toward that goal,” Democratic Senator Chris Murphy said in a statement.

Sunni leader Saad Hariri announced his departure from Lebanese politics this week, opening the way for the Shiite Hezbollah to extend its sway over the country.

Hariri's departure opens a new phase in Lebanon's politics, governed by a system of sectarian power-sharing, and adds to uncertainty in a country suffering a financial crisis that marks its biggest threat to stability since the 1975-90 civil war.

More than half of Lebanon's 6 million people have fallen into poverty. The World Bank says it is one of the sharpest modern depressions, with the currency plunging more than 90% and the financial system paralysed.

Leader Urges Officials...

FROM PAGE 1

Ayatollah Khamenei hailed Iranian producers, entrepreneurs and workers as “officers” of the battle against the enemies' economic war.

“The stronghold of production and economy of the country is alive; thank God, it is standing. The army that stood against the enemy, the officers of this holy defense, were entrepreneurs and capable economic managers. Its warriors were also workers. The workers were the sincere and earnest warriors of this battle. You and all economic actors share in this honor of preserving the country's economy,” the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei reiterated his oft-repeated line that officials should not tie the country's economy to the results of negotiations in Vienna to remove U.S. sanctions on Iran.

“I always repeat that you should not condition the country's economy and economic activities. Do not pause over something that is not in our hands,” the Leader said in his remarks directed at state officials.

Ayatollah Khamenei described production as struggle in the path of Allah, which is known as the principle of jihad in Islam.

“The resistance of the producers against the attack on the economy and the enemy's efforts to prevent the sales of oil and gas and cut foreign exchange resources and against their planning to block Iran's foreign exchanges is in fact jihad and one of the greatest acts of worship.”

Ayatollah Khamenei said the enemy's plans to “conquer the production stronghold” of Iran as part of its economic war on the country had failed.

“In this onslaught on the country's economy, there were problems in people's livelihoods, but production did not come to its knees, and a U.S. State Department spokesman explicitly stated a few days ago that the policy of maximum pressure had led to the tragic defeat of the United States.”

The Leader was apparently referring to US State Department spokesman Ned Price who had said last Tuesday that the “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran, initiated by the Trump administration and maintained by the Biden administration, has been an “abject failure”.

Ayatollah Khamenei said Iran's economy needs a leap in production to overcome problems and remain immune from internal and external shocks.

“A jump in production leads to improved economic indicators such as sustainable employment, export prosperity, foreign exchange earnings and lower inflation. It leads to national self-confidence that is a guarantor of national dignity and security.”

The Leader touched on Iran's great potentials and vast possibilities as acknowledged by domestic and foreign experts, saying “if efficient, hard-working and caring managers use these capacities correctly, the situation will certainly be many times different”.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the cause of economic problems in the country is not solely the sanctions, adding wrong decisions and dereliction on the part of officials are behind an important part of the problems.

Iran, Russia...

FROM PAGE 1

Rezaei also pointed out that the international trade among countries located in the Eurasia continental area amounted to \$300bn annually and if Iran achieved to gain even ten percent of business going on in this market, it would result in a major economic boost for the nation.

Rezaei comments come after Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Moscow last week, as part of comprehensive plans to expand all-out cooperation between the neighboring countries.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian described Raisi's recent trip to Russia as a “great achievement” and new chapter in relations between Tehran and Moscow.

Foreign Minister has lauded the Iranian President Raisi's recent trip to Russia, saying the two-day visit had great achievements for the country and brought about openness in relations with regard to the Islamic republic's foreign policy.

Iran's top diplomat said Raisi's two-day visit had great achievements for the country and brought about openness in relations with regard to Tehran's foreign policy.

Amir-Abdollahian pointed out that during the visit “necessary decisions were made on important issues of mutual interest.”

Medvedev Cops \$12,000 Fine for Umpire Rant

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Daniil Medvedev was fined a total of US\$12,000 Saturday following his extraordinary outburst at the chair umpire during his semi-final win over Stefanos Tsitsipas at the Australian Open.

The Russian world number two was handed two fines by Tennis Australia -- \$8,000 for a "visible obscenity" and \$4,000 for "unsportsmanlike conduct". His four-set win over Tsitsipas sealed his second consecutive Australian final appearance, but it was his bewildering rant at chair umpire Jaume Campistol that dominated post-match talk.

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Juventus Sign Fiorentina Striker Vlahovic

TURIN (Dispatches) - Juventus have signed Fiorentina striker Dusan Vlahovic, the Italian club announced, with the deal worth up to a maximum of €80 million (RM373.7 million), plus other charges, making it the biggest transfer of the January window so far.

The 22-year-old, who is the joint-top scorer in Serie A this season with 17 goals, has signed a deal until June 2026 in Turin.

"Juventus... has reached an agreement with Fiorentina for the definitive acquisition... of the player Dusan Vlahovic for a fee of €70.0 million, payable in three years," Juventus said in a statement.

Paul's Triple-Double Propels Suns to 9th Straight Win

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Chris Paul collected 21 points, 14 assists and 10 rebounds as the Phoenix Suns held on to beat the visiting Minnesota Timberwolves 134-124 for their ninth consecutive win.

Phoenix's Devin Booker led all scorers with 29 points to go along with nine assists. Cameron Johnson contributed 23 points, hitting 5 of 9 attempts from beyond the 3-point arc. Anthony Edwards recorded 27 points and 10 assists for Minnesota, which lost for the second time in as many nights. Karl-Anthony Towns finished with 23 points and nine boards, and Malik Beasley chipped in 26 points off the bench.

Magic 119, Pistons 103

Franz Wagner scored 13 of his 24 points in the first quarter to help build a double-digit lead, and Mo Bamba finished with 18 points and 11 rebounds as host Orlando defeated Detroit.

Terrence Ross (21 points) came off the Orlando bench to hit four 3-pointers and Chuma Okeke scored 17 points on 6-for-7 shooting, including 3-for-4 from beyond the arc. Gary Harris also added 10 points and six assists as the Magic shot 49.4 percent (41-for-83) as a team.

Hornets 117, Lakers 114

Miles Bridges scored 26 points and Ish Smith provided a large boost off the bench with 22 points as host Charlotte held off injury-riddled Los Angeles.

Terry Rozier and LaMelo Ball each scored 20 points for Charlotte, which was two nights removed from setting a franchise record with 158 points against the Indiana Pacers.

The Lakers' LeBron James missed his second game in a row with a sore knee. Russell Westbrook poured in all but five of his 35 points in the second half and Carmelo Anthony posted 19 points for the Lakers.

Hawks 108, Celtics 92

Trae Young and John Collins each scored 21 points and grabbed nine rebounds as Atlanta beat visiting Boston to earn its sixth consecutive win.



Bogdan Bogdanovic added 19 points and was instrumental in an 18-2 fourth-quarter run that allowed the Hawks to turn a one-point lead into a 17-point advantage.

The six-game winning streak is the longest active streak in the Eastern Conference and the second-longest in the NBA. Boston got 26 points and 12 rebounds from Jaylen Brown and 20 points and six rebounds from Jayson Tatum. However, the Celtics' reserves were outscored 46-17 by Atlanta's bench.

Grizzlies 119, Jazz 109

Ja Morant tallied 30 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists to lead Memphis to a victory over visiting Utah. Morant is averaging 35.4 points, 8.4 rebounds and 8.8 assists over his past five games.

Brandon Clarke finished with 22 points for the Grizzlies, who won for the 15th time in 18 games. Jaren Jackson Jr. chipped in 18 points, and Desmond Bane added 17.

Pacers 113, Thunder 110 (OT)

Domantas Sabonis registered 24 points, 18 rebounds and 10 assists and Indiana rallied from a 16-point, third-quarter deficit to record an overtime victory at Oklahoma City.

Justin Holiday scored the go-ahead layup with 40.8 seconds remaining in OT as part of a 22-point effort. Jeremy Lamb added 14 points as Indiana snapped a three-game slide and won for just the fourth time in the past 17 games.



MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Australian bad boys Nick Kyrgios and Thanasi Kokkinakis won the Australian Open men's doubles title on Saturday, beating compatriots Matthew Ebden and Max Purcell on Rod Laver Arena.

The pair, especially Kyrgios, had come in for plenty of criticism for their antics during their run to the final.

Nicknamed "Special K", they had been involved in altercations with opponents, had whipped up their boorish home fans into a frenzy, argued with umpires, smashed racquets and made obscene gestures.

But the dynamic duo, who have been friends since they were nine years old, were too strong in a clash of unseeded pairs, winning 7-6, 6-4 in 1hr 35min.

"Nick I love you brother, I can honestly say we didn't expect to come close to this," said Kokkinakis at the trophy presentation.

"It's been a dream come true," replied Kyrgios. "I wouldn't want to do it with anyone else than you."

U.S. Paying Athletes to Disrupt Winter Olympics

BEIJING (Dispatches) - The United States is paying athletes to "create disturbances" during the Beijing Winter Olympics, Chinese state media reported Saturday.

The accusations come just a week before the start of the most politicized Games in recent memory and immediately drew a denial from the US embassy in China.

China Daily newspaper, citing "sources familiar with the matter", said there was a plot by Washington to persuade athletes to "play passively" or refuse to take part in competitions and "express discontent toward China".

"The sources stressed that Washington's plan is a new example demonstrating attempts by some anti-China forces in the United States to politicize sports and maliciously disrupt and spoil the Beijing Winter Olympic Games," the article said.

In return the United States will offer financial compensation and work to protect the reputations of athletes who cooperate, according to the paper.

Washington is leading a diplomatic boycott of the Games by a group of Western nations over China's human rights record, in particular its crackdown on Muslim Uyghurs in the western region of Xinjiang that the United States has labelled "genocide".

The countries taking part in the boycott are not sending officials to Beijing for Friday's opening ceremony but their athletes will participate in competitions.

The U.S. embassy in Beijing on Saturday denied the accusations reported in China Daily.

"We were not and are not coordinating a global campaign regarding participation at the Olympics," an embassy spokesperson said in an email to AFP.

"U.S. athletes are entitled to express themselves freely in line with the spirit and charter of the Olympics, which includes advancing human rights."

The embassy said Beijing was seeking to "deflect attention from their egregious human rights record".

"We expect the PRC to ensure the safety and well-being of our athletes -- and all athletes -- competing in Beijing and to respect their human rights and fundamental freedoms," the spokesperson said.



Rooney Rejects Everton Approach

LONDON (Dispatches) - Derby County manager Wayne Rooney said he rejected an approach from former club Everton to discuss the vacant managerial position.

Everton are searching for a manager after they sacked Rafa Benitez this month following a run of disappointing results and named Duncan Ferguson as caretaker boss.

Rooney, who spent two spells at Everton as a player, is currently in charge of second-tier Derby who are under administration amid a

financial crisis and sit second-bottom in the league.

"Everton approached my agent and asked me to interview for the vacant job, which I turned down," Rooney told a news conference.

"I believe that I will be a Premier League manager and I believe I'm ready for that 100 per cent, and if that is with Everton one day in the future that'd be absolutely great. "But I've got a job here to do at Derby County which is an important job to me."

British media reported that former Porto manager Vitor Pereira and former Chelsea manager Frank Lampard are in contention for the Everton job.

Everton are 16th in the Premier League on 19 points after 20 matches, four points above the relegation zone. They host Brentford in the fourth round of the FA Cup on February 5 after the international break.

Suter Wins Garmisch Downhill

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Reigning world champion Corinne Suter boosted her morale ahead of the Olympic downhill in Beijing with victory at Garmisch-Partenkirchen on Saturday in the weekend's final tune-up races before the Winter games, which starts next week.

Suter thundered down the downhill course in the heart of the Bavarian Alps, clocking one minute, 40.74 seconds with Swiss team-mate Jasmine Flury second at 0.51 behind.

Austria's Cornelia Huettner finished third at 0.78 behind Suter, who won the world downhill title in Cortina d'Ampezzo last February.

"I am really happy to have won here, it wasn't planned, but I am happy to have some momentum," said Suter with one eye on the Beijing Olympics, which open Friday.

Suter can complete the Garmisch double in the women's super-G. With just days to go before the Olympics, several top-names were missing in Garmisch, including overall World Cup leader Mikaela Shiffrin of the USA.

Swiss racers Lara Gut-Behrami and Michelle Gisin were among the other top names who opted to skip Bavaria to head to China early.

Injured overall World Cup downhill leader Sofia Goggia was also absent as she battles against time to defend her Olympic title on February 15 in Beijing.

The Italian sprained her knee, tore a ligament and suffered a small fracture to her fibula in a crash last Sunday on home snow in Cortina d'Ampezzo.

Suter's victory in Garmisch lifted her to second in the overall downhill World Cup rankings behind Goggia.



Barty Breaks 44-Year Hoodoo to Win Australian Open

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - An imperious Ashleigh Barty became the first Australian to win her home Grand Slam in 44 years Saturday, halting the charge of fearless American Danielle Collins in straight sets.

The world number one was 5-1 down in the second set but came storming back to win on a tiebreak and sweep past the 27th seed 6-3, 7-6 (7/2) to be crowned Australian Open champion in front of an expectant Rod Laver Arena crowd.

It was a third Slam title for the 25-year-old after her breakthrough French Open success in 2019 and Wimbledon last year, joining Serena Williams as the only active players to win majors on all three surfaces.

She achieved the feat with Christine O'Neill, the last Australian man or woman to win in Melbourne, watching in the stadium.

O'Neill won the title in 1978 and told reporters before the match: "I'm probably her (Barty's) biggest fan. I'd be happy to hand it over to her because she's so deserving of it."

"She is an absolute thinker, she's a craftsperson, a bit like a chess player with how she constructs the points."

There were fears she might be overwhelmed by the weight of expectation, but the Australian has dealt with intense pressure before, none more so than at Wimbledon last year.

Winning at the All England Club was the one trophy she wanted more than any others, and she handled the occasion with aplomb.

She applied the same tactical acumen with the resurgent Collins, who has enjoyed a new lease of life after surgery last year for endometriosis left her pain free, storming to her first two WTA titles.

