

Health Ministry Announced on Wednesday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 132,563 With 59 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Main Index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Lost 26 Points on Wednesday While the Index Closed at 1.301m Points and over 7.705b Securities Worth 41.226 Trillion Rials (About \$146.7m Were Traded at the TSE)

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India's Exports To Iran Drop 43%

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's economy ministry reported a 43 percent drop in exports to Iran in 2021 compared to the previous year. India's total exports to Iran last year were about \$1 billion and \$284 million.

The 43 percent drop in Indian exports to Iran occurred while the same year, India's total exports to foreign countries grew by 42 percent from 2020 to \$394 billion. India's imports also grew by 53 percent to \$572 billion.

Iran's exports to India also reached \$409 million last year, according to statistics from India's ministry of economy published this week. Thus, the trade balance between the two countries has been severely detrimental to Iran.

Before the U.S. oil embargo and in 2018, India's exports to Iran were about \$2.8 billion and imports from Iran were \$14.8 billion. In total, Iran had a share of less than half a percent in India's foreign trade last year.

No Direct Talks With U.S. in Vienna

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran has not held any direct negotiations with the Americans in the course of Vienna talks on the revival of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an MP quoted Iran's top negotiator Ali Baqeri as saying.

Speaking to Tasnim, the spokesman for the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy commission gave details of a Tuesday meeting that the commission members have held with Iran's lead nuclear negotiator Ali Baqeri.

According to Mahmoud Abbaszadeh, Baqeri has made it clear that the Iranian and American teams have not held any direct talks in Vienna so far.

Baqeri also pointed to the positive trend of the nuclear negotiations and reaffirmed Iran's goodwill and determination in the talks, the lawmaker added.

He noted that what can be concluded from yesterday's meeting at the Parliament is that the fruitfulness or the definite results of possible direct talks with the US are not clear under the current circumstances. Although the Vienna talks are making progress, there are major outstanding issues that need to be negotiated and agreed upon, Abbaszadeh said.

Last week, Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, also said in a tweet that "contact with the American delegation in Vienna has been through informal written exchanges, and there was no need, and will be no need, for more contact, so far."

Nation's Maximum Resistance Overcomes U.S. Maximum Pressure



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi says the United States' maximum pressure policy against the Islamic Republic has failed in the face of Iran's maximum resistance campaign.

Raisi made the remarks on Wednesday morning, during a visit to the mausoleum of the late founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, on the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

He said even U.S. officials themselves have admitted to the failure of the maximum pressure policy, which was initiated by former U.S. president Donald Trump in 2018 and has been maintained under the new administration of Joe Biden.

"When the Americans officially acknowledge that they have failed in maximum pressure (policy), an ignominious failure, this is a victory for the Iranian nation," the Iranian president stated.

"Today, the nation's maximum resistance to seditions and sanctions has borne fruit and the maximum pressure has failed," he added.

According to Raisi, whenever Iran resisted against the enemy, including during the era of Iraq's imposed war and other conspiracies hatched against the country, "divine victory accompanied us."

He said every success that has been attained in the country was made possible only where people were enabled. "Wherever we succeeded, it was because we had handed the field over to the people, and wherever we did not define a significant presence for the people, we did not succeed," the president said.

Further highlighting the ideals of the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Raisi said relying on God and engaging people were two basic principles invoked by the "great reformer of the century" to lead the Iranian nation toward the Revolution.

"Imam's advice to support [ordinary] people and hut-dwellers was a truth and was drawn from a belief," he noted. "Attending to people is a principle for all administrations, [including] our administration ... We need to take lessons from the Imam's political view," Raisi added.

Raisi said, "The field of justice requires men and women who exercise justice and one of the central points of change in society is that people should be fair, have a fair law and make fair judgments".

The President pointed out, "At a time when everyone was fleeing from justice in word and deed, the late Imam taught us that in this society, change can be made in the name of religion and justice, and he himself raised the banner of justice".

Raisi said: "In the last 40 years, very good actions and services have been done in various fields, but the enemies are still trying to prevent the religious system from being fully established and developed, but they have not succeeded so far and will not have the opportunity in the future as well".

Referring to the Supreme Leader's statements regarding the Americans' official acknowledgment of the scandalous defeat of their maximum pressure, the President said, "With this defeat, it became clear that the result of resistance and endurance will be divine victory".

Raisi emphasized the need to work on the path of the late Imam Khomeini and said, "Saving the country, solving problems and prosperity of people's lives depends on acting on this line of light".

Tehran Calls for Acceleration of ECO Gate Project

TEHRAN (MNA) - In the 11th Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) transport ministerial meeting which is hosted by Turkey, the ECO member states emphasized promoting ECO's intra-regional and inter-regional connectivity.

Iran Minister of Transport and Urban Development, Rostam Ghasemi, in his speech at this meeting, pointed to the necessity of improving economic development in the ECO region through infrastructural development, updating trade and transit procedures, and increasing traffic.

Ghasemi stressed accelerating the implementation of the project for a common gateway among ECO member states known as the 'ECO Gate Project' which will help the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) to better access the high seas.

Iran proposed the ECO Secretariat and Pakistan to attract investments from banks and international organizations to construct Quetta-Taftan Railway Line and equip the fleet.

Iran also pointed to the importance of financing the projects along the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) Corridor and continuing the test run along road corridors of KTAI and ITI under the TIR Convention in order to identify and remove the barriers.

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Iran to Modernize Airports With Russian, Chinese Help

TEHRAN (PressTV) - An official says Iran plans to expand and refurbish its airports according to international standards with the help of China and Russia.

"Projects will be for the next 20-25 years, because existing airports will meet the needs of the industry for the next 15 years, but in the long run we need a number of world class international airports," Managing Director of Iran's Airports Company (IAC) Siavash Amirmokri said.

He touched on Iran's stepped-up cooperation with Russia and China, saying detailed information in this regard will be released in due time after technical and specialized discussions are completed.

"Given our interactions with China and Russia, the plan is to build new airports in accordance with the needs of the country in some regions," Amirmokri said.

The official cited Ardabil airport in northwest Iran which lies on the crossroads of Eastern Europe and South Caucasus near the border with Azerbaijan.

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Iraqi Resistance Fighters Warn Turkey Over Airstrike on Makhmour

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - The secretary general of Iraq's Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq movement, which is a part of Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) or Hashd al-Sha'abi, says resistance fighters will give an adequate response to the latest Turkish military aggression on the Arab country.

Qais al-Khazali, in a tweet published on his Twitter page on Wednesday, condemned Turkey's repeated violations of Iraqi sovereignty, warning that the Ankara government "is going too far with targeting civilians."

"Amid the government's deplorable silence, flagrant violation of the Iraqi sovereignty continues by Turkish occupation forces, after they established military bases in northern Iraq. The situation has exacerbated and ordinary citizens are now being targeted under flimsy claims and pretexts," Qazali wrote. He underlined that Iraqi resistance fighters will teach Turkish forces a tough lesson.

"We condemn in the strongest terms the aggression against our people, the bombardment of a refugee camp and increasing the suffering of [internally] displaced persons. We affirm that the barbaric Turkish moves will not go unanswered, and will be dealt with when the time is ripe. We will force them to withdraw from the Iraqi soil, as we did with respect to American occupation troops," Khazali pointed out.

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U.S., Israel "True Enemies" of Muslims

SANAA (Dispatches) - Leader of the Yemeni popular Ansarullah resistance movement has called the United States and the Israeli regime "enemies number one" to Muslims around the world.

"Americans and Israelis try to abuse the problems that lie within the [international Muslim] Ummah (Nation) towards furthering their own plots," Abdul-Malik al-Houthi said on Tuesday while receiving tribal delegations from across war-torn Yemen.

"Israel and its mercenaries consider the Yemeni nation to be their common enemy," he added.

Al-Houthi was referring to the regional Arab states that have entered US-backed normalization agreements with the Israeli regime and have, ever since, been trying to ingratiate themselves to the occupying regime by aligning their positions with it. "The [adversarial] positions that the United Arab Emirates, the Zionist regime, and Saudi Arabia [adopt] against the Yemeni people during their meetings is very clear," the Houthi leader noted.

The UAE was one of the regional states that normalized its relations with the Israeli regime via the Washington-mediated so-called "Abraham Accords" in August 2020.

Several other regional states followed suit. Saudi Arabia has not yet clinched any explicit normalization agreement with Tel Aviv, but has once received the occupying regime's former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and recently opened its airspace to a UAE-headed flight that was carrying Israeli President Isaac Herzog.

Al-Houthi attacked Riyadh's double-standards in dealing with the occupying regime and the Yemeni people, asking how the kingdom would open up its skies to the Israeli officials' plane, but at the same time would forbid the Yemeni people from travelling within the kingdom.

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Main Issues Remain in Vienna Talks

TEHRAN (MNA) – Despite the positive and forward-looking negotiation process, there are still important issues that need to be negotiated and agreed upon, said the Spokesman for the Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Commission.

Referring to the meeting of Iran's top negotiator at the Vienna talks Ali Bagheri Kani with the members of the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, Mahmoud Abbaszadeh Meshkini said that Bagheri Kani positively assessed the negotiation process and stressed the goodwill and seriousness of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the talks.

According to Bagheri Kani said Iran has not had any direct talks with the US so far, said Abbaszadeh Meshkini.

Nuclear Tech Driving Force Behind Iran's Development

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has called on Iranian officials to pave the way for faster advances in new technologies, saying nuclear technology is the “driving force” behind the country’s development.

Mohammad Eslami made the remarks on Tuesday while paying a visit to the family of prominent nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, who was assassinated near Tehran on November 27, 2020, in a terrorist attack widely attributed to Israel.

He said hegemonic powers cannot stand Iran's power and spare no effort to hinder the country's progress.

“Our officials should take heed of paving the way for the development of science and knowledge, especially new technologies, without fear and with confidence. Whenever we decided to enter a field and get involved in it, we emerged victorious and proud,” Eslami said.

He said a source of power is development in new technologies, in which, he continued, Iranian scientists have reached significant achievements, including Iran's recognition as a nuclear energy power in the world.

“From the point of view of the global arrogance (hegemonic powers), the presence



of the Islamic Iran among powerful countries is considered forbidden,” he said.

The chief Iranian nuclear official further said that thriving in new technologies, for the sake of creating wealth and power, would free Iran of the domination of hegemonic powers. “This is not something they want,” he added.

“The important point is that today, nuclear technology is the driving force behind the country's development, and the impact of this technology on other industries and different aspects of people's lives will be manifested soon, God willing,” Eslami said.

He explained that Iran's nuclear industry aims to produce electricity and improve the health, agriculture, food, and environment sectors.

“Our scientists' advances in the rapid movement toward new technologies should not stop. Our scientists proved that they will conquer the peaks of scientific progress, which was unimaginable for the world, without relying on others,” he added.

Gov't Approves Plan to Support Domestic Production

TEHRAN (MNA) - Government Economic Coordination Headquarters, in a meeting on Wednesday, approved a proposed plan for supporting domestic production and eliminating barriers in this regard, the portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) reported.

Chaired by President Ebrahim Raisi, the mentioned meeting also dealt with various issues regarding the regulation of the basic goods market.

During the meeting, a report on the situation of the major foodstuff market was presented, which was approved by President Raisi. Raisi further asked Agriculture Minister Seyyed Javad Sadati-Nejad to take the necessary measures for managing the price of foodstuff items.

The attendees also approved the government's proposed package that is aimed at removing obstacles and supporting the production and service sectors after several review sessions and it was decided to review it immediately in a cabinet meeting to be notified to the executive bodies for implementation after finalizing.

This package includes removing barriers to production, supporting Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), and providing financial facilities to manufacturing and service enterprises.

Supporting domestic production has become a major goal of the Iranian government over the past two years as the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Seyed Ali Khamenei has repeatedly stressed the need for promoting domestic production and cutting reliance on foreign sources.

Earlier in January, the Iranian parliament (Majlis) had also approved the general outlines of a bill on supporting the country's factories and production units.

Gov't Imposes Restrictions Amid Surge in COVID Deaths

TEHRAN (IFP) - The government has imposed fresh restrictions on movement between cities amid a surge in the number of deaths and infections caused by the coronavirus.

Iran's health ministry announced that 15 major cities across the country had been designated as “red” in a color coding system meant to indicate the severity of coronavirus disease in various regions.

The ministry said that some 61 cities were in “orange” or medium-high risk status while the rating in 274 cities was “yellow” or low-risk.

The red cities included the capital Tehran where local authorities said primary schools will shift to online classes for a week starting Wednesday to prevent the spread of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus.

That comes as figures published on the website of the Iranian

health ministry showed that the number of coronavirus deaths recorded in the country since Monday afternoon had topped 50, more than double figures from earlier this week.

The daily number of infections also rose to 35,070 on Tuesday while coronavirus patients in need of intensive care reached a total of 1,703.

Iran's health minister Bahram Einollahi urged people to get booster vaccines to prevent a new peak in the number of deaths and infections in Iran.

Einollahi said the number of referrals to Iranian hospitals for coronavirus had risen by several times within the past week. He insisted that a majority of those hospitalized were people who had failed to receive the full two doses of coronaviruses vaccines needed to get an acceptable level of immunity against the disease.

Jalili Recommends JCPOA Withdrawal

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Leader of the Islamic Revolution's envoy to Iran's Supreme National Security Council Saeed Jalili has written a letter to Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei calling for Tehran to abandon the 2015 nuclear deal and enrich uranium to over 90% purity before holding direct talks with the United States, an informed source has said.

According to the source quoted by Iranian daily Shargh, in his letter, Jalili explicitly expresses his opposition to the current path of negotiations in Vienna and stresses that Iran must withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action now.

Jalili, who served as the lead nuclear negotiator under former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, predicts that the other side will face legal problems in pursuing the snapback of the main nuclear sanctions against Iran.

According to the source, Jalili believes that any snapback of sanctions will require a referral to the UN Security Council, but Russia and China will use their veto powers and block the efforts of the Europeans and the United States.

The former nuclear negotiator believes when Iran pulls out of the JCPOA and intensifies uranium enrichment, it can sit down for talks with the U.S. and secure the removal of all sanctions.

The source says Jalili wrote the letter after he failed to convince Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian and lead negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani to abandon the current path of negotiations.

Jalili has yet to comment on this report.

Ashgabat Hosts Photo Expo of Iran's Achievements

TEHRAN (IRNA) - A photo exhibition of Islamic Revolution of Iran's achievements opened in Ashgabat, capital of Turkmenistan.

Iranian embassy's cultural consulate holds a photo exhibition in Ashgabat simultaneous with the Ten-Day Fajr Celebrations under the title of “Achievements of the Islamic Revolution of Iran.”

The ten-day photo exhibition is scheduled to be held from February 2 to 11 at the cultural consulate complex.

Cultural Attaché of the Islamic Republic of Iran Navid Rasouli said in the opening ceremony of the exhibition that the fair showcases a set of achievements of the Islamic Revolution of Iran during 43 years of efforts and unity to upgrade the Islamic country.

The photo expo plans to artistically illustrates the Islamic Republic of Iran's internationally-recognized progresses in industry, aerospace, energy, military, agriculture, science, education, health, stem cell and so on, Rasouli noted.

Japan Envoy in Anzali Wetland



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - February 2 was World Wetlands Day” and the Japanese government is supporting the rehabilitation of Lake Urmia, the largest lake in Iran through the activities of UNDP, FAO and JICA.

The Japanese government JP is also working extensively to protect beautiful ecosystems in Iran through its efforts in the Anzali Wetland.

In addition, as for the 40th years anniversary event for Kushiro Wetland in Japan JP under the Ramsar Convention, JICA held online webinar between wetland area in Iran and JapanJP, and share the knowledge of Kushiro Wetland to Iranian people.

Japan's Ambassador to Tehran on this occasion paid a visit to Anzali Wetland. He said he hopes that these efforts will contribute to conserve the beautiful ecosystem for the next generation.

Issues Related to Workforce Training Discussed at TCCIMA Meeting

TEHRAN (MNA) - The 13th meeting of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA)'s Business Environment Improvement Committee was held on Wednesday during which issues related to the training of capable workforce for industrial units were discussed.

The attendees of the meeting stressed the need for the cooperation of public educational institutions like Iran Technical and Vocational Training Organization, and Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research with the private sector institutions for training capable workforce, the TCCIMA portal reported.

During the gathering, the participants expressed their views and opinions on the mentioned subject, and Mohammad-Reza Najafi-Manesh, head of the TCCIMA Business Environment Improvement Committee, underlined the importance of skill-based training for the workforce and noted that public educational institutions along with private ones like Takapou Business School and TCCIMA Training Institute can provide a good platform for training educated and skilled workforce.

Furthermore, it was decided that the representatives of these educational institutions in the government and the private sector communicate with each other in order to examine the ways for cooperation in training and preparing the labor force needed by the production sector.

Tajikistan Calls for Expansion of Bilateral Ties With Iran



TEHRAN (IRNA)- Tajik Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Muhriddin said on Wednesday that Dushanbe always wants to expand bilateral relations with Tehran.

Muhriddin made the remarks during the press conference on Wednesday.

Regarding Tehran-Dushanbe's future relations in 2022, Muhriddin stated that the recent visit of President Raisi to Tajikistan focused mainly on relations and the renewal of a foreign policy of the two states towards each other which caused more development of bilateral cooperation in the political, economic, commercial, technical and cultural fields.

Pointing to the level of relations between Iran, Tajikistan, he highlighted that Tajikistan has always wanted to expand bilateral relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran and strives to further strengthen and expand cooperation.

Raisi Hopes for Enhanced Iran-China Ties in All Fields

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raeisi says he hopes Iran and China will further promote cooperation in all sectors, in the light of political trust between Tehran and Beijing.

In a message to Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday, Raisi offered his sincerest congratulations to him and the noble people of China on the Spring Festival, commonly known in English as the Chinese New Year.

“I am delighted that at the beginning of the New Year, diplomatic relations between the two nations have entered their second fifty years and the implementation of a 25-year comprehensive cooperation plan has been announced,” he added.

He expressed hope that Iran and China would witness further promotion of bilateral regional and international cooperation in all areas.

Undoubtedly, the Iranian president stated, the world would witness the successful holding of the Beijing Winter Olympics 2022 under Xi's wise leadership.

Iran and China signed a landmark agreement in March last year in defiance of the US's unilateral sanctions, in a move aimed at bolstering their long-standing economic and political alliance.

Beijing has long sought to boost ties with Tehran, with President Xi describing Iran as “China's major partner in the Middle East” on a rare visit to the country in 2016.

Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi signed final documents to announce the start of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two countries in January.

Iran, Qatar Discuss Afghanistan

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Special envoys representing Iran and Qatar weighed plans for cooperation between the two countries on the issues relating to Afghanistan.

Iran's special representative for Afghanistan Hassan Kazemi Qomi and the special envoy of Qatar's foreign minister for counterterrorism and mediation in conflict resolution, Mutlaq bin Majed Al Qahtani, held talks at a meeting in Doha.

According to the Iranian envoy, their talks have revolved around the cooperation between Iran and Qatar on the affairs relating to Afghanistan.

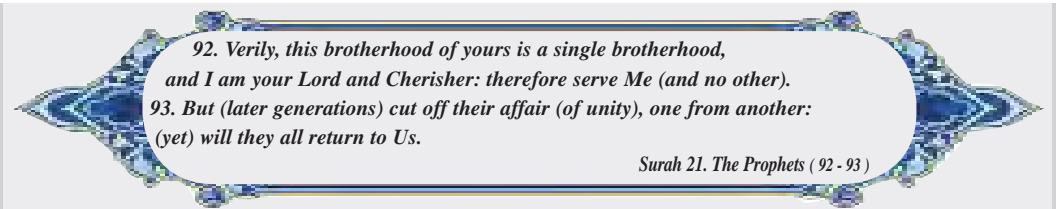
The Iranian officials say they stay in contact with all Afghan groups, including the Taliban, calling for the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan.

In an address to an emergency session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), held in Islamabad in December 2021, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian warned that delay in the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan will give the enemies of Afghan people the chance to activate an extensive network of social criminals through spreading the terrorism of Daesh and creating economic hardships.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:18
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:52
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:36
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:01



Iran, Armenia Call for Expansion of Trade Ties

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Deputy Industry Minister and Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Alireza Peyman-Pak and Armenia's Deputy Economy Minister Narek Teryan stressed the need for expansion of economic ties and removing barriers in the way of trade exchanges in a meeting on Tuesday.

The meeting was also attended by Armenia's new Ambassador to Tehran Arsen Avagyan, the TPO portal reported.

In this meeting, Peyman-Pak referred to some of the measures taken by the Trade Promotion Organization to facilitate trade between Iran and Armenia including appointing a new commercial attaché and negotiating for opening a trade center in Yerevan.

He further stressed the existing opportunities for developing trade relations between the two countries considering Armenia's privileged position for trade with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

The official also stressed the need to increase the exchange of trade delegations, ministerial visits, and the active presence of the two sides' companies and traders in each other's exhibitions as well as the use of the capacity of free trade zones on the borders of the two countries.

Narek for his part welcomed the TPO head's proposals for increasing the exchange



of business delegations, ministerial visits, face-to-face meetings of businessmen, and the effective operation of the Iran trade center in Armenia and expressed his readiness to facilitate the implementation of joint projects of Iranian companies in Armenia.

He also welcomed the recent improvements in the activities of the two countries' industrial and mining working group for facilitating trade cooperation between the two countries.

Elsewhere in this meeting, Avagyan also raised some issues and challenges related to the development of economic relations between the two countries, which were decided to be put on the agenda of the specialized working group on cooperation between the two countries.

As long-lasting trade partners, Iran and Armenia have been taking new steps to boost the volume of economic exchanges between the two countries.

Back in November 2021, the head of Iran-Armenia Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry said the two countries plan to establish a joint industrial park in the near future.

Hervik Yarijanian said the two sides also have the potential to cooperate in other fields like banking, finance, agriculture, and extraterrestrial farming.

Biotechnology Companies Account For 60% of Iran's Medicinal Exports

TEHRAN (IP) - 60% of Iran's exports in the field of medicine goes to knowledge-based companies active in the field of biotechnology.

Mostafa Ghanei, Secretary of Iran's Biotechnology Development Headquarters, said that the most expensive drugs, such as the ones suitable for fighting against cancer, hemophilia and coronavirus, are related to biotechnology.

"With the support of Iranian officials from knowledge-based companies in the field of biotechnology, the outflow of 1 billion and 800 million dollars of foreign currency for the import of drugs is now prevented," he added

Ghanei stated that in the field of biotechnology, considering that the Iranian scientists have entered the field of medicine only, Iran ranks third in Asia.

The secretary of Iran's Biotechnology Development Headquarters said that the biotechnology department has guaranteed the country's security in the field of medicine.

"We made the Corona Diagnostic Kit on a quarterly basis, and Iran is the second country after the United States to manufacture a drug to reduce pneumonia," he concluded.

Hegmatane on Way of Global Registration in UNESCO

TEHRAN (IP) - The Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts said Iran had sent the document of Hegmataneh (Hamedan's ancient name), west of the country, to UNESCO for registration.

Ali Darabi said on Tuesday that the document narrates Hamedan's history from the ancient time to the contemporary age, encompassing a wide area from the ancient site of Hegmataneh, including the streets and squares of the ancient historical city of Iran-Islam era.

Darabi added that the definite agreements on sending the world heritage document to UNESCO in 2022 were finalized, with the relevant committees starting the studies to implement the project.

The Governor of Hamedan Alireza Ghasemi Farzad pointed to 1,800 historical and natural tourist attractions, including Alisadr Cave, considered one of the world's most beautiful sites.



Ecbatana, Hegmataneh, or today's Hamedan, was an ancient city in western Iran. It is believed that Ecbatana is in Hagmatana Hill (Tappe-ye Hagmatāna), an archaeological mound in Hamedan.

According to Herodotus, Ecbatana was the Medes' capital in the late 8th century BC by Deioces.

Under the Achaemenid Persian kings, Ecbatana, situated at Mount Alvand, became a summer residence.

Later, it became the capital of the Parthian Empire, at which time it became their main mint, producing drachm, tetradrachm, and assorted bronze denominations.

The wealth and importance of the city in the Persian Empire are attributed to its location on a crucial crossroads that made it a staging post on the main east-west highway.

468 Industrial, Mining Projects to Be Inaugurated During Ten-Day Dawn

TEHRAN (MNA) - Some 468 industrial and mining projects worth 626 trillion rials (about \$2.2 billion) are scheduled to be inaugurated in Iran during the Ten-Day Dawn (February 1-11), which marks the 43rd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Mehdi Niazi announced.

According to Niazi, the mentioned projects are going to create direct job opportunities for over 22,800 people across the country, IRNA reported.

Niazi said 172 of the mentioned projects are large-scale industrial and mining projects which will benefit the country at a national level. Most of the said projects will be put into operation in East Azarbaijan, Khorasan Razavi, Yazd, and Alborz provinces, the official said.

Of the total number of projects ready to be inaugurated, 296 are related to the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that have been established with a total investment of about 2.6 trillion rials (about \$93.1 million) and will create jobs for about 5,800 people, Niazi added.

Every year, during the Ten-Day Dawn celebrations, which mark the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, numerous infrastructure projects are inaugurated or commenced to mark the development of the country after the revolution.

Last week, Transport and Urban Development Ministry had announced the plan for the inauguration of numerous port development, maritime, and transport projects during the Ten-Day Dawn.

The mentioned projects include 484 transport projects with a total investment of 60.42 trillion rials (about \$214.6 million), 53 railway projects valued at 26.72 trillion rials (about \$94.92 million), and 19 maritime and port development projects worth 6.8 trillion rials (about \$24.15 million). Agriculture Ministry also plans to inaugurate 1,969 water and soil preservation projects across the country during the mentioned 10 days.

Marine Telecommunication Project Inaugurated in Coasts of Sistan



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Concurrent with the beginning of the festivities marking the 43rd anniversary of the Islamic Republic, the project of marine telecommunications covering the coasts of Sistan and Baluchestan was inaugurated and came on stream in the presence of the governor general of Sistan and Baluchestan Province Mr. Hossein Modarres Khiabani.

According to the public relations of Ports and Marine Organization of Sistan and Baluchestan Province, the director general of the organization Mr. Behrouz Aqaei said that with the launch of this project, the full radio coverage (VHS and AIS) of the coastal waters of the province will be possible and it will boost safety of the shipping and marine activities in the framework of the international convention (SAR and SOLAS) and will accelerate sending marine emergency messages in the Sea of Oman.

Aqaei noted that the executive operation of the project started last January with a credit worth 110 billion rials and it was launched for building five radio sites of Passabandar, Brace, Chabahar, Gordim and Shahid Rezaee Port of Zarabad.

He went on to say that after conducting all tests successfully in the sites of the project and with using the modern technologies and equipment, the project became ready for the launch and it was inaugurated concurrent with the Islamic Revolution anniversary festivities.

He went on to say that this project in the VHF band covers a vast area from the eastern and western coasts of Sistan and Baluchestan to the waters of Hormozgan Province. He reiterated that the goal behind implementation of the project is to increase the safety of the coastal waters and easing the process of managing the rescue operation and saving the lives of the people and their assets in the sea.

Mega Water, Wastewater Projects Ready To Come on Stream in Isfahan

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – The CEO of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company (ABFA of Isfahan) says there are six mega projects of the company ready to be inaugurated and to come on stream during the Ten-Day Dawn festivities, marking the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

Mr. Hashem Amini said that these projects include four urban and rural water supply projects, one laboratory for water and one laboratory for the wastewater which have been carried out with the budget over 331 billion toman.

Amini noted the emergency water supply line to big Isfahan with the length of 3.12 kilometers and diameter of 1400 millimeters, the first phase of the project for water supply to the towns of Bagh Bahadoran and Baghshad and villages en route to those towns with the length of 18 kilometers and diameters of 200 and 500 millimeters, Dahan water supply project with the length of 47 kilometers and diameter of 300 millimeters and the water supply project of Moorche Khort with 44 kilometers and diameters of 200 and 300 millimeters are of the most important of these projects which have been carried out aimed at supplying the sustainable drinking water for subscribers residing in these areas.

Amini went on to say that besides these projects, Chemical Physico and Microbiology Laboratory of water of Felman wells as well as the laboratory of South Wastewater Treatment plant are other projects ready to come on stream during the Ten-Day Dawn festivities with an aim at monitoring water of western and northern areas.



Minister Announces Registration of Iranian Medicines in Syria



TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Health said that Tehran would be ready to stand by Syria in fight against terrorism and in health and treatment sector.

Following decades of war in Syria and U.S. and some Western sanctions against the country, the Syrian health sector has been severely damaged and disrupted.

Bahram Einollahi, Minister of Health, Treatment and Medical Education of Iran, during a meeting with Shafiq Dayoub, the Syrian Ambassador to Iran, referred to the improvement of relations between the two countries in the field of medicine, adding: "With the implementation of the Syrian president's order to register Iranian-made drugs in that country, medicine produced by Iranian pharmaceutical companies will be exported to Syria."

Einollahi said: "Unfortunately, due to the sabotage of terrorists in Syria, the health infrastructure of this country has been damaged and the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to help the Syrian people in the field of health and treatment."

The Minister of Health, Treatment and Medical Education of Iran further stated that there is no border between the two countries, saying the Islamic Republic of Iran, as in the past, stands by the Syrian government and people in all areas, as well as in the fight against terrorist outfits.

Shafiq Dayoub also considered the relations between the two countries as historical and unique and expressed hope that under the new administration of Iran, the relations between the two countries will expand in different fields.

The Syrian ambassador to Iran said: "The prospects for cooperation between the two countries are very broad and the expansion of cooperation between the Ministry of Health of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Ministry of Health and Higher Education can strengthen relations between the two countries."

Landslide in Quito Kills At Least 14, Injures 32

QUITO (Dispatches) - At least 14 people died and another 32 were injured in a landslide in the north of Ecuador's capital Quito, the country's emergency response office said on Tuesday, as firefighter rescue crews continue searching homes and streets covered by mud.

Torrential rains on Monday night caused a build-up of water in a gorge near the working class neighborhoods of La Gasca and La Comuna, sending mud and rocks down on residences and affecting electricity provision.

"The figure of deceased people rises to 14, that of destroyed homes to 3 and affected families to 3," the Ecuador Office for Risk and Emergency Management said on Twitter. Authorities said late on Monday nine people were missing and 32 were injured.

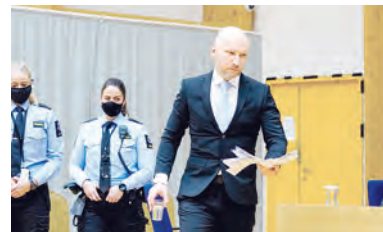


Norwegian Mass Killer's Parole Application Rejected

OSLO (Dispatches) - A Norwegian court has rejected mass killer Anders Behring Breivik's parole application, it said in a ruling on Tuesday, ordering that he must stay in prison.

Breivik, an anti-Muslim neo-Nazi, killed 77 people in Norway's worst peacetime atrocity in July 2011. He killed eight with a car bomb in Oslo and then gunned down 69, most of them teenagers, at a Labor Party youth camp.

On the first day of the parole hearing last month, Breivik made a white supremacist sign with his fingers before raising his right arm in a Nazi salute to signal his far-right ideology as he entered the court. "The risk of violence is real and significant and equal to what it was when (Breivik) was first sentenced," the district court in Telemark said in a unanimous verdict.



Ukraine Plans to Boost Army; U.S. Demands Russian De-Escalation



KIEV (Dispatches) - Ukraine's president signed a decree to boost his armed forces by 100,000 troops over three years, as European leaders lined up to back him in a standoff with Russia and the United States demanded immediate Russian de-escalation.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged lawmakers to stay calm and avoid panic, saying he had ordered the increase "not because we will soon have a war... but so that soon and in the future there will be peace in Ukraine".

Russia has massed more than 100,000 troops near Ukraine's borders. It denies plans to invade but says it could take unspecified military action if demands are not met, including barring Ukraine from ever joining NATO. The United States and its allies say any invasion would trigger tough sanctions.

Speaking to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov by phone, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken reiterated Washington's readiness to continue dialogue, but called for "immediate Russian de-escalation and the withdrawal of troops and equipment from Ukraine's borders", the State Department said. Ukraine's armed forces number about 250,000, compared to Russia's overall strength of around 900,000.

Russian troops have been holding drills in Belarus and in a breakaway region of Moldova, potentially making it possible to attack from several directions.

Ukraine said it was working with Poland and Britain to strengthen cooperation "in the context of ongoing Russian aggression".

On a visit to Kyiv, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said Warsaw would help Ukraine with gas and arms supplies, as well as humanitarian and economic aid.

"Living close to a neighbor like Russia, we have the feeling of living at the foot of a volcano," said Morawiecki, promising Ukraine artillery ammunition, mortar bombs, portable air-defense systems and surveillance drones.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson also visited Kyiv on Tuesday in a Western show of support intended to convince Russian President Vladimir Putin he would pay a high price for any aggression.

"We urge Russia to step back and engage in dialogue to find a diplomatic resolution and avoid further bloodshed," Johnson said in remarks released ahead of his arrival.

Some countries have removed non-essential embassy staff from Kyiv and Washington advised on Tuesday against travel to Belarus because of "an increase in unusual and concerning Russian military activity near the border with Ukraine."

The West last week formally rejected Russian demands to bar Ukraine from ever joining NATO and pull out NATO forces from Eastern Europe. Western countries say they are still willing to talk about arms control and confidence-building measures.

Amnesty Accuses Israel of Enforcing Apartheid On Palestinians



TEL AVIV (Dispatches) - Amnesty International accused Israel on Tuesday of subjecting Palestinians to a system of apartheid founded on policies of "segregation, dispossession and exclusion" that it said amounted to crimes against humanity.

The London-based rights group said its findings were based on research and legal analysis in a 211-page report into Israeli seizure of Palestinian land and property, unlawful killings, forcible transfer of people and denial of citizenship.

Israel said the report, the second by an international rights group in less than a year to accuse it of pursuing a policy of apartheid, "consolidates and recycles lies" from hate groups and was designed to "pour fuel onto the fire of antisemitism".

It accused Amnesty UK of using "double standards and demonization in order to delegitimize Israel".

Palestinians praised the report.

"The United Nations Security Council and the General Assembly are obliged to heed the compelling evidence presented by Amnesty and other leading human rights organizations and hold Israel accountable for its crimes against the Palestinian people, including through sanctions," the Palestinian foreign ministry said in a statement.

Amnesty said Israel was enforcing a system of oppression and domination against Palestinians "wherever it has control over their rights", including Arab citizens of Israel, Palestinians in Israeli-occupied territory and refugees living abroad.

The measures included restrictions on Palestinian movement in territory occupied in the 1967 Middle East war, underinvestment in Palestinian communities in Israel, and preventing the return of Palestinian refugees.

Alongside forcible transfers, torture and unlawful killings, which Amnesty said were intended to maintain a system of "oppression and domination", they constitute "the crime against humanity of apartheid".

U.N. Urges Taliban to Release Information About Missing Journalists

KABUL (Dispatches) - The United Nations mission to Afghanistan called on the Taliban administration to release details on the detention of two Afghan journalists who disappeared the previous day.

A Taliban administration spokesman, Bilal Karimi, said it was investigating the men's abduction and denied they had been arrested.

"Mounting concern about restrictions on media & free expression. UN urges Taliban to make public why they detained these...reporters & to respect Afghan's rights," said the U.N. Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) in a Tweet.

Ali Asghari, news manager at local broadcaster Ariana News, said that on Monday afternoon two of its journalists were taken, but the identity of the abductors was not clear.

Fears for the safety of vocal opponents of the Taliban and prominent women have risen since the Islamist group took over the country in August as foreign forces withdrew. Many civil society and women's rights activists fled the country. Also on Tuesday, the UN's human rights spokesperson gave a briefing in Geneva expressing major concern over the disappearance of six people last month in connection with women's rights protests.

"We are gravely concerned for their well-being and safety," said U.N. human rights spokesperson Ravina Shamdasan, adding there were other reports of other house searches of activists.

"These reports have also brought into focus what appears to be a pattern of arbitrary arrests and detentions."

Another Taliban administration spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid rejected the UN human rights spokeswoman's assessment, saying it was investigating the situation involving the abducted women.

The Taliban says they have an amnesty for any previous opponents, including Afghan military members, and that they respect women's rights in line with Islamic law and customs, but many human rights advocates and foreign diplomats remain skeptical.

Japan Parliament Adopts Resolution on Human Rights in China

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's parliament adopted a rare resolution on what it called the "serious human rights situation" in China, and asked the government to take steps to relieve the situation.

Japan has already announced it will not send a government delegation to the upcoming Beijing Winter Olympics, following a U.S.-led diplomatic boycott over concerns about China's human rights condition, although Tokyo avoided explicitly labelling its move as such.

Since taking office in October, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has said on multiple occasions that Japan would not mince words with China when necessary, and in November appointed former defence minister Gen Nakatani as his aide on human rights.

The resolution, adopted by the lower chamber, said the international community has expressed concerns over such issues as internment and the violation of religious freedom in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Tibet and Hong Kong.

"Human rights issues cannot just be domestic issues, because human rights hold universal values and are a rightful matter of concern for the international community," the resolution said.

"This chamber recognizes changes to the status quo with force, which are symbolized by the serious human rights situation, as a threat to the international community," it said.

China's foreign ministry said in a statement on Tuesday that the resolution "ignores the facts, maliciously slanders China's human rights situation, seriously violates international law and basic norms governing international relations, grossly interferes in China's internal affairs, and is extremely egregious in nature."

When Japan launched a war against other countries, it committed countless crimes, the statement added.

U.S. President Joe Biden in December signed into law legislation that bans imports from China's Xinjiang region over concerns about forced labor. Washington has labelled Beijing's treatment of the Uyghur Muslim minority genocide.

China denies abuses in Xinjiang, a major cotton producer that also supplies much of the world's materials for solar panels.

The conservative wing of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) sought the adoption of the resolution ahead of the Feb. 4 opening of the Beijing Winter Olympics although there were worries in the government about a potential economic impact, Jiji news agency has said.

There have long been competing views within the LDP about the approach to China. The party's more conservative wing is hawkish on China policy and seen as concerned primarily with defense issues. Other members of the party have pushed to preserve Japan's deep economic ties with its neighbor.



Two Babies Freeze to Death In IDP Camps in Idlib

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - Two children died overnight, including a seven-day-old baby, in tented displacement camps in Syria's Idlib province due to severe cold weather, drawing attention to the dire humanitarian condition in the region.

"When I touched her, she felt like ice," Mohamad Al-Hassan told Al Jazeera. His seven-day-old daughter Fatima passed away overnight at the Al Rahman hospital in Idlib, which is home to millions of Syrians who have fled the decade-old war.

"We were able to prepare a little bit for the winter," said Al-Hassan, "but we couldn't get everything we need. It's hard to secure work and an income."

His family was displaced seven years ago from southern Aleppo province, before moving to the Laith displacement camp further north where they have since lived in tented settlements.

Dr Fadi Hallak of the Al-Rahman hospital said that Fatima was blue and bleeding from the nose and mouth by the time she reached the hospital. "She was born here a week ago without any complications," Hallak told Al Jazeera. "But she, unfortunately, died because of the freezing cold in recent days."

Freezing cold weather over the past two weeks has swept northwest Syria, where more than 4 million displaced Syrians live. About 1.7 million of these internally displaced persons (IDPs) live in tented settlements after fleeing the forces of President Bashar al-Assad. The enclave is the last opposition stronghold in the war-torn country.

Amina Salameh, a two-month-old who lived with her family in the Al-Jabal displacement camp in northern Idlib, also passed away this morning. She had a pulse when she arrived at Al-Rahman, but doctors couldn't keep her alive.

"She was blue and had a slow pulse," said Dr Hallak. "We tried to keep her warm and nourish her".

At least three other children have died in the cold in the past two weeks.

International humanitarian agency Save the Children in a statement called the deaths "avoidable and tragic".

"It is incomprehensible that any child should face the winter scared for their life," Sonia Khush, the director of the Save the Children Syria Response Office, said in a statement.

"Almost 11 years after the crisis in Syria started, it feels like the world has forgotten about children in North West Syria."



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S/p, Sauna
Jacuzzi, pkg
green yard

Parsian

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Exxon Posts Best Results in Seven Years

HOUSTON (Reuters) - Exxon Mobil Corp on Tuesday reported a fourth-quarter profit of \$8.87 billion, its largest in seven years, as the top U.S. oil producer benefited from strong energy prices.

The company slashed spending after fuel demand cratered two years ago and, since then, earnings have topped pre-pandemic levels. On Monday, Exxon also disclosed a business shakeup to accelerate a \$6-billion cut to operating expenses set in motion last year.

The revamping will “position us to lead in cash flow and earnings growth, operating performance, and the energy transition,” Chief Executive Darren Woods said in a statement.

Exxon reported a profit of \$2.08 per share, above analysts’ forecast of \$1.94 as the bottom line benefited from soaring oil and gas prices, higher volumes and asset sales. In the same quarter a year ago, Exxon posted an adjusted profit of 3 cents a share.



Qatar Seals Boeing Freighter Deal With Surprise 737 Order

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Qatar Airways handed Boeing Co a record launch order for 34 new 777X freighters and a surprise purchase of 737 MAX passenger jets on Monday, in a \$30 billion-plus package as President Joe Biden hailed the Persian Gulf state as a major U.S. ally.

The deal, signed at the White House during a visit to Washington by Qatar’s ruling emir, boosted Boeing at a time when the U.S. planemaker faces chronic industrial and financial constraints. The order drove Boeing shares up to close 5.1% higher.

The deal for 25 of the largest version of the MAX, the 737-10, plus 25 further options, widened the fallout from a dispute between Qatar Airways and Airbus.

The European planemaker earlier this month revoked a contract with Qatar Airways for 50 competing A321neo jets as part of a spiraling dispute that began with disagreements over the severity of flaws on long-haul A350 jets.

Qatar Airways Chief Executive Akbar Al Baker said Qatar and U.S. aircraft and engine negotiators had “lost a lot of sleep” in the intervening two weeks to shape an alternative deal, and contrasted that with a recent plunge in relations with Airbus.

“We like to build long-term relationships with trusted partners where both parties work together towards a common purpose,” he told a White House signing ceremony attended by leaders from Boeing and engine maker General Electric Co.

Airbus declined comment.

The total order included 34 of a newly launched freighter version of the 777X passenger plane, plus 16 options, and two more of the current-generation freighter, the 777F. Reuters reported the 737 MAX deal earlier on Monday.

The freight part of the deal represents the first order for a cargo spin-off of the 777X, the world’s largest twin-engine passenger plane whose entry to service has been delayed more than three years to late 2023 or beyond.

Boeing said the freighter would enter service in 2027.

It is banking on sales of the new twin-engined juggernaut to defend its dominance of the cargo market and head off a challenge from a new Airbus A350 freighter.

“(The 777X) will be an absolute world-beater,” Boeing Chief Executive Dave Calhoun said.

To win the freighter order, Boeing agreed to convert a third of Qatar’s existing order for 60 777X passenger planes, for which there is currently less demand, to the cargo version.

Al Baker played up support for the U.S. economy from Qatar Airways, which has faced trade complaints in the past from U.S. carriers over alleged subsidies - a practice it denies.

For Boeing, the deal marks a respite from a recent safety crisis over the MAX and delays with the 777X passenger jet and 787 Dreamliner, and a chance to win points for its own economic contribution after intense regulatory and political scrutiny.

Qatar Airways had criticized the MAX and urged Boeing to design an all-new jet after crashes led to a lengthy grounding, but sales have rebounded since it was re-cleared in late 2020.

The Airbus A321neo continues to dominate sales in the part of the market served by the largest MAX variant, however.

Boeing said the freighter order would sustain more than 35,000 U.S. jobs with an annual economic impact of \$2.6 billion.

Turkey Tourism Revenue Doubled

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkey’s tourism revenues doubled to almost \$25 billion last year and the country’s trade deficit narrowed, according to data on Monday reflecting a recovery from the initial wave of COVID-19 pandemic measures in 2020.

President Tayyip Erdogan has presented a shift to a current account surplus as a centerpiece of his government’s sweeping new economic policy, which is focused on low interest rates and stronger exports and credit - despite soaring inflation.

Income from tourism has also grown more important as the central bank seeks to boost reserves and execute market interventions to defend the lira, which lost 44% of its value to the dollar last year amid a December currency crisis.

Last year as a whole tourism revenue climbed 103% to \$24.482 billion, Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) data showed. In the fourth quarter, revenues rose 95% to \$7.6 billion, only 3% below the level in October-December 2019 - the last quarter before the coronavirus began having an impact.

However, the revenues last year as a whole were still well off the \$34.5 billion recorded in 2019.

It was TUIK’s first publication following Erdogan’s dismissal of its Chairman Sait Erdal Dincer at the weekend, less than a year after his appointment.

The move comes after opposition parties and some economists

OPEC+ Output Misses Cost Almost \$21b in Lost Revenue in 2021

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - OPEC+ missed its oil production target by more 800,000 barrels per day (bpd) on average last year, missing out on billions of dollars in revenues and hurting members of the group which have struggled to raise cash to invest, data seen by Reuters showed.

Based on the average price of \$70 a barrel for OPEC’s crude basket, 800,000 bpd in lost output - about half Britain’s daily consumption - equates to about \$21 billion in lost earnings for the group in 2021, Reuters calculations show.

After its record output cuts in 2020, OPEC+, which groups the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies led by Russia, has been gradually relaxing its curbs as demand recovers from the worst impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

But not all producers have kept up with the rising output goals, especially West African producers Nigeria and Angola, which have faced outages and struggled with limited investment.

Even as others matched production targets - which have recently been rising at a rate of 400,000 bpd a month across the group - analysts say spare capacity has been whittled away.

Spare capacity, production which can switched on at short notice, is a vital cushion to protect the market from any shock, smoothing out price volatility and spikes.

“Spare capacity remains critically low, with concerns around Russia’s, Kuwait’s, and Iraq’s productive capacity likely to materialise by summer, when demand seasonally ramps up and international travel reopens,” Goldman Sachs wrote in a note.

OPEC+ is expected to stick to its previously agreed plan to raise March output by 400,000 bpd when it meets on Wednesday, although two OPEC+ sources told Reuters the surge in prices might prompt the group to consider other steps.

Benchmark Brent traded above \$90 a barrel this month at a more than seven-year high. It was \$88.85 at 1202 GMT, more than \$20 higher than the average price in 2021.

A Reuters OPEC production survey on Tuesday found that in January the group overall had undershot the output rise it had planned by even more than in December.



India to Launch State-Backed Digital Rupee, Tax Crypto

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - India will introduce a state-backed “digital rupee” and impose a 30 percent tax on profits from virtual currencies, the government announced Tuesday.

The plans are a blow to one of the world’s fastest-growing cryptocurrency markets, which has remained unregulated despite burgeoning local trading platforms and glitzy celebrity endorsements.

They make India the latest major emerging economy to rein in the sector, after China went even further in outlawing all cryptocurrency transactions last September.

“There has been a phenomenal increase in transactions in virtual digital assets,” finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman told parliament, adding that the growth necessitated a proper tax framework.

Profits made trading cryptocurrencies and other digital assets will be taxed at 30 percent, while any losses from digital transactions will not be granted offsets against other income.

A one-percent tax will be deducted at the source for all digital asset transactions above an as-yet-unspecified threshold.

Sitharaman also said the central bank would introduce a “digital rupee”, based on blockchain technology, by the end of March 2023.

“Introduction of central bank digital currency will give a big boost to (the) digital economy. Digital currency will also lead to a more efficient and cheaper currency management system,” she said.

Cryptocurrencies have been under scrutiny by Indian regulators since first entering the local market nearly a decade ago, with a surge in fraudulent transactions leading to a central bank ban in 2018.

India’s Supreme Court lifted the ban two years later and the market has surged since, growing by nearly 650 percent in the year to June 2021 -- second only to Vietnam, according to research by Chainalysis.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year warned that Bitcoin presented a risk to younger generations and could “spoil our youth” if it ended up “in the wrong hands”.

The government soon proposed banning “all private cryptocurrencies”, but ultimately held back.

Tuesday’s budget also included plans to ramp up infrastructure spending to support the economy’s post-pandemic bounceback as officials grapple with rising inflation and unemployment.

Spending will be directed to roads, railways, defense, housing and energy, as the government eyes important state polls in the coming weeks.



Iran Climbs One Place In FIFA World Ranking

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran’s national men’s football team, while keeping its first place in Asia football ranking, has moved up to 20th place in FIFA’s Feb. ranking, up one spot since last ranking. FIFA has announced its world ranking for the national men’s football team according to which the national Iranian men’s football team has ranked 20th in the world, climbing up one

place in the world since the last FIFA ranking.

The Iranian squad has maintained its position at the top of Asia with 1,572.9 well above Japan with 1,549.8.

The Iranians improved their rankings following two wins in a row against the national football teams of Iraq and UAE in the Asian qualifications for the Qatar 2022 world cup recently.



Chinese, French Oil Majors Seal Deal for Uganda Megaproject

KAMPALA (Dispatches) - Chinese and French oil giants sealed a landmark \$10-billion deal on Tuesday to develop Uganda’s energy resources and build a vast regional oil pipeline, a megaproject that has incensed environmental groups.

The so-called Final Investment Decision was announced at a ceremony in Kampala by the heads of France’s TotalEnergies and the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC).

“Today is the day we commit to invest \$10 billion in the Tilenga and Kingfisher projects and the 1,443-km long pipeline,” TotalEnergies chairman and CEO Patrick Pouyanne said in a statement.

The project aims to exploit the huge crude oil reserves at Lake Albert, a 160-kilometre (100-mile) natural border between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The oil would be pumped from landlocked Uganda through a 1,443-kilometre (900-mile) heated pipeline — said to become the longest of its type when completed -- through Tanzania to the Indian Ocean port of Tanga.

Pouyanne described the controversial pipeline as a “masterpiece” of a project, although critics charge that it threatens livelihoods and fragile ecosystems in the heart of Africa.

“From today with the FID, the project will fully enter into the construction phase,” he said.

CNOOC Uganda president Chen Zhuobiao said: “Achieving FID is a first step towards achieving first oil and unlocking opportunities for investment and development of Uganda and the whole region.”

The ceremony was also attended by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and Tanzania’s Vice President Philip Mpango.

Lake Albert lies atop an estimated 6.5 billion barrels of crude, of which about 1.4 billion barrels are currently considered recoverable.

In Uganda, the drilling is located in several natural reserves, one of which extends to Murchison Falls, the country’s largest national park.



TotalEnergies, formerly Total, said last year it had taken steps to reduce the project’s impact on people and the environment, but conservation groups charge it will be devastating.

The pipeline project would be “displacing thousands of households, endangering water resources for millions of Ugandans and Tanzanians, devastating vulnerable ecosystems and pushing the world further into climate chaos,” campaign group 350Africa.org’s regional director Landry Ninteretse said in a statement.

A consortium of Ugandan and French NGOs filed a lawsuit in 2019 against the French company accusing it of failing to abide by its legal obligations to protect the environment and the rights of the people affected by the project.

In December, the Court of Cassation, France’s highest, ruled that the case should be heard in a civil court rather than assigned to a commercial tribunal, in what the activists said was an important victory.

U.S. Manufacturing Sector Slows in January



WASHINGTON (dispatches) - A measure of U.S. manufacturing activity fell to a 14-month low in January amid an outbreak of COVID-19 infections, supporting views that economic growth lost steam at the start of the year.

The Institute for Supply Management (ISM) said on Tuesday that its index of national factory activity dropped to a reading of 57.6 last month. That was the lowest reading since November 2020 and followed 58.8 in December.

A reading above 50 indicates expansion in manufacturing, which accounts for 11.9% of the U.S. economy. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the index dropping to 57.5.

The economy hit a soft patch in December, which appeared to have persisted into early 2022 as coronavirus infections, driven by the Omicron variant, raged across the country. The ensuing disruptions at businesses and schools have led economists to anticipate a sharp slowdown in job growth in January.

The economy grew at a 6.9% annualized rate in the fourth quarter, helping to boost overall growth in 2021 to 5.7%, the strongest since 1984. Economists at Goldman Sachs on Monday slashed their first-quarter gross domestic product growth estimate to a 0.5% rate from a 2.0% pace, citing Omicron and reduced money from the government to households.

The ISM survey’s forward-looking new orders sub-index fell to 57.9 last month, the lowest reading since June 2020, from 61.0 in December. It was the second straight monthly slowdown in new orders. But customer inventories remain depressed, which could help to limit the pace of moderation in order growth.

There was another tentative sign of improving supply chains.

The survey’s measure of supplier deliveries was little changed at 64.6. A reading above 50% indicates slower deliveries to factories. The steady reading in the index is encouraging given the Omicron wave, which economists had feared would keep more factory workers at home and further stress supply chains.

Still, prices at the factory gate continued to march higher.

The survey’s measure of prices paid by manufacturers increased to a reading of 76.1 from 68.2 in December, suggesting that inflation could remain uncomfortably high for a while.

The Federal Reserve last week said it was likely to raise interest rates in March, with economists expecting as much as seven hikes this year to tame inflation.

Climate Change, Population Threaten Staggering U.S. Flood Losses by 2050

PARIS (Dispatches) - Climate change is on track to ramp up the annual cost of U.S. flood damage more than 25 percent by 2050, according to new research Monday that warns disadvantaged communities will likely bear the brunt of the financial burden.

The study published in the journal Nature Climate Change used new flood models to map out the present and future impact of sea level rise, tropical cyclones and changing weather patterns.

Losses include destruction projected to hit homes and businesses. Researchers warned that even more people are expected to move into areas at growing risk of inundation.

“Climate change combined with shifting populations present a double whammy of flood risk danger and the financial implications are staggering,” said lead author Oliver Wing, of the University of Bath’s Cabot Institute for the Environment.

Wing said the findings should be a “call to action” for both a reduction in emissions and efforts to adapt to accelerating climate risks “to reduce the devastating financial impact flooding wreaks on people’s lives.”

Researchers used nationwide property asset data, information on communities and flood projections to estimate flood risk across the U.S.

The study showed that poorer communities with a proportionally larger white population currently face the steepest losses.

But future growth in flood risk is expected to have a greater impact on African American communities on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts.

“The mapping clearly indicates Black communities will be disproportionately affected in a warming world, in addition to the poorer White communities which predominantly bear the historical risk,” said Wing.

“Both of these findings are of significant concern.”



Average annual flood losses were forecast to increase by 26.4 percent, from \$32 billion currently, to \$40.6 billion in 2050, based on 2021 dollar values.

The researchers said these figures are “essentially locked in climatically”, meaning that even if emissions fall dramatically they

would still be the same. They also warned that expanding populations in the U.S. would also significantly increase the flood risk, eclipsing even the impact of climate change.

With inundations expected to intensify in areas where populations are also increasing, the researchers said average annual exposure of the U.S. population to floods is expected to grow to more than seven millions by 2050, a 97-percent increase from current levels.

It said increases in climate-enhanced exposure was particularly concentrated along the US East Coast, with existing Texas and Florida residents seeing a roughly 50-percent increase in flood exposure by 2050.

In terms of increased flood risk due to population growth, the researchers highlighted intensified development on existing floodplains, which they said was “relatively severe in the currently sparsely populated central Prairie States and the Deep South”.

The study said even developments currently considered low risk may be in areas expected to see a heightened flood risk in the coming decades.

“Current flood risk in western society is already unacceptably high, yet climate and population change threaten to inflate these losses significantly,” said co-author Paul Bates, a professor of hydrology at the Cabot Institute for the Environment.

“The relatively short timescales over which this increase will take place mean we cannot rely on decarbonisation to reduce the risk so we have to adapt better, both to the situation now and for the future.”

Greenland Ice Cap Loses Enough Water in 20 Years to Cover U.S.

COPENHAGEN (Dispatches) - Greenland’s immense ice sheet has lost enough ice in the past 20 years to submerge the entire United States in half a metre of water, according to data released this week by Danish researchers.

The climate is warming faster in the Arctic than anywhere else on the planet and melting ice from Greenland is now the main factor in the rise in the Earth’s oceans, according to NASA.

Since measurements began in 2002, the Greenland ice sheet has lost about 4,700 billion tons of ice, said Polar Portal, a joint project involving several Danish Arctic research institutes.

This represents 4,700 cubic kilometers of melted water -- “enough to cover the entire U.S. by half a meter” -- and has contributed 1.2 centimeters to sea level rise, the Arctic monitoring website added.

Polar Portal’s findings are based on satellite imagery from the US-German GRACE program (Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment), which showed the ice melt to be most severe near the coasts of the Arctic territory, at the edge of the ice sheet.

In these peripheral zones, “independent observations also indicate that the ice is thinning, that the glacier fronts are retreating in fjords and on land, and that there is a greater degree of melting from the surface of the ice”, the website said.

The west coast of Greenland is particularly affected, according to the data.

Climate change is particularly alarming in the Arctic, which scientists say is warming at a rate three to four times the global average.

Tehran Calls for...

FROM PAGE 1

The development of an efficient transport network in the ECO region is of high priority. Among the seven main Routes of transport corridors in the ECO region, Iran has a key role in the first 5 routes due to the crucial geographical and strategic location of the country in the region which have turned it into a transit route, playing an important role in the trade between West and East.

Transport along these ECO routes in Iran has recently witnessed important developments particularly along “Turkey-Iran-Pakistan” (ITI) and “Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran” (KTI) Corridors.

Operationalization of the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) corridor by dispatch of freight from Pakistan to Turkey through Iran in December 2021 is a major achievement in regional connectivity along ECO Corridor. The ECO meeting acknowledged the activation of the ITI Corridor and emphasized the removal of the impediments for the regularization of this Corridor. Moreover, the member states are to explore possibilities for extension of the Corridor to Europe and China. ECO train as the most effective mode of transport for freight transfer can play an important role in expanding commercial transactions between the member states.

For the implementation of the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran (KTI) railway freight corridor, recently a tripartite MoU between Railway Administrations of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran had been signed on the sidelines of the ECO summit in Ashgabat in November 2021. Due to the geopolitical privileges of Iran, this agreement on rail transport and transit will result in increased rail transits through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to Iran. Further, it will expand operations through International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

Further in the meeting, the member states emphasized the commercialization of the ITI, KTI, Istanbul-Almaty, and Bandar Abbas-Almaty Railway Corridor and acknowledged their capacity to serve as key transit corridors in the region.

The member states committed to achieving the goals and objectives of the ECO in the field of transportation and communications and conferred digitalization of transport, customs, and border crossing procedures through implementing e-TIR/e-CMR protocols and other tools along transport corridors.

The member states of the ECO transport corridor include Iran, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Iran to Modernize...

FROM PAGE 1

Relying on knowledge-based companies, Iran has provided most of the equipment needed in its airports from domestic production in recent years, he said.

“Recently, we have had projects such as the contract for the purchase of advanced radar, switching and navigation aid systems and runway lighting system at Ardabil airport, in which we have reached self-sufficiency.”

Due to its size, Iran has 53 airports and domestic air travel is rising even though the country has long struggled to replenish its fleet in the face of sanctions. Iran had placed orders for purchases of 20 ATR 72-600 planes from the Franco-Italian aircraft manufacturer for internal travel, but only 13 of them were delivered.

The import package was part of national flag carrier Iran Air’s plans to buy 200 brand new planes from Airbus and Boeing and ATR after the country signed a nuclear deal in 2015. However, the contracts came to a halt in 2018 after the US Treasury banned the planemakers from supplying the jets to Iran.

Iraqi Resistance...

FROM PAGE 1

Sirwan Barzani, a commander of Kurdish Peshmerga forces, told Rudaw televiaion news network that Turkish airstrikes targeted the surroundings of Makhmour refugee camp and a base belonging to the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) militant group in Mount Qarachogh, causing casualties and material damage.

Iraq’s Security Media Cell, in a statement, called for a halt to Turkish attacks on Iraqi territories, saying, “Iraq is fully prepared for bilateral cooperation and to control the security situation on common borders” with Turkey. The Turkish Defense Ministry on Wednesday confirmed the attack, adding that it marked the launch of Operation Winter Eagle against the positions of PKK and the so-called People’s Protection Units (YPG) in northern Iraq and Syria.

Militants of the PKK — designated as a terrorist group by Turkey, the United States and European Union — regularly clash with Turkish forces in the Kurdish-dominated southeast of Turkey attached to northern Iraq. A shaky ceasefire between the PKK and the Turkish government collapsed in July 2015. Attacks on Turkish security forces have soared ever since.

More than 40,000 people have been killed during the three-decade conflict between Turkey and the autonomy-seeking militant group.

U.S., Israel...

FROM PAGE 1

The Emirates is also Saudi Arabia’s main ally in a 2015-present war and simultaneous siege that the kingdom has been leading against Yemen in order to change the impoverished country’s ruling structure.

The war has killed tens of thousands of Yemenis and turned the entire country into the scene of the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. On Tuesday, the spokesman for the Yemeni Armed Forces, repeated a threat he had leveled against the UAE last week, in which he had warned that — with the Emirates’ ongoing involvement in the devastating war — the country’s popular Dubai Expo 2020 might be the next target of Yemen’s retaliatory strikes.

Swim World Championships Moved to 2023 Due to Covid

PARIS (Dispatches) - The swimming world championships scheduled to take place in the Japanese city of Fukuoka in May this year have been postponed until July 2023 because of Covid-19 risks, organizers said on Tuesday.

Swimming's governing body FINA said the world championships after that, in the Qatari capital Doha, will as a result be delayed until January 2024.

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Cancelo Signs Contract Extension at Man City

LONDON (Dispatches) - Joao Cancelo has signed a two-year contract extension keeping him at Manchester City until 2027, the Premier League leaders announced on Tuesday.

The Portuguese international full-back has established himself as a key player of Pep Guardiola's side since arriving from Juventus in 2019, playing 106 games and winning three major trophies.

"Manchester City is a fantastic club, so I am incredibly happy to have signed this new agreement," said the 27-year-old.

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SPORTS

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 3, 2022

Sixers Stretch Win Streak to 5

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Tyrese Maxey scored 33 points, including the go-ahead driving layup with 26.4 seconds remaining in overtime, and the host Philadelphia 76ers defeated the Memphis Grizzlies 122-119.

Tobias Harris produced 31 points and Andre Drummond had 16 points and 23 rebounds. The Sixers have won five straight.

Ja Morant led the Grizzlies with 37 points and Desmond Bane added 34, including five points in overtime. Jaren Jackson Jr. had 18 and Steven Adams swept 12 rebounds for Memphis, which had its three-game winning streak snapped.

The Sixers played without All-Star Joel Embiid, who was given the night off for rest after competing in 21 games in a row.

Warriors 122, Rockets 108

Stephen Curry scored 21 of his game-high 40 points in the fourth quarter and Andrew Wiggins chipped in 23 points as Golden State handed Houston its 11th consecutive home loss.

The Warriors earned their sixth win in a row while the Rockets dropped their fourth straight overall. Curry, who shot 7-for-10 overall in the final frame, including 4-for-7 from 3-point range, recorded his sixth 40-point game of the season. Wiggins grabbed five rebounds and shot 8 of 14 for the Warriors, who hit 53.8 percent from the floor and went 17 of 40 (42.5 percent) from behind the 3-point arc.

Christian Wood (24 points, 13 rebounds) and Kevin Porter Jr. (17 points, 11 assists) posted double-doubles for the Rockets.

Dele Alli Wants To Be Happy Again After Everton Move

LONDON (Dispatches) - Dele Alli said he wanted to rediscover the joy of playing football after securing a move to Frank Lampard's Everton in an effort to revive his faltering career.

The England midfielder signed a two-and-a-half-year contract at Goodison Park, bringing his seven-year stay at Tottenham to an end late in the transfer window, which closed on Monday.

Alli, 25, was a member of Gareth Southgate's 2018 World Cup squad but has struggled under a succession of managers at Spurs in recent seasons and fallen out of the England reckoning.

"I've had a few good conversations with him (Lampard) already and he's a player I've admired watching his whole career," Alli told Sky Sports.

"To have the opportunity to work with him now is very exciting and hopefully I'm sure we're going to do great things together."

When asked his main motivations for the move, he said he wanted to enjoy playing.

"I just want to be happy playing football and I think working with Lampard and the great players they've got there I think it's a great opportunity to do that.

"I'm excited to go there and show the fans what I can do and help the club as much as I can."

Nike Suspends Relationship With Greenwood

LONDON (Dispatches) - Nike have suspended their relationship with Manchester United's Mason Greenwood, the sportswear giant said after accusations surfaced online that the 20-year-old forward had assaulted a woman.

United said on Sunday they were "aware of images and allegations circulating on social media" and later confirmed Greenwood would not return to training or play for the Old Trafford club until further notice.

"We have suspended our relationship with Mason Greenwood. We are deeply concerned by the disturbing allegations and will continue to closely monitor the situation," a Nike spokesperson told Reuters.



CJ McCollum scored a game-high 21 points on 10-of-17 shooting to lead the Trail Blazers, who have dropped two consecutive games and four of their past five. Norman Powell added 17 points, and Jusuf Nurkic had 14 points and nine rebounds.

Pacers 122, Clippers 116

Rookie Isaiah Jackson collected a season-high 26 points and 10 rebounds to lift short-handed Indiana past Los Angeles in Indianapolis.

Caris LeVert scored 17 points, Duane Washington Jr. added 16 and Terry Taylor chipped in 15 for Indiana.

Amir Coffey scored 27 points and Reggie Jackson added 21 for the Clippers, who concluded an eight-game road trip with a 4-4 record.

Celtics 122, Heat 92

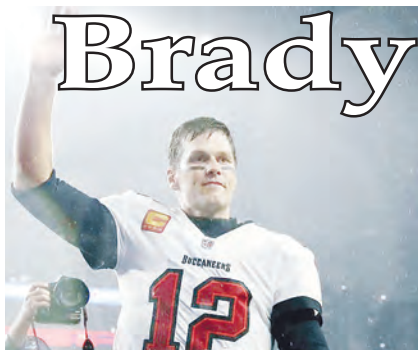
Jaylen Brown scored a game-high 29 points and Jayson Tatum contributed 20 points and 12 rebounds to power host Boston to a rout of Miami.

Marcus Smart added 16 points and seven assists and Al Horford contributed 14 points and nine boards for the Celtics. Boston won for the fourth time in five.

Knicks 116, Kings 96

Evan Fournier scored 16 of his 18 points in the first quarter for host New York, who were never seriously threatened thereafter in a win over Sacramento.

Alec Burks scored a team-high 21 points off the bench for the Knicks, who snapped a three-game losing streak and won for just the second time in their last eight games. Fellow reserves Quentin Grimes and Obi Toppin scored 14 points apiece.



Brady, winner of a record seven Super Bowls, said he was quitting the sport after deciding he could no longer make the "competitive commitment" to continue.

"I have always believed the sport of football is an 'all-in' proposition -- if a 100%

Brady Confirms Retirement

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - NFL Licon Tom Brady confirmed his retirement from the sport on Tuesday, officially bringing the curtain down on a glittering 22-season career.

The 44-year-old Tampa Bay Buccaneers superstar, widely regarded as the greatest quarterback in history, made the announcement in a post on Instagram.

Brady, winner of a record seven Super Bowls, said he was quitting the sport after deciding he could no longer make the "competitive commitment" to continue.

"I have always believed the sport of football is an 'all-in' proposition -- if a 100%

competitive commitment isn't there, you won't succeed, and success is what I love so much about our game" Brady wrote.

"There is a physical, mental and emotional challenge every single day that has allowed me to maximize my highest potential..."

"This is difficult for me to write, but here it goes: I am not going to make that competitive commitment anymore."

"I have loved my NFL career, and now it is time to focus my time and energy on other things that require my attention."

Brady's announcement draws a line under three days of feverish speculation that he was preparing to call time on his career.

News of his imminent retirement had been reported by ESPN citing multiple sources close to the player on Saturday.

Premier League Clubs Spend Nearly £300m In Transfer Window

LONDON (Dispatches) - Premier League clubs splashed out nearly £300 million in January -- the second-highest amount ever spent in the winter transfer window -- boosted by a flurry of late big-money moves.

The arrivals of Luis Diaz, Bruno Guimaraes and Rodrigo Bentancur in the last few days of the month lifted the league's gross spending to £295 million (\$398 million) according to figures from finance company Deloitte.

January 2018's figure of £430 million remains the record but this year's outlay is more than four times higher than last year's figure of £70 million, when the coronavirus crisis hit budgets.

The clubs' net expenditure -- player purchases less player sales -- of £180 million is the highest since the January transfer window was introduced in 2003.

The five clubs currently at the bottom of the Premier League spent around £150 million, more than 50 percent of the total.

Among the big moves, Liverpool signed Porto's Colombia winger Diaz for a reported initial fee of £37.5 million while Newcastle paid an initial £35 million for Lyon's Brazilian midfielder Guimaraes.

Newly wealthy Newcastle also paid Burnley £25 million for New Zealand international striker Chris Wood and signed England defender Kieran Trippier for £12 million from Atletico Madrid.

Dan Jones, head of Deloitte's sports business group, said: "This transfer window indicates that the financial pressures of Covid on Premier League clubs are easing, with spending firmly back to pre-pandemic levels and remarkably among the highest we've ever seen in January."



Nadal Feels Lucky To Be Part of Dominant Big Three

MADRID (Dispatches) - Rafa Nadal said he was lucky to be part of an era of tennis that included Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic after the Spaniard won a men's record 21st Grand Slam title at the Australian Open to move one ahead of his two great rivals.

Nadal roared back from two sets down to edge Daniil Medvedev 2-6 6-7(5) 6-4 6-4 7-5 in a classic final on Sunday, only months after fearing his glorious career might be over because of a nagging left foot injury.

He then paid tribute to Federer, who missed the year's first Grand Slam to continue his rehabilitation from knee surgery and Djokovic, who was deported following a dispute over Australia's Covid-19 entry requirements and his unvaccinated status.

"At the end of the day, it's just a game and in some way we achieved more than what we ever dreamed of when we were kids," Nadal told reporters. "It doesn't matter that much if one is 21, one is 20, or the other finished 23 and the other with 21."

"I think we did very important things for our sport and we achieved our dreams and we enjoy it. I feel lucky to be part of this era that has been very special for our sport."

The 35-year-old, who pulled out of Wimbledon, the Tokyo Olympics and the US Open in 2021 and returned to competitive action last month, said the satisfaction of winning his second Australian Open crown was impossible to describe. "It's amazing to have this trophy with me," Nadal said. "I tried hard during my career here in Australia, finally, it was probably the most unexpected year for me to achieve, one more time this beautiful trophy so I'm super happy."

Nadal said he was not thinking about his next tournament.

