

Health Ministry Announced on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic In Iran Increased to 132,830 With 85 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Iran Sent a 30-Ton Humanitarian Aid to the Needy People of Afghanistan, Coinciding With Days in Which the Victory of the Islamic Revolution Is Commemorated in the Country

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President Opens 48 Large Industrial Projects

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – As many as 48 large industrial projects were given to investors and big companies to implement during a ceremony in presence of Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi on Sunday.

During a ceremony that was held at the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) conference hall in the north of Tehran with the participation of President Raisi, as many as 48 large industrial projects were given to investors and big companies to carry out.

Gol-e-Gohar Mining and Industrial Company, Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company (EMSCO), National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO), Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company, Metals and Mines Development Investment Company and Parsian Oil and Gas Company have undertaken the responsibility of investing in the massive projects.

Once these giant industrial projects are put into operation, it is predicted that \$11 billion worth of products would be exported annually.

In addition, the production of 54 million tons of mining, mineral and petrochemical products will yield \$20 billion annual revenue for the country, while tens of thousands of jobs will be created.

Generating 21,000 direct jobs and 64,000 indirect jobs are the salient advantages of these giant industrial projects.

Foreign Investment in Iran's Major Sectors Up 90%

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreigners have committed to more than \$2.8 billion in investment in manufacturing, mining and trade projects in Iran, shows figures published by the government which indicate investment flow into the country has continued despite American sanctions targeting various economic sectors.

Figures published on Saturday by Iran's Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade (MIMT) showed that the government had approved a total of 102 projects with foreign investments worth \$2.804 billion in the three quarters to December 21.

The figures showed an increase of 89.8% against the similar period in 2020 during which the MIMT had approved 104 projects involving foreign investment, said a report by the official IRNA news agency.

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Chinese Investing \$20b In Iran's Oil Industry



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Oil Minister Javad Owji says the maximum pressure of the U.S. against Iran has failed, adding that oil industry staff are soldiers of economic jihad and are at the front line of this economic war. Concurrent with the festivities marking the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, Owji highlighted the performance and achievements of Iran's oil industry since the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

He said despite all pressures and sanctions from the U.S., the country has overcome the maximum pressure of the Americans and oil industry staff are the soldiers of the economic war.

He emphasized the necessity of investment in the oil industry in order to keep up with the rise in the domestic consumption of fuel and its exports. He reiterated that the priority of the current government is to develop oil and gas fields, adding that due to lack of investment in the fields, the drop of pressure during gas supply has occurred and the gas refineries are working under their capacities.

He said that the country needs investment in the oil and gas fields for increasing the pressure and the ministry has planned for keeping the current production as well as discovery of the new fields. He said that the country needs \$80b of investment for optimizing the upstream and downstream industries of oil and gas sector and new wells and drilling facilities are required.

Owji said the ministry does its best for investment in the joint and independent oil fields aimed at keeping a least the current amount of production and increase it.

He said that most of investments have been financial and financing in the oil and gas sector especially in the refineries and petrochemical sector, announcing readiness of holding over of a field for development to a holding from A to Z of the project.

He said that in order to attract investors, the ministry has changed the format of contracts by creating diversity in them. He added that in the next 8 years, the ministry will allocate up to \$20b of oil and gas resources for developing the fields and the same amount of money will be invested by the Chinese investors under the 25-year cooperation agreement of Iran-China, stating that the ministry tries to have such a contract with Russian investors.

He reiterated that investment is the top priority in the oil and gas industry of the country and if it does not happen now, the country will turn into importers of oil and gas and oil products.

E3 Troika Urges Iran to Use Sanctions Waivers to Revive JCPOA

TEHRAN (MNA) – Claiming that time for the reaching agreement in Vienna talks is running out, the E3 called on Iran to use US sanctions waiver for the revival of JCPOA.

The European Troika (Britain, France and Germany) issued a joint statement, reacting to the US move to reinstate some sanctions waivers related to Iran's peaceful nuclear program, and announced that the move should facilitate technical discussions needed to support Vienna talks on the removal of sanctions.

AFP reported that the European parties in JCPOA talks are urging Iran to use the "opportunity" of the US waiving some sanctions against Iran's peaceful nuclear program in an attempt to persuade Tehran to reach a 2015 nuclear deal.

On Friday, a high-ranking U.S. State Department official reported that the US administration made a decision to restore the sanctions waivers which allowed Iran to receive assistance on peaceful nuclear projects from other countries, including Russia. The official stressed that the waiver "is not a concession to Iran," nor is it "a signal that we are about to reach an understanding on a mutual return to full implementation of the" Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

This is while some believe that the move by the Biden administration is in fact in line with the White House's "blame game" and cannot have economic positive effects on Iran's economy.

The U.S. restoring sanctions waivers to Iran which allowed it to use the assistance of other countries in the sphere of nuclear energy may slow down the implementation of Iran's nuclear program, Russian Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov said on Saturday, TASS reported.

"Clear provisions of the Iranian nuclear deal are totally misinterpreted by opponents. The U.S. maximum pressure policy remains the major factor in the advancement of the Iranian nuclear program. Probably waivers can slow it down," he wrote on Twitter.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Iran Right Not to Trust the U.S.

Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, all governments in the country and even its leadership have repeatedly said that they cannot trust the U.S. and have considered this arrogant country as their enemy number one and they have had their own reasons to think so and history has shown us that the Iranians have been always right in not trusting the U.S. governments, and on the whole the U.S. because they always tell lies even to their own nation.

Now that the talks between Iran and P4+1 are underway in Vienna and the U.S. wants to return to the JCPOA, Tehran has set conditions for verifying the removal of sanctions because it does not trust the U.S., as the Americans have several times violated what they have said and signed and Washington has proved it cannot be trusted.

Historically, the U.S. governments once in a while have told lies to their nation from the Vietnam War to Afghanistan and they have tried to deceive the Americans no matter it is a Democratic or Republican government.

On Friday a prominent CNN news anchor blasted the Biden administration's recent suggestion that journalists who don't trust their claims are siding with terrorists or foreign powers, pointing out that the U.S. government has a long history of "lying to the American people."

The on-air criticism of the administration by Jake Tapper was prompted by two separate incidents in the past week in which White House and State Department spokespersons clearly implied that journalists challenging the validity of their official statements were siding with Washington's enemies.

On Thursday, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki was challenged by a reporter to offer evidence proving her claim that Daesh (ISIS) leader Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi had detonated himself with a suicide device during a raid by the occupying US special forces in Syria.

"As our troops approached to capture the terrorist, in a final act of desperate cowardice, with no regard to the lives of his own family or others in the building, he chose to blow himself up," US President Joe Biden also claimed.

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MPs Renew Allegiance With Imam Khomeini's Ideals

TEHRAN (IP) – Majlis members on Sunday attended the mausoleum of the Founder of the Islamic Republic in Iran, late Imam Khomeini, on the eve of the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

On February 1st, 1979, Imam Khomeini, the Founder of the Islamic Revolution, returned to Tehran amidst an enthusiastic welcome from the people after fifteen years of exile.

In the ceremony, the Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and the members of the parliament commemorated the late Imam Khomeini by laying down flowers on his graves and praying for him.

Qalibaf also delivered his speech.

Delivering a speech at the mausoleum of the late founder of the Islamic Revolution on Sunday, Hassan Khomeini stated that unity is essential for the country.

Highlighting that the Islamic Revolution has many enemies, he noted: "Today, the country faces many problems, the important one is people's livelihoods, so parliament has to solve them." He added: "The parliament must rely on national capabilities and power in making discussions."

The anniversary of the Islamic Revolution is celebrated on 22 Bahman, which is the 11th month in the Iranian calendar, February 11 in the Gregorian calendar.

Every year, Iranians mark the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution from February 1 to 11, known as the Ten-Day Fajr ceremonies. The event commemorates the protests that led to the downfall of the U.S.-backed Shah monarchy and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran.



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021-44253335-39

www.irannewsdaily.com
info@irannewsdaily.com

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President Congratulates Sri Lanka on Independence Day

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi in a message on Saturday expressed congratulations on the occasion of the Sri Lankan Independence Day.

In his congratulatory message to Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Raisi expressed hope for developing cooperation in various fields between two states in line with mutual interests.

He also wished health and success for his Sri Lankan counterpart and prosperity for the people of Sri Lanka.

Regional States Capable of Solving Issues If Foreign Intervention Ends

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi says the United States' excessive demands are the root cause of the existing problems in the region, emphasizing that regional states are capable of solving issues if foreign intervention comes to an end.

"All problems and issues in the region can be resolved provided that extra-regional powers stop their intervention," Raisi said in a phone call with Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi on Saturday.

"Regional problems are rooted in the Americans' excessive demands and if they are expelled from the region in a real way which is not a pretense, we will see that the countries of the region themselves can fully establish peace, stability and security in cooperation with each other," he added.

Pointing to the successful battle of Iran and Iraq against Daesh and Takfiri groups, he said the two countries can use such experience in strengthening regional security and stability.

Raisi added that Tehran has always attached importance to the expansion of relations with Baghdad and said Iraq has a special position in the Iranian administration's foreign policy to promote ties with neighboring and regional countries.



Iran has always underlined the need for a strong and solid government and a powerful and united society in Iraq, he stated.

The Iranian president expressed hope that the "political structure building in Iraq will materialize through national solidarity and unity in order to result in increasing stability and progress of the Iraqi nation."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Raisi pointed to the sufferings of the oppressed Yemeni people and expressed hope that the Iraqi government would be able to take the lead in a regional initiative to lift the siege on the impoverished country and restore the rights of the Yemenis.

The Iraqi prime minister, for his part, said his country attaches great importance to promotion of economic exchanges with Iran.

Kadhimi added that Baghdad fully welcomes Tehran's policy of expanding relations with its neighbors and regional states and hoped the two states would further promote cooperation.

Solving Hard Currency Obstacles Precedes Setting Up Joint Committee



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Iran's Red Crescent Society said on Saturday that sanctions have restricted Iran's humanitarian activities while calling on the International Joint Red Cross and Red Crescent Federation to establish a joint committee as soon as possible to resolve banking problems and provide hard currency for the society.

Pir-Hossein Koulivand said in a meeting with the Head of the Joint Red Crescent and Red Cross Federation Head Office in Tehran Ata Dorani that the sanctions problems have currently made some pharmacies face problems in providing medicines.

"Financial transactions of the IRSC with the world to provide medicine and ensure our fellow citizens and immigrants' health, and even the health of some Iranians are now disturbed and even many Iranians abroad cannot assist us," he added.

The IRCS head said that the establishment of IRSC Homes is among the initiatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran RSC, adding, "We are ready to share our experience with the world national societies."

"One of the main strategies of the Islamic Republic of Iran is establishment of effective and close relations with world countries and the IRCS, too, always welcomes share experience with the world national societies," said Koulivand.

The Head of the Joint Red Crescent and Red Cross Federation Head Office in Tehran Ata Dorani, for his part, said in the meeting that "we are ready to report the problem to the Federation in Geneva diplomatically and for humanitarian reasons in order to find ways to defuse the effects of the sanctions in your field of activities."

He appreciated the IRCS's initiative of sharing experience with the other countries' national societies, arguing that one of the Joint Red Crescent and Red Cross Federation's fields of cooperation with the IRSC is collecting money to assist the draught-stricken people in the central and southern Iranian provinces.

"Also from the Emergency Contributions Fund of the Federation we have several times gained some amounts and delivered them to the Islamic Republic of Iran RSC to deal with the natural disasters' problems," he added.

Positive Developments in Vienna Talks Fall Short of Expectations

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says positive developments have taken place during the course of the ongoing talks in the Austrian capital on the removal of sanctions imposed on Tehran, but

they are not enough to meet Iran's expectations.

Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in a Saturday phone call with the European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, during which the two sides discussed the latest developments in the Vienna talks.

Thanking the efforts made by Borrell and his deputy, Enrique Mora, for the coordination of the talks, Iran's top diplomat said, "Since the last round of negotiations, positive developments have taken place in the Vienna talks, but they still fall short of meeting our expectations."

Late in November last year, the participants in the talks aimed to revive Iran's deal with world powers, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), resumed the Vienna talks for the first time under Iran's new president Ebrahim Raisi. Since then, Iran has repeatedly emphasized that it seeks a "good agreement" in the Austrian capital.

The talks were launched last April over US President Joe Biden's pledge to rejoin the JCPOA and rescind Trump's "failed maximum pressure" campaign.

Over a year into his presidency, Biden has failed to re-enter the 2015 deal. Instead, he has kept Trump's sanctions in place while adding new ones as well.

The United States quit the deal in 2018 and returned the

sanctions that the accord had lifted. Now, the talks are examining the potential of fresh removal of the sanctions.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Amir-Abdollahian said Iran was "resolutely and clearly" pursuing conclusion of a "good agreement" with the other side in Vienna, but "at the same time we insist on guarding our own redlines and national interests with the same level of determination."

Unfortunately, due to the sanctions, the 2015 deal has fallen short of meeting Iran's economic interests over the past years, he added, insisting that a good agreement was an agreement that would secure Iran's economic interests "in a sustainable and reliable" manner.

The Iranian foreign minister, meanwhile, said the country is determined to achieve a good agreement and to that end, it will maintain "uninterrupted and close" contact with the European Union.

Borrell, for his part, acknowledged that the talks were going through "an important juncture."

He urged the concerned parties to come to the negotiating table "with a distinctive agenda" aimed at bringing about an agreement, and be ready for "taking political decisions."

His remarks appeared to be echoing the Islamic Republic's complaint about the Western side's lack of initiative as opposed to Tehran's preparedness.

Iranian Pilgrims Can Register for Visiting Iraq, Syria

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization of Iran Ali-Reza Rashidian has announced that the time for registering for visiting holy sites in Iraq and Syria will be as of mid-February.

A number of Iranian pilgrims were dispatched to Syria about a month ago and the dispatch was welcomed by the applicants, Rashidian said according to a Sunday report of the Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization.

Since a month ago, over 500 Iranians have left for visiting Syrian holy sites and shrines, the official added.

And, new agreements have been signed with Syrian side on reducing the travel cost and arranging good transport, he underlined.

Rashidian went on to say that Iranian pilgrims will depart for Syria while their security is preserved and due services are provided.

So far, more than five thousand people have registered for this travel, he added.

According to Iran's agreements with Iraqi and Syrian governments, the two countries have the duty to ensure security and preserve dignity of the Iranian pilgrims, the official underlined.

Also with regard to the issue of health, good measures are to be taken to protect the pilgrims, he stressed.

About the issue of vaccination, the official said the pilgrims should have vaccination documents and carry negative coronavirus test certificate.

Iraq 2nd Destination of Iranian Goods

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Islamic Republic of Iran exported 25,040 million tons of goods worth 7.295 billion dollars from March 21, 2021 to January 20, 2022, turning the neighboring state into the second largest destination of Iranian exports.

Ruhollah Latifi, spokesman of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), said on Sunday that export to Iraq increased 12 and 14 percent in terms of weight and value respectively in the ten-month period.

Expansion of relations between Iraq and Iran has been put on agenda in recent years due to their numerous cultural, political and religious affinities, Latifi said, noting that both countries took serious steps in this regard despite challenges ahead.

Iraq's last year imports from Iran stood at around 80,000 tons worth 103 million dollars, while the figure increased to nearly 2 million tons worth over 920 million dollars, indicating 2,414 percent growth in weight and 793 percent in value in the same period this year, the IRICA spokesman said.

The neighboring country ranked 26 among states providing Iran with required commodities in last year, he said, explaining that agreements between Baghdad and Tehran led to increase of selling goods to the Islamic Republic.

Now Iraq ranks nine after the United Arab Emirates, China, Turkey, Germany, Switzerland, Russia, India and Britain in terms of exporting goods to Iran.

Referring to major imported items from Iraq, Latifi said that more than 1.867 million tons of goods worth over 734 million dollars are basic needs or foodstuff, including wheat, corn, soybean, barley, palm oil and sugar.

Fishery, poultry, dairy and agricultural products along with machineries, minerals and construction materials were among the most exported items from Iran to the neighboring country, which have been estimated at nearly 2.66 million tons worth 1.227 billion dollars, he said.

Observance of Kashmir Day at Embassy of Pakistan in Tehran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - To commemorate the Kashmir Solidarity Day, the Embassy of Pakistan in Tehran organized a seminar today to express support of Pakistani government and the nation for the Kashmiri people in their struggle against the continued Indian illegal occupation of Jammu & Kashmir. A number of Iranian academicians, media persons, members of Pakistani community including students participated in the event.

On the occasion, the messages from the President, Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan were readout.

In his remarks, the Ambassador reiterated Pakistan's call to the world leaders, international community including the

United Nations, and all human rights organizations to urge India to halt the brute use of force against the innocent Kashmiri people and resolve the Kashmir Dispute as per the charter of the United Nations and various UNSC Resolutions. The Ambassador thanked the Iranian leadership, civil society and media persons for their continued support to the Kashmir cause.



H.E. Ambassador Rahim Hayat Qureshi, Hojat-ul-Islam Walmuslimeen Ayatollah Dr. Israfeel Dehghan addressed the audience to observe Kashmir Solidarity Day in Tehran on 05.02.2022

Prominent religious scholar Hujjat-ul-Islam Walmuslimeen Ayatollah Dr. Israfeel Dehghan and Ms. Masoumeh Mehmoodi, senior student from Ferdowsi University, Mashhad, in their speeches, condemned the continuing atrocities and gross human rights violations being committed by the Indian occupation forces in IJOK.

At the end, a special prayer was held for the alleviation of sufferings of innocent Kashmiris and for their freedom from barbaric and illegal Indian rule.

U.S.-Based Terrorist Group's Ringleader Put on Trial

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The ringleader of a U.S.-based terrorist group accused of committing terror attacks and counterrevolutionary operations against Iran has been put on trial in Tehran.

Iran's official news agency IRNA, citing the Judiciary's media center, reported on Sunday that the trial of Jamshid Sharmahd, the ringleader of the Tondar (Thunder) terrorist outfit, was underway in a plenary court session presided over by Judge Abolqassem Salavati in the capital, Tehran.

The prosecutor's representative, the families of the victims of the group's terrorist acts and the defendant and his lawyers were in attendance. Judicial officials said Sharmahd will be tried in two legal and criminal courts.

The Iranian Intelligence Ministry announced in a statement in August 2020 that it had arrested the terrorist ringleader, who had directed "armed operations and acts of sabotage" in Iran from the US.

Upon his arrest, Sharmahd admitted to providing explosives for a 2008 attack against a religious congregation center in the southern Iranian city of Shiraz, Fars Province, in 2008, which killed 14 people and wounded hundreds.

According to the Ministry, the group had planned to carry out several high-profile and potentially deadly attacks across the Islamic Republic, but its efforts were thwarted by the intricate intelligence operations targeting the outfit.

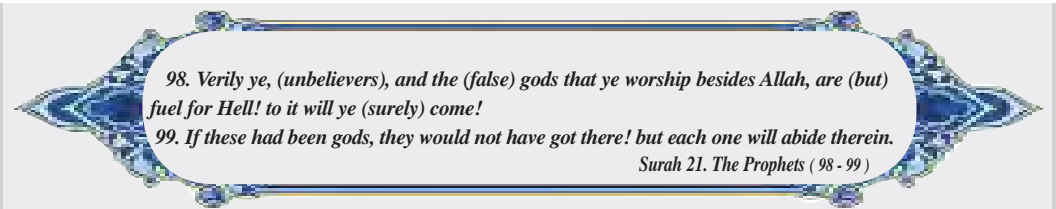
The prosecutor's representative said in an address to the court on Sunday that Sharmahd intended to carry out 23 terrorist acts, but was successful in only five cases and failed in 18 others.

Behrouz Hassani Etemad said Sharmahd had confessed to committing terrorist acts and deadly explosions in a large religious gathering in Shiraz, Imam Khomeini's mausoleum, Sivand Dam and Jahan Hotel, and also plotting a bombing attack on the seminary of Iran's late prominent cleric, Ayatollah Lotfollah Saafi Golpayegani.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:18
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:56
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:33
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:58



Tehran, New Delhi Explore Ways for Boosting Bilateral Trade ties

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – In a webinar which was held by Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Mine (TCCIM), Iran and India explored ways for expansion of trade ties and investments.

TCCIM and India's PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry in a joint collaboration held the webinar on Investment and Trade Opportunities of Iran and India where some economic and industrial activists of both countries as well as senior officials of the TCCIMA and PHD and representatives of embassies of the two countries were present.

In the webinar, Head of TCCIM Mr. Masoud Khansari said that holding such events bespeaks of interests of the private sectors of both countries for broadening the bilateral trade and economic relations and noted that some challenges and problems exist in the trade ties of Iran and India which has intensified in recent years.

He reiterated that the current trade condition of Iran and India requires efforts of both sides for achieving solutions and strategies for easing bilateral trade. He went on to say that the main and important problem in broadening the trade ties is transfer of money and problems because of lack of banking relations, adding that so far several rounds of talks have been held between the two countries for establishing branch of bank as well as exchange through a mechanism by using Indian national currency rupee but unfortunately they have been in vain.

Khansari went on to say that the two countries need to launch a credit line for supporting the prioritized exporting sectors with an eye to minimize the bureaucratic complication of trade. He also said his second concern is failure in implementing the preferential trade agreement which has been signed between the two countries in 2019, adding that it is necessary for both sides to talk on changing the some items of goods on this agreement, noting that he know talks are underway but it should be accelerated.

He also said trade dispute is another issue which is the concern of the economic activists of the two countries and it is because of the weak trade contracts and called for holding a training workshop on preparing the trade contracts by the TCCIM and PHD to minimize the disputes or refer the disputes to the arbitration centers to



resolve the differences very fast.

Khansari went on to say that Iran and India can diversify fields of their trade ties by expanding it to the fields like petrochemical, chemicals, agriculture, auto, pharmaceuticals, machineries, IT and joint ventures. He said by containing the pandemic both countries should work hard to bring bilateral trade back to the level before the pandemic and invited head of PHD to lead a trade delegation to Tehran to get familiar with high trade and industrial capacities of the country and exchange views with economic activists of Iran's private sectors.

Then Head of PHD Mr. Pradeep Multani, for his part, said that the pandemic has made difficult travel of Indian investors worldwide, adding that the ties between Iran and India for thousands of year has been continued due to the meaningful interactions and they have many cultural and traditional commonalities.

He said the trade volume between Iran and New Delhi was around \$1.1b in 2021 and India's exports to Iran included rice, tea, sugar, fresh fruit, medicines, artificial fibers, electric machineries, artificial jewelries, noting that in return India imported dried fruits, chemical and mineral materials, glass and glassware, precious stones and leather.

Multani went on to say that India's joint investment in Iran between 1990 to March 2021 was \$7.5b and major Indian companies like OVL, SR and Tata Steel are present in Iran, reiterating that huge gas and oil reserves as well as strategic location of Iran has turned it into an attractive destination for investment by Indians.

He then said choosing Iran by India as a gateway to the Central Asia and Afghanistan has had positive consequences for materializing the dream of Iran to become a trade and transit hub in the region and therefore industries of India and Iran should work together for boosting trade cooperation via joint investment and transfer of technology with taking a united approach.

Iran, Russia to Hold Joint Agricultural Working Group

TEHRAN (MNA) - Deputy Ministry of Agriculture for Horticultural Affairs said that the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation will hold a joint working group in the field of agriculture.

Mohammad Mehdi Boroumandi said that Iranian and Russian ministries of agriculture reached an agreement to set up a joint working group in the agricultural field.

Turning to the high capacities and potentials of the country in exporting horticultural products to Russia, he said that Russia is a lucrative market for Iran's agricultural products and if the country's potential and capacities are used optimally, Russia can be a sustainable market for Iranian products.

He pointed out that Russians have acknowledged the high quality of Iran's agricultural products, saying that Iranian agricultural and horticultural products are cheaper than similar products of other countries.

After China, New Zealand and Italy, Iran is the fourth-largest producer of kiwi fruit in the world, he said, adding that Iran produced 390,000 tons of kiwi fruit in the current year in 1400 (started March 21, 2021), 177,000 tons of which were exported overseas.

The deputy minister put the export value of horticultural products to Russia in the current year at about \$250 million.

Indigenizing Equipment at MSC Needs Commercializing



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) says indigenizing the equipment in the company requires commercializing so that any part and equipment which is indigenized in this company should be used in other industries and by the other producers who require it in order that these parts are mass produced.

The CEO of the company Mr. Yaser Tayebnia and his assistants, continuing their visits of the production lines and units, paid a visit to the technical and supporting units and then in a meeting with managers of different sections of these units were informed of the activities of the mentioned units and managers of the units expressed their views and concerns.

The CEO of company Mr. Tayebnia addressing the managers of the different sections of the technical and support units of the company said that this unit has successfully improved quality parameters along with the infrastructural developments and it is considered as the strong port of the MSC.

He said the unit enjoys having valuable treasure of specialized, skillful and committed forces, adding that if the work is handed over properly to the right skillful forces, then we will definitely witness better output.

Tayebnia also emphasized using the necessity for using capacities of the company in indigenizing equipment, noting that indigenization of the equipment in the company requires commercialization for mass production. He reiterated that MSC should be a leading company in indigenizing the industrial parts and equipment in the country.

4th Dose of COVID Vaccine Is Needed

TEHRAN (IP) - The head of the Pasteur Institute of Iran (IPI) said that people who have received three doses of the 'PastoCovac' should receive the fourth COVID jab.

Anti-coronavirus vaccine named PastoCovac as a joint venture between Iran and Cuba, is being produced at Pasteur Institute of Iran (IPI). PastoCovac, jointly manufactured by IPI and Cuba's Finlay Institute of Vaccines, can help boost the span and scope of public vaccination in Iran.

The third phase of the clinical trial of the Iranian-Cuban COVID-19 vaccine started in April Tehran, Iran, on December 21, 2021.

On Saturday morning, Dr. Alireza Bigleri, IPI head, said that Iranians' acceptance of the PastoCovac+ caused a shortage of the vaccine, and the problem will be solved soon.

Dr. Bigleri further pointed out the need for a fourth COVID PastoCovac and added: "If six months have passed since the third dose of the PastoCovac Plus, people can get the fourth dose as well."

The head of the Pasteur Institute of Iran added: "The consignment of PastoCovac Plus vaccine will be administered in universities this week, but those who have received the previous doses of PastoCovac are in the priority."

Despite the increase in COVID-19 patients, Iran is still passing relatively quiet days. The majority of citizens have been vaccinated with two doses, and the booster shot has entered a more sensitive phase.

Executive Operation of 10 Developmental Projects of Chadormalu Co. Starts

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Concurrent with the inaugural ceremony of 48 mega industrial projects in the country which was held in presence of President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi at the Conference Hall of IRIB, the executive operation of 10 industrial and infrastructural projects in Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company started.

The CEO of Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company Mr. Naser Taghizadeh, as one of the managers of the leading groups of the progress of the country, was the first speaker of the ceremony and pointed to the strategic policies of Chadormalu Company in creating wealth in this company and hailed the Firs-Vice President and other government members for advancing the project of the leaders of the progress of the country.

He said undoubtedly big companies in the developing countries are the driving force of the economy and strategy of Chadormalu Company is also the rise of value of the company and boosting the capability of sustainable creation of profits for its shareholders with providing sustainable feed for the future years through exploration projects, increasing the production capacity and maximum utilization of the existing lines and completing and developing the chain of value through developmental projects, boosting occupation, helping development of the basic infrastructures of the province and the region especially for resolving the problem of water via transfer of water from the Persian Gulf to Yazd Province as well as participation and development in the downstream industries of steel in the province with the public participation.

Taghizadeh reiterated currently Chadormalu Company with its market value worth over 164,000b tomans is Iran's sixth biggest company in the capital market which optimized its production lines last year and it witnessed also 11% growth, and this year in 9 months despite severance of electricity and gas supply it has witnessed 4% production growth and in terms of making profit, the company saw 270% growth last year and the figure for the first three quarters of the current years has been 93% net profits.

He added that the company after conducting feasible studies approved implementation of 26 developmental projects with the budget over 3.7b euros and the company's direct share of investment stands at 2.5b euros and almost 50% of the projects are in the executive operation stage or holding tender. He said now the company has honor to announce that it starts executive operation of 10 projects with the cost of 1.7b euros on the eve of the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution victory.

Taghizadeh said these projects include the 5-million-ton pelletizing unit, 4-million-ton concentrate unit of Bahabad and exploitation of Ariz mine (D19), two combined cycle power plant each with capacity of 546 megawatts, the Sarmad Abarkouh melting plant and the plants for production of Ferro-alloy and the waste recycling unit.

He then pointed to some other measures of the company regarding efficient water consumption, protecting the environment and upgrading the facilities and job creation.



In the name of God

SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT



**Brief Notice of International
Tender No. 140001832**

It is hereby respectfully notified that Esfahan Steel Co. intends to assign the supply of the refractory materials for Casting Houses No. 1& 2 of Blast Furnace No.2 to one fully-competent supplier.

Prospective bidders specialized and experienced in the said area may visit ESCO's website to get the Tender documents not later than 19.02.2022 and submit their bids through "ESCO's Integrated Suppliers System" available at ESCO's website www.esfahansteel.ir not later than the official closing time (i.e.11:00 p.m.) on 19.02.2022.

Public Relation of Esfahan Steel Co.

IranPlast to Host 300 Foreign Businesspeople

TEHRAN (Shana) -- The director of the 15th IranPlast International Exhibition said: "This year, the showcase will host 300 merchants from all over the world."

According to the IranPlast exhibition headquarters, Ayub Benavi added: "This year, we faced restrictions on space allocation, and finally the companies were located in 20,000 square meters of indoor halls and 2,500 meters of open space, but the International Exhibitions Company promises that in the next edition of the fair, all the exhibition halls will be provided to IranPlast."

Referring to the presence of 300 foreign businessmen from 15 countries in the IranPlast International Exhibit, he added: "It is planned to hold 16 specialized meetings and workshops in the field of downstream petrochemical and polymer industries during the exhibition." The director of the 15th IranPlast International Exhibition continued: "IranPlast Virtual Exhibition for participants and visitors who are not able to physically attend the exhibition, will start simultaneously with the exhibition on February 7 and will run for one month."

The 15th IranPlast International Exhibition is an opportunity to introduce high value-added products to customers from all over the world. Iranian exhibitors, along with foreign participants from China, Taiwan and Italy, will present their innovative and technological capabilities and achievements in 9 private halls in four product groups: raw materials, machinery, products and technical and engineering services. The 15th Iran Plast Exhibition will be held from February 7 to 10 at the permanent location of Tehran International Exhibitions.



President Erdogan Tests Positive for COVID-19

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan said that he had tested positive for the Omicron variant of COVID-19.

"The result of COVID-19 tests done with my wife after showing mild symptoms came back positive," Erdogan said in a tweet, adding that both had the Omicron variant of the virus.

"We will continue our work at home. We look forward to your prayers," he added.

Officials of his AKP ruling party, ministers and opposition leaders wished him a speedy recovery.



Malaysia Ex-PM Mahathir Allowed Home

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who served for more than two decades in the top job, continues to undergo treatment at the National Heart Institute but has been allowed to go to his home, his office said.

Mahathir, 96, has been permitted to return home since Wednesday and go back to the hospital for physiotherapy and further treatment, his office said in a statement. He has been advised not to receive visitors, it said. In a video message, Mahathir said he goes back to the hospital in the evenings after spending the day at home as he still has to undergo certain procedures.

"I have recovered, not fully," Mahathir said in the video, in which he was also seen walking slowly.



China's Xi Meets More Heads of State



BEIJING (Dispatches) - Chinese President Xi Jinping met the leaders of several more countries on Saturday as Beijing used the start of the Winter Olympics to score diplomatic points amid simmering tensions with the United States.

Following a groundbreaking agreement with Russia on Friday over Taiwan and against NATO expansion, Xi held meetings with the leaders of Serbia, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and hosted a banquet at Beijing's Great Hall of the People.

Over 30 foreign leaders travelled to Beijing to attend Friday's opening ceremony. But the United States and other Western countries have subjected the Winter Games to a diplomatic boycott amid rising geopolitical tensions and allegations of human rights abuses in China's northwestern region of Xinjiang.

The Global Times, run by the ruling Communist Party's People's Daily, hit back at foreign media reports that the event had attracted only "authoritarian" leaders, accusing them in an editorial of using "outdated anti-China clichés".

Saturday's Lunar New Year-themed banquet was the first time the Chinese president has joined a gathering of state leaders since before the outbreak of COVID-19 in late 2019.

Toasting his fellow leaders, Xi expressed "heartfelt thanks to all governments, peoples and international organizations who care about and support the Beijing Winter Olympics".

"China has made every effort to overcome the impact of the coronavirus epidemic, earnestly fulfilled its solemn commitments to the international community and ensured the Beijing Winter Olympics is being held as scheduled," Xi said in a speech published by Xinhua news agency.

The People's Daily described strengthened China-Russian relations - announced by Xi and Russian President Vladimir Putin after they met on Friday - as "an important guarantee for maintaining an international strategic balance, world peace and stability". The Global Times called it the start of a new era "not defined by the United States".

Xi held individual meetings with Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Serbia's President Aleksandar Vucic and President Abdel Fatta Al-Sisi of Egypt on Saturday morning, Xinhua news agency reported, discussing Belt and Road-related infrastructure investments and cooperation in the fight against COVID-19.

He also told Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov that the two sides should deepen cooperation on supplying natural gas to China.

Xi also met Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, while Chinese Premier Li Keqiang held meetings with Ecuador's President Guillermo Lasso, Singapore's President Halimah Yacob and the director general of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Amnesty Report on Israeli Apartheid Garner's Bipartisan U.S. Fury

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - In an era of hyper-partisanship in the United States, a new bipartisan consensus appeared to emerge on Capitol Hill this week: condemning Amnesty International over its report accusing Israel of committing the crime of apartheid against Palestinians.

Dozens of U.S. lawmakers from both major parties, including powerful legislators and heads of key committees in the House of Representatives and Senate, have released statements rejecting Amnesty's findings - with some accusing the group of fuelling antisemitism.

These forceful condemnations, analysts say, illustrate the level of support Israel enjoys in Washington despite mounting allegations of abuse - but they do not reduce the validity of the rights group's report.

"They want to nip this in the bud, but the bud has already broken ground and developed roots, and it's going to be a losing battle on their part," said James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute (AAI), a Washington-based think tank.

Zogby told Al Jazeera that domestic political pressures have compelled many legislators to condemn the Amnesty report, but the group's status and international credibility make it difficult to dismiss its conclusion that Israel is systematically oppressing Palestinians.

He added that while many US legislators are demonising the report and accusing Amnesty International of bias, they have not discussed specific allegations. "They've decided to just focus on the use of the word 'apartheid' because that's the only case they can make ... 'How dare you use apartheid to describe Israel.'"

In its February 1 report, Amnesty said Israel is committing the crime of apartheid against Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT), as well as within Israel. Human Rights Watch, Israeli rights group B'Tselem and Palestinian rights groups have all reached the same conclusion.



UN Support of Olympics Crucial at Time of Crisis

BEIJING (Dispatches) - United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres defended his organization's support for the Olympic Games, saying it was important for nations to come together in Beijing as conflicts brew across the world.

Following a meeting with International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach a day after the official opening of the Beijing Winter Games, Guterres said the Games' message of solidarity was important.

"When we see so many conflicts around the world, we see the absolute relevance of having Olympic Games in which all countries are represented -- even, unfortunately, some that are in a war situation.

"To have them all here and to show that peace is possible, that unity is possible, and that solidarity is possible; this fully justifies the strong commitment of the United Nations to support the International Olympic Committee."

The IOC has been criticized for years after awarding the Games to China back in 2015 with some nations, including the United States and Britain, deciding on a diplomatic boycott of the Games in Beijing over the country's human rights record.

The Olympics are also held under the shadow of a potential military conflict between Russia and Ukraine as well as heightened tensions between China and Taiwan.

Russia has amassed 100,000 troops near its border with Ukraine as it tries to pressure the country into ruling out future NATO membership.

"I think we need at this moment more than ever the message of unity and solidarity that is the message of the Olympic Games," Guterres said.

"In a moment when we see so many expressions of populism, so many expressions of racism, so many expressions of xenophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim hatred, to be here and to be with athletes that come from all cultures, from all countries, from all ethnicities, from all religions, it's a fantastic message," Guterres said.

The Games run until Feb. 20.

First U.S. Reinforcement Troops Arrive in Poland

RZESZOW (Dispatches) - The first U.S. troops reinforcing NATO allies in Eastern Europe amid a Russian military build-up on Ukraine's border arrived on Saturday at Rzeszow military base in southeastern Poland.

A small plane carrying what a Polish military source said were U.S. chain of command personnel landed in the morning at Rzeszow-Jasionka airport as preparations continued at the base, which is near Poland's border with Ukraine.

TV footage showed temporary accommodation being prepared at the G2A Arena in the nearby town of Jasionka, while workers could be seen building a fence around the venue.

"As announced, the first elements of the brigade battle group from the 82nd Airborne Division of the United States Army have arrived in Poland," a Polish military spokesman said.

On Wednesday, U.S. President Joe Biden ordered nearly 3,000 extra troops to Poland and Romania to shield Eastern Europe from a potential spillover

from the Ukraine crisis.

About 1,700 service members, mainly paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division, will deploy from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to Poland "over the next days", U.S. Army sources have said.

According to the Pentagon, a Stryker squadron of around 1,000 U.S. service members based in the German town of Vileck will be sent to Romania.

The first additional U.S. troops arrived in Germany on Friday.

Russia has denied plans to invade Ukraine but has deployed more than 100,000 troops near Ukraine's borders and says it could take unspecified military measures if its demands are not met, including a promise by NATO never to admit Kyiv.

The new plan goes above and beyond the 8,500 troops the Pentagon put on alert last month to deploy to Europe if needed. NATO defense ministers are expected to discuss further reinforcements at their next meeting on Feb. 16-17.



Pence Dismisses Trump Claim



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - In a sharp rebuke of his former boss, former US vice president Mike Pence said that Donald Trump was wrong to believe Pence had the power to reverse the outcome of the 2020 presidential election that Trump has falsely claimed was stolen from him.

After losing his re-election campaign to Democrat Joe Biden in November 2020, the Republican Trump in a bid to stay in office pressured Pence to block congressional certification of the results while presiding over the proceedings on January 6, 2021. Pence, a loyal lieutenant during the four years of Trump's tumultuous presidency, opted not to block certification.

Trump has often disparaged Pence since then, and on Sunday issued a fresh statement saying the former vice president could have "overturned" the election.

"President Trump is wrong," Pence said in a speech to the Federalist Society, a conservative legal organisation, in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. "I had no right to overturn the election."

"The presidency belongs to the American people, and the American people alone. And frankly there is no idea more un-American than the notion that any one person could choose the American president," Pence added.

Pence's comments represented his most forceful criticism of Trump to date. A Trump spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

"I understand the disappointment many feel about the last election. I was on the ballot," Pence said. "Whatever the future holds, I know we did our duty that day. John Quincy Adams reminds us: Duty is ours; results are God's," Pence added, quoting a 19th-century US president.

"And the truth is there's more at stake than our party or political fortunes. Men and women: If we lose faith in the Constitution, we won't just lose elections, we'll lose our country," Pence added.

Trump issued a statement later on Friday disagreeing with Pence.

Miss
SHANON
Contract manager
Shanon_tari@yahoo.com
+989121907875
Tel : 88510081
FAX : 88506474

Parsian

Velenjak Apt (\$2600)
200sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
Fully Furn

Pasdaran Villa (\$4500)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, & pkg
Fully Furn

Darrous Apt (\$3000)
300sq.m, 4bdrs
S/p, S, J, pkg
balcony, & F.F

Farmanieh (\$2000)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S
J, balcony, pkg, & F.F

Niavaran Villa (\$6000)
1200sq.m, 5bdrs
yard, S/pool, S
terrace, & pkgs

Zafar (\$1500)
140sq.m, 2bdrs
pkg, & Fully Furn

Jordan (\$1800)
3bdrs, S/p, F.F

Elahieh Apt (\$2500)
250sq.m, 4bdrs, S/p, S
J, balcony, pkg, & F.F

Jordan Villa (\$3000)
1000sq.m, 5bdrs

Vali-e-Asr Office
300sq.m, 4bdrs
(\$30 per sq.m)

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Argentina Pays IMF \$370m in Debt Interest

BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - Argentina yesterday paid US\$370 million (RM183.8 billion) to the IMF as interest on a US\$44 billion debt that was rescheduled late last month, officials said.

The Central Bank's bulletin showed international reserves of US\$37.18 billion at the end of the day, a difference from the day before corresponding to the amount paid out yesterday.

It was the second payment of the year by Argentina, after a transfer of approximately US\$700 million last Friday, the day that the rescheduling announcement was announced. Argentina and the IMF announced a week ago an agreement in principle on a renegotiation of the country's US\$44 billion debt in return for economic reforms.



Russia, China Agree 30-Year Gas Deal Via New Pipeline, to Settle in Euros

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Russia has agreed a 30-year contract to supply gas to China via a new pipeline and will settle the new gas sales in euros, bolstering an energy alliance with Beijing amid Moscow's strained ties with the West over Ukraine and other issues.

Gazprom, which has a monopoly on Russian gas exports by pipeline, agreed to supply Chinese state energy major CNPC with 10 billion cubic meters of gas a year, the Russian firm and a Beijing-based industry official said.

First flows through the pipeline, which will connect Russia's Far East region with northeast China, were due to start in two to three years, the source said in comments that were later followed by an announcement of the deal by Gazprom.

Russia already sends gas to China via its Power of Siberia pipeline, which began pumping supplies in 2019, and by shipping liquefied natural gas (LNG). It exported 16.5 billion cubic metres (bcm) of gas to China in 2021.

The Power of Siberia network is not connected to pipelines that send gas to Europe, which has faced surging gas prices due to tight supplies, one of several points of tension with Moscow.

Under plans previously drawn up, Russia aimed to supply China with 38 bcm of gas by pipeline by 2025.

The new deal, which coincided with a visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin to the Beijing Winter Olympics, would add a further 10 bcm, increasing Russian pipeline sales under long-term contracts to China. Gazprom gave few details about the deal in its announcement.

Russian gas from its Far East island of Sakhalin will be transported via pipeline across the Japan Sea to northeast China's Heilongjiang province, reaching up to 10 bcm a year around 2026, said the Beijing source, who asked not to be identified.

The deal would be settled in euros, the source added, in line with efforts by the two states to diversify away from U.S. dollars. Discussions between the two firms began several years ago after the start-up of Power of Siberia, a 4,000-km (2,500-mile) pipeline sending gas to China. Talks accelerated more recently after Beijing set its 2060 carbon neutral goal, the source said.

"China's coal shortage last year served as another wake-up call that natural gas has its special value, that's why CNPC decided to top up with the new pipeline deal," the source said.

A CNPC representative did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The pricing of the new gas deal will be similar to that of Power of Siberia, the source said, adding that both were "fairly satisfied" with that arrangement.

The deal is expected to weigh on China's LNG import outlook.

"Piped gas from Russia can be supplied to northern China at prices that are competitive when compared with LNG," said Ken Kiat Lee, analyst at consultancy FGE.

The IEA said in a report last week that China will remain the single largest country contributor to LNG import growth, but with a growth rate dropping to 9% in 2022 from 17% in 2021 due to the ramp-up of pipeline flows from Russia and the overall slowdown in gas demand growth.

Japan to Screen Power, Gas and Oil Equipment for Hacking Risk

TOKYO (Dispatches) - The Japanese operators of power, gas, oil and other critical infrastructure will be required to receive government clearance before procuring equipment under planned legislation designed to protect those networks from cyberattacks.

Businesses will have to disclose the equipment's manufacturer and country of origin. The government will have the power to block the equipment's adoption if there is a reasonable risk of hacking.

The new rules will be part of economic security legislation the government hopes to pass during the current parliamentary session. After the legislation is enacted, some of the affected companies will be publicly named, based on their sales and the number of users.

The aim is to prevent major social and economic disruptions by protecting critical systems from cyberattacks. The government is mainly looking at the risks posed by Chinese-made products.

The rules will apply to 14 sectors: electricity, gas, petroleum, water service, telecommunications, broadcasting, postal services, finance, credit cards, railroads, trucking, ocean freight, aviation and airports.

The equipment subject to prescreening will be determined by ministerial ordinance. Possible candidates include power supply control systems for electric utilities, 5G base stations, and rail traffic control systems.

Under the new rules, a company would need to submit in advance a written plan to the government for adopting equipment for critical infrastructure.

This would include who and where the equipment was made, a summary of its parts, when it will be installed, and how it will be used.

The government will recommend against using equipment it believes to pose a risk of cyberattack. The company will have to tell the government how it will respond to the recommendation.

Should the business fail to notify the government or say it will not comply, the government can issue a full order if there is no legitimate justification for non-compliance.

Screening can also be done retroactively for installed equipment. If the equipment's maintenance and management is outsourced, then the contractor will be checked.

The economic security legislation is going forward with the potential risks posed by Chinese-made equipment in mind. The U.S. has warned against using products made by Huawei Technologies and other Chinese companies. Japan will take cues from Washington.



EU, US Agree to Resume Trade in Mussels, Clams and Oysters

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The European Union and the United States have agreed to resume trade in mussels, clams and oysters from the end of February after they were halted more than a decade ago, marking another step in improved transatlantic relations.

Trade in bivalve molluscs, also including cockles and scallops, came to a halt in 2011 due to differences in food safety rules, but transatlantic exports will initially resume for the Netherlands and Spain and the U.S. states of Massachusetts and Washington, the two sides said yesterday.

Shellfish producers in other US states and EU member countries can apply for export clearance under the agreement through a streamlined regulatory process established by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, known as DG SANTE.

The U.S. Trade Representative's office said the two sides had concluded negotiations on Friday. The European Commission, which oversees trade for the 27 EU nations, said it had now adopted relevant legislation.

The commission and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration carried out audits in 2015 and, after years of discussions, have recommended that the food safety systems for raw molluscs in the US states and EU countries could be considered equivalent.

The commission said trading opportunities could be extended to more EU countries in the future under a simplified authorization procedure agreed to between the two sides, the first time a US agency has agreed to such a process.

EU trade commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis in a statement said both sides had worked hard to resolve this long-standing issue.



Turkey Establishes Most Companies in Uzbekistan in 2021

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey was recorded as the country that established the most companies in Uzbekistan last year, the data of Uzbekistan's State Statistics Committee showed.

According to the data, the number of companies with foreign capital reached 13,700 as of Jan. 1, with a total of 1,508 foreign capital companies operating in the country in 2021.

Turkey, which established 407 companies in Uzbekistan last year, ranked first among the countries that established the most companies with foreign capital. Turkey was followed by Russia with 356 companies and China with 266 companies. Last year, 209 companies with capital from Kazakhstan and 97 companies with South Korean capital were established in the country.

While companies with foreign capital were mostly established in country's capital of Tashkent and also Samarkand, Surhanderya and Fergana regions, foreign business people especially invested in industry, health, trade, information technologies, construction and agriculture sectors.

As of Jan. 1, the total number of foreign-owned enterprises in the country was 13,700. In this context, the number of companies with Russian capital was 2,309, and the number of companies with Chinese capital was 1,927. While the number of enterprises with Turkish capital was 1,882, the number of enterprises with capital from Kazakhstan was 1,067, and the number of companies with South Korean capital was 896.

In 2020, 1,490 enterprises with foreign capital were established in the country.

The close relations between Turkey and Uzbekistan are also reflected in the economic field. As a recent example of this, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was inked last year between two countries to enhance economic cooperation.

Kazakhstan Wants More Oil Output to Stay at Home

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Kazakhstan has asked the foreign companies operating its main oilfields to supply the domestic market so it can boost its refining industry and tackle the rising fuel prices that led to violent protests in January.

Energy minister Bolat Akhkulakov said Kazakhstan can't ramp up domestic refining without supplies from the foreign-led

consortia operating its Tengiz, Kashagan and Karachaganak oilfields, according to notes accompanying a presentation he gave to journalists.

The fields currently export all of their output.

A source close to one of the consortia said the energy ministry was seeking supplies in the next two to three years, but was skeptical the operators would respond favorably.

"We look into it, but I doubt it can be profitable," he said, adding export prices are currently two or three times higher than domestic ones.

Kazakhstan was rocked by a rare flare-up of protests in January that were initially triggered by fuel shortages and rising prices. Although the government quelled the unrest, it is looking for ways to prevent a recurrence.

As part of its plan, the energy ministry is proposing to double capacity at its Shymkent refinery, which can currently process around 120,000 barrels of oil per day (bpd).

"It is not possible to do this without supply from Tengiz, Kashagan and Karachaganak," the presentation notes said.

The notes said the ministry saw the need to increase domestic oil prices to attract the foreign operators. But it was not clear how this could be achieved.

Tengiz is operated by Chevron-led Tengizchevroil, while Kashagan's operator is the internationally-owned North Caspian Oil Consortium (NCOC). Karachaganak is operated by Karachaganak Petroleum Operating, which is led by Eni and Shell.

Chevron said it did not comment on commercial matters. NCOC and KPO didn't immediately respond to the requests for comment.

Tengiz, Kashagan and Karachaganak account for about 63% of Kazakhstan's oil output, but under the terms of their production sharing agreements the operators are able to export all of the output.

Indonesia Fights to Cool Inflation as CPI Hits 20-Month High



JAKARTA (Dispatches) - Global inflationary pressures started to catch up with Indonesia in January, as the archipelago recorded its highest inflation rate in 20 months.

While still well within the central bank's target range, authorities are rushing to dampen inflation as it begins to directly impact the lives of ordinary people.

Indonesia's headline consumer price index rose 2.18% on the year in January, data from the Statistics Agency showed on Wednesday, the biggest climb since May 2020.

"[Inflation in January] was more influenced by limited supply resulting in price increases," said the agency's head, Margo Yuwono, apparently suggesting rising costs were driven more by supply bottlenecks than recovery in consumer demand.

Bank Indonesia's target range for inflation is 2% to 4%, but the government is worried about the impact of climbing prices for essentials as they fight to get the economy back on track from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The nation's consumer price index for food, drinks and tobacco grew 3.45% year-on-year, the highest in at least 12 months. While prices for key foods such as chicken, rice and eggs have risen in recent months, cooking oil has seen the biggest surge.

Data from the Ministry of Trade's price monitoring portal show prices for both bulk cooking oil and simple packaged cooking oil have soared around 40% over the last year. That comes as demand for biofuel stokes palm oil shortages.

In a bid to rein in prices, the government last week introduced an upper limit on the cost of crude palm oil at 9,300 rupiah (65 cents) per kg, as well as announcing a so-called domestic market obligation for cooking oil producers -- meaning they must sell 20% of their planned crude palm oil exports in the local market.

A price ceiling on cooking oil was brought in at the same time, replacing a policy announced in early January offering the oil at subsidized prices.

Iran's Zayanderud River Revives Temporarily

ISFAHAN (IP) - Water flowed in Zayanderud of Isfahan, central Iran and the river revival will last for twelve days. The gates of Zayanderud Dam were opened, although for a 12-day period, to give a transitional life to the thirsty river in touristic Isfahan. The consecutive drought period in the last decades has led to Zayanderud being dry, but the revival of the river has refreshed the soul of the city and its people, making the Isfahani farmers happy. Now the people in Isfahan are seizing the opportunity, spending beautiful seconds along the Zayanderud.



WHO Sees Pause, Even End of Pandemic for Europe

COPENHAGEN (Dispatches) - The World Health Organization on Thursday offered Europe hope of a "long period of tranquility" and even "enduring peace" in the war on coronavirus, with a growing list of nations lifting almost all Covid curbs.

WHO Europe director Hans Kluge spoke of "a ceasefire that could bring us enduring peace", with high vaccination rates, the milder Omicron variant and the end of winter in sight. "This context leaves us with the possibility for a long period of tranquility," he told reporters.

This was "not to say that (the pandemic) is now all over", but "there is a singular opportunity to take control of the transmission", he added.

"Even with a more virulent variant (than Omicron) it is possible to respond to new variants that will inevitably emerge -- without re-installing the kind of disruptive measures we needed before", Kluge said.

He cautioned that the optimistic scenario required countries to pursue vaccination campaigns and surveillance to detect new variants.

Sweden joined the move towards scrapping most coronavirus restrictions, setting February 9 as the date with the pandemic entering a "whole new phase".

Stockholm will end 11:00 pm closing for bars and restaurants, and limits on crowd numbers.

Vaccine passes for indoor events will go and face masks will no longer be recommended on crowded public transport.

"The pandemic is not over, but we are entering a whole new phase," Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson announced.

Her Health Minister Lena Hallengren said the government would remain "vigilant" about the pandemic's progress.

Sweden made headlines early in the pandemic for choosing to not impose lockdowns. With over 16,000 fatalities so far, its death toll is in line with the European average, but is far higher than those of neighboring Norway, Finland and Denmark.

After Britain and Ireland, Copenhagen on Tuesday lifted most domestic Covid-19 restrictions, followed later in the day by Norway.

France on Wednesday loosened several restrictions imposed to curb the latest Covid-19 surge, with authorities hoping a small decline in huge daily case numbers will soon ease pressure on overburdened hospitals.

And New Zealand is to start easing some of the toughest pandemic border restrictions yet seen, but will not fully reopen until October.

"It's time to move again," Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said Thursday unveiling a five-step plan to reconnect to the rest of the world.



Hotel quarantine requirements for New Zealanders stranded overseas will be lifted this month. Ardern had been under pressure to relax border policies that have been largely unchanged since the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis almost two years ago.

"Families and friends need to reunite, our businesses need skills to grow, exporters need to travel to make new connections," she said.

But Germany is still grappling with record infection numbers fuelled by Omicron and now recommending a fourth vaccine for at-risk groups, following in the footsteps of Israel and several European nations.

Germany's STIKO vaccine commission said Thursday that data showed "that protection against the currently circulating Omicron variant wanes within a few months of the first booster vaccination".

Israel last month became the first country to roll out fourth Covid-19 shots, initially to the elderly and health care workers, and since to all vulnerable people over 18.

Denmark, Hungary and Spain are also offering fourth jabs to high-risk groups, as are others including Chile and Brazil.

The move has not been universally welcomed, with the WHO repeatedly warning wealthier nations they cannot boost their way out of the pandemic.

Coronavirus has killed at least 5,698,322 million people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to an AFP tally from official sources.

European Oil port Terminals hit by cyberattack



BRUSSELS (AFP) - Major oil terminals in some of Western Europe's biggest ports have fallen victim to a cyberattack at a time when energy prices are already soaring, sources confirmed.

Belgian prosecutors have launched an investigation into the hacking of oil facilities in the country's maritime entryways, including Antwerp, Europe's second biggest port after Rotterdam.

In Germany, prosecutors said they were investigating a cyberattack targeting oil facilities in what was described as a possible ransomware strike, in which hackers demand money to reopen hijacked networks.

Oil prices hit a seven-year high last month amid diplomatic tensions with gas supplier Russia, and energy bills are fuelling a rise in inflation that has spooked European policymakers.

According to a specialized broker, the alleged hacking is affecting several European ports and is disrupting the unloading of barges in this already strained market.

"There was a cyberattack at various terminals, quite some terminals are disrupted," said Jelle Vreeman, senior broker at Riverlake in Rotterdam.

"Their software is being hijacked and they can't process barges. Basically, the operational system is down," he said.

The EU's Europol police agency said it was aware of the incidents in Germany and had offered support to authorities.

"At this stage the investigation is ongoing and in a sensitive stage," Europol spokeswoman Claire Georges said.

One of the main victims seems to be the cross-border Dutch and Belgian Amsterdam-Rotterdam-Antwerp oil trading hub, where company IT systems were affected by the attack.

SEA-Tank Terminal, which has storage facilities in Antwerp, was hit, Belgian daily De Morgen reported.

The Dutch National Cyber Security Centre said the attacks were "probably committed with a criminal motive" and pledged to take further action "if necessary".

In Germany, two oil supply companies said they were victim to the cyberattack since Saturday January 29.

Both Oilbanking Deutschland GmbH and Mabanaf declared force majeure, an emergency legal clause that is used when a company cannot fulfil its supply contracts because of an unforeseeable event, a joint statement said.

"We are committed to resolving the issue and minimizing the impact as quickly and effectively as possible," they said.

Meta Sheds Over \$230B in Biggest Drop Ever to Shake Wall Street

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The Wall Street benchmarks slumped as Facebook parent company Meta's stock marked a record one-day plunge following a disappointing earnings forecast that shook the global tech landscape. Meta's stock plunged 26.4%, erasing more than \$230 billion in market value -- comparable to the size of New Zealand's economy -- the largest drop in history, after its results raised doubts about the troubled social media giant's future.

Because Meta is valued so highly, a big swing in its stock price can also sink or lift broader market indexes. The S&P 500 index fell 1.6% as of 2:04 p.m. EST and the tech-heavy Nasdaq fell 2.6%.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, which does not include Meta Platforms, fell 278 points, or 0.8%, to 35,351.

Meta sank after forecasting revenue well below analysts' expectations for the current quarter, a disappointment for a company that investors have become accustomed to delivering spectacular growth.

It also reported a rare decline in profit due to a sharp increase in expenses as it invests in transforming itself into a virtual reality-based company.

Ahead of results, analysts expected 1.95 billion daily active users on Facebook, but Meta reported 1.93 billion -- a key indicator for where the platform is headed.

On the financial side, Meta reported a turnover of \$33.67 billion, in line with its forecasts, but it made \$10.3 billion in net profit in the fourth quarter, 8% less than last year.

Investors also recoiled at Facebook's report of losing roughly 1 million daily users globally between the last two quarters of 2021 -- a fraction of the total but a potential signal of stagnation.

"It's the first time the user base is shrinking," said analyst Adam Sarhan from 50 Park Investment. "If the company is not growing, then it's a complete reset for investors," he added.

It is essential to note Meta is still massive and growing on the whole -- as 2021 closed, 2.8 billion people used one of its four platforms and messenger services at least once a day, and 3.6 billion at least once a month.

One way out of Meta's troubles would be to acquire the next big thing in social media, as it has done previously.

But the company is under considerable scrutiny from United States regulators after the damning allegations that emerged from its whistleblower crisis last year.

The steep drop weighed on fellow social media company Twitter, which shed 5.6%. Snapchat's parent company Snap sank 21.6% and Pinterest lost 9.3%.

Big tech stocks such as Alphabet Inc. and Microsoft Corp. fell about 1.3% and 2.3%, respectively, while Amazon.com Inc. declined 6.5%.

Big technology and communications companies played a big role in driving gains for the broader market throughout the pandemic and much of the recovery in 2021, but the market seems to have shifted, said Brad McMillan, chief investment officer for Commonwealth Financial Network.

Interior Minister Stresses Tehran-Islamabad Potentials to Cement Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Interior Minister Minister Ahmad Vahidi said here on Sunday that there are great potentials to empower comprehensive cooperation, especially economic exchanges between Iran and Pakistan, and the serious will of both sides is an essential for achieving this goal.

Pakistan's Ambassador to Tehran, Rahim Hayat Qureshi, met Iran's Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi on Sunday.

Vahidi said in the meeting that Iran and Pakistan have great potentials and opportunities to expand and broaden trade, security and cultural ties.

Iranian minister in the meeting added that expanding of border markets and trade exchanges will create a suitable opportunity to develop cooperation between the two countries, and it is expected that the officials of the two countries provide the prerequisite conditions."

Vahidi regarded the cooperation between Iran and Pakistan in important economic issues such as energy and transit as very important, and said that the will of the two sides is to expand comprehensive ties and possible obstacles should be removed in joint meetings.



He called for interactions and cooperation between the two ports of Chabahar and Gwadar of Iran and Pakistan, and said that the necessary conditions should be provided to strengthen trade ties and exchanges between these two important ports in the region.

Referring to Afghan immigrants, Iranian Interior Minister said that this issue is one of the common issues between the three countries of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and said that conditions should be provided through trilateral cooperation so that fewer people decide to emigrate.

Pakistan's Ambassador to Tehran Rahim Hayat Qureshi, for his part, said in the meeting that Islamabad is planning and preparing six border markets to expand interactions with the Islamic Republic of Iran in various fields, especially trade exchanges.

Referring to the numerous capacities and resources that exist in Iran, he noted that the two countries can have an acceptable volume of exchanges in different fields such as energy, including importing electricity and gas from Iran.

Iran Right Not to...

FROM PAGE 1

Psaki then suggested that the reporter, NPR's White House correspondent Ayesha Rascoe, was implying that the US military was "not providing accurate information," while "ISIS is providing accurate information."

Psaki to reporter asking about those "skeptical" about civilians killed in raid: "Skeptical of the U.S. military's assessment when they went and took out... the leader of ISIS, that they are not providing accurate information, and ISIS is providing accurate information?"

Sources on the ground in Syria's northwestern border town of Atmeh -- where the nighttime U.S. raid took place -- told media outlets that at least 12 civilians were killed in the raid. UNICEF, the UN children's agency, also confirmed that six children were killed in the immediate area.

The exchange between Psaki and Rascoe onboard the presidential plane coincided with a similar argument over the reliability of information provided by the US government at the State Department, where Spokesman Ned Price claimed on Thursday that Russia was preparing to stage a 'false flag' attack as a pretext to invade Ukraine.

When asked by veteran Associated Press reporter Matt Lee for evidence to support the official claim, Price did not offer any evidence and in a lengthy argument went on to accuse the journalist of doubting "the credibility of the U.S. government" and finding "solace in the information the Russians are putting out" instead.

"What the Biden administration is doing here is saying to journalists, whose jobs are to be skeptical... 'Oh, so you side with our enemies?'," said the CNN anchor during his news show -- 'The Lead with Jake Tapper' -- on Thursday, pushing back against this line from the government.

"There's a long history in this country that long predates the existence of everybody at this table... of the U.S. Government lying to the American people," Tapper then underlined. "Lying for the right reasons maybe, or because they had the wrong information or they're backing their guys, but it is our job to challenge."

American newspaper the Washington Post in an article has also claimed the U.S. governments have been telling lies from the Vietnam War era to the withdrawal from Afghanistan by interviews with some former Pentagon officials.

The paper wrote, "Lies are an integral part of the U.S. national security operations. They seek credibility for government policy. They mislead adversaries, cover up mistakes and failures. Above all, they are intended to secure public support for policy and defeat opposition at home. Political scientist John Mearsheimer has noted that governments don't often lie to their allies and adversaries, "but instead seem more inclined to lie to their own people."

It added, "In particular, secrecy and deception convey power. As philosopher Sissela Bok says, "Deception can be coercive. When it succeeds, it can give power to the deceiver."

So we realize even American media and officials do not trust their governments and accuse the governments of telling lie to their own nation and it is right that other nations lose their trust to the U.S. and turn their back to this government and even chant anti-U.S. slogans.

Unfortunately some people in the countries and even in Iran follow the U.S. policies and governments blindly and they are more Catholic than the Pope. But the truth is that the U.S. government is a liar and the world should not trust it no matter it is a Democratic or Republican because each one tells lie in different style to deceive Americans and other nations.

Foreign Investment in...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran has reported increased flow of foreign investment in its mining and metals sector since 2018 when the government decided to implement developments projects in the sector to increase exports and to compensate for losses suffered in oil exports revenues because of American sanctions.

Increased foreign investment in Iranian mines and metals companies has come despite the fact that Washington has maintained sanctions on Iran's trade of metals since 2019.

The MIMT said in its Saturday report that foreign investment figures for the March-December period included share buying by foreigners in Iranian companies as well as investment commitments by foreigners for carrying out new projects in the country.

Johaug Wins First Gold of Beijing Winter Olympics

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Norway's Therese Johaug won the first gold medal of the Beijing Winter Olympics on Saturday, storming ahead of the competition in the women's 7.5km-plus-7.5km skiathlon cross-country skiing.

Johaug, the clear favourite ahead of the event, finished the course in 44min 13.7sec to take what is expected to be the first of many cross-country skiing medals for Norway at these Games.

Natalia Nepryaeva battled it out with Austria's Teresa Stadlober for second place, with the Russian prevailing to finish 0.3 seconds ahead to clinch silver.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

Switchboard:

(+98) (21) 44253448

Public Relations Tel:

(+98)(21) 44253450

Editorial Board: 44253449

Public Relations Fax:

(+98)(21) 44253395

Advertising Department:

Tel/Fax: (+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234

Website:

http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:

info@irannewsdaily.com

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German Skater Breaks Record for Oldest Woman Winter Olympian

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Claudia Pechstein became the oldest woman Winter Olympian in history on Saturday in Beijing when the decorated speed skater competed aged 49 years and 348 days.

The German police officer also became the first woman to participate in eight Winter Olympics.

Pechstein, who has won five gold medals over an Olympic career stretching back to 1992, finished last in the women's 3000 meters and saw her Olympic record time beaten by winner Irene Schouten of the Netherlands.

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SPORTS

MONDAY FEBRUARY 7, 2022

Cavaliers Thwart Hornets Rally, Raptors Win Again

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - The Cleveland Cavaliers fended off a furious Charlotte Hornets rally to snatch a 102-101 NBA victory over the Hornets in wild style.

Jarrett Allen scored 29 points and pulled down 22 rebounds for Cleveland and Kevin Love made two free-throws to seal the win with 1.2 seconds remaining.

The Cavaliers led 76-65 going into the fourth quarter, but their fortunes changed when Ed Davis, who was on the Cleveland bench but didn't play in the game, interfered with a three-point attempt by Charlotte's Terry Rozier, thinking the play had been whistled dead.

He was assessed a technical foul and Rozier was credited with a three-pointer -- and made the technical free throw to cut the deficit to six points.

Back-to-back three-pointers from P.J. Washington and a three-pointer from Kelly Oubre gave the Hornets a 101-98 lead with 46.2 seconds remaining.

Allen's tip-in of a Love miss pulled Cleveland within 101-100 with 35.3 seconds left. That was the score with 2.1 seconds remaining when Cavs guard Brandon Goodwin missed a jumper. Love grabbed the rebound and missed the follow-up -- sparking celebrations on the Hornets bench.

But officials deemed on review that Love had been fouled, and he was awarded the game-winning free-throws.

Allen said the Cavaliers were "all feeling like we wanted to send a message" after a loss to the Houston Rockets on Wednesday.



Pascal Siakam equalled his season-high with 33 points. Fred VanVleet scored 26 points and handed out 11 assists as the Raptors beat the Hawks for the second time in a week.

De'Andre Hunter and John Collins scored 23 points apiece for Atlanta, Trae Young had 22 points and 13 assists for the Hawks a day after his 43-point performance in the Hawks' victory over the league-leading Phoenix Suns.

Boston's Jayson Tatum scored 24 points to help the Celtics push their winning streak to four games with a 102-93 victory over the Pistons in Detroit.

After the Celtics held the Pistons to a season-low 31 first-half points, Tatum scored 10 points in the third quarter as Boston powered to a 78-56 lead heading into the fourth on the way to a wire-to-wire victory.

Jaylen Brown added 13 points for Boston. Josh Richardson scored 12 and Robert Williams had 11 points, 11 rebounds and five blocked shots.

Chicago center Nikola Vucevic scored a season-high 36 points and grabbed 17 rebounds and DeMar DeRozan added 31 points to power the Bulls to a 122-115 victory over the Indiana Pacers.

Vucevic connected on 16 of his 21 attempts from the field. He also handed out four assists and blocked three shots as the Bulls withstood a 42-point performance from Indiana's Caris LeVert.



Kyrgios out of Australian Davis Cup Squad

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Nick Kyrgios has been left out of Australia's Davis Cup team to face Hungary next month despite his recent doubles victory at the Australian Open, although partner Thanasi Kokkinakis has been selected by captain Lleyton Hewitt.

Hewitt handed Luke Saville his debut while Australia number one Alex de Minaur, world number 12 doubles player John Peers and Alexei Popyrin will also join Kokkinakis for the match, which will be played in Sydney on March 4-5.

"Alex has had most of his recent success in Sydney, winning the Sydney international a few years back but also some of his best results last month, including quality wins against (Matteo) Berrettini and (Ugo) Humbert," Hewitt said.

"Thanasi had a fantastic Australian summer. He really cemented himself as a top-100 player again, winning his first title at home in Adelaide and beating quality players.

"And then to go on to win the Australian Open doubles, this is going to give him a lot of confidence heading into this tie."

Kyrgios paired up with Kokkinakis to win the first Grand Slam title of his career in a run to the Australian Open final that saw the duo criticised by opponents for inciting rowdy behaviour from the Melbourne Park crowd.

Chelsea Survive Scare

LONDON (Dispatches) - Non-league Kidderminster Harriers were seconds away from one of the biggest shocks in FA Cup history until Declan Rice rescued West Ham as the Premier League side progressed to the fifth round 2-1 after extra time.

Chelsea also needed extra time and late drama to see off lower league opposition 2-1 to reach the last 16 after Plymouth missed a late penalty at Stamford Bridge.

Sixth-tier Kidderminster sit 113 places below David Moyes' men, who are pushing for a place in next season's Champions League.

But the fragility in the Hammers' squad without Rice and Michail Antonio was exposed as Harriers were good value for the lead given to them by Alex Penny's early goal for much of the 90 minutes.

The defender smashed into an unguarded after the Hammers failed to deal with Omari Sterling's free-kick.

Moyes sent on Rice at half-time among five changes during the second half, but the home side looked set to hold on until the England midfielder took matters into his own hands.

Rice charged forward from midfield in the first minute of stoppage time, cut inside and blasted the ball high into the roof of the net.

Even then the visitors laboured for 30 minutes of extra time until striking in stoppage time once more to avoid the risk of a penalty shootout.

Jarrod Bowen was left with the simple task to tapping home from close range after Kidderminster 'keeper Luke Simpson denied Aaron Cresswell from point-blank range. Chelsea were without manager Thomas Tuchel, who has tested positive for coronavirus.

And a star-studded Blues line-up made life difficult for themselves before jetting off to the Club World Cup in Abu Dhabi.

Macauley Gillespie nodded the League One side into the lead after just eight minutes.

The Plymouth goal led a charmed life as Mateo Kovacic and Callum Hudson-Odoi hit the bar before Cesar Azpilicueta's inventive finish levelled just before half-time.

"I think tonight was obviously a way to show who we are as a team," he said.

Love scored 25 points -- 22 of them in the second half as the Cavs handed the Hornets a third straight defeat.

In Toronto, the Raptors pushed their winning streak to five games, following up their overtime triumph over the Chicago Bulls on Thursday with a 125-114 victory over the Atlanta Hawks.

Bogataj Gives Slovenia Historic Ski jumping Olympic Gold



ZHANGJIAKOU (Dispatches) - Urša Bogataj came from behind to win the women's individual ski jump title at the Beijing Olympics today — Slovenia's first-ever gold medal in the sport.

Bogataj trailed Germany's Katharina Althaus after her first attempt but nailed a jump of 100 metres with her second try to

finish on 239.0 points.

Althaus took silver on 236.8 points, followed by Slovenia's Nika Kriznar on 232.0.

Japan's Sara Takanashi, who has a record 61 World Cup victories but has never won the Olympic title, finished fourth.

World Cup overall leader Marita Kramer of Austria was ruled out of the competition after testing positive for Covid-19.

Defending Olympic champion Maren Lundby of Norway did not compete in Beijing after deciding to prioritise her mental and physical health.

Sousa Saves 3 MPs, Reaches Final in Pune

PUNE (Dispatches) - Joao Sousa is an ATP Tour finalist once again as he showcased his fighting qualities to end Swedish qualifier Elias Ymer's fairytale run in a mammoth battle at the Tata Open Maharashtra.

With his back against the wall, the 32-year-old saved three match points to claw past Ymer 5-7, 7-6(4), 7-5 to reach his 11th tour-level final in Pune. It is the first time Sousa has advanced to this stage at an ATP Tour event since 2018 when he triumphed in Estoril.

"It means a lot," Sousa said in his on-court interview. "The past two years were very tough for me, [with] a lot of things going through my mind. It means a lot to me to be in the final again. Thank you so much guys. The atmosphere was unbelievable tonight. This is why you want to play tennis. On the three match points, I just kept believing and somehow I found a way to turn it around."

In a dramatic match, Sousa recovered from squandering a 4-1 lead in the second set as he raised the intensity in his groundstrokes in the tie-break to level. The World No. 137 then saved three match points on serve in the third set at 4-5, before he broke to advance after three hours and 15 minutes in a mammoth battle.

The Portuguese man has now extended his perfect ATP Head2Head record against Ymer to 4-0 and will be aiming to win his fourth tour-level trophy in the championship match on Sunday against Emil Ruusuvuori.

Ymer, who earned his first Top 20 win against World No. 15 Aslan Karatsev en route to the last four, was competing in his maiden tour-level semi-final. The Swedish qualifier had not been beyond the quarter-final stage at a tour-level event since 2016 (Gstaad) prior to this week.

Ymer will now turn his attention to the Open Sud de France, where his younger brother Mikael Ymer will aim to overcome Alexander Zverev and reach his second tour-level final in Montpellier.

Earlier, sixth seed Ruusuvuori broke new ground, soaring into his first tour-level final in Pune.



Zverev Rolls Into Semifinals At Montpellier

MONTPELLIER (Dispatches) - Top-seeded Alexander Zverev of Germany needed just 50 minutes to complete a 6-1, 6-0 victory over France's Adrian Mannarino and reach the semifinals of the Open Sud de France at Montpellier.

Zverev had an 8-0 edge in aces in the easy quarterfinal victory. He will next face Sweden's Mikael Ymer, who knocked off Frenchman Richard Gasquet 7-5, 6-7 (6), 6-1 in another quarterfinal match.

Sixth-seeded Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan had 26 aces while outlasting second-seeded Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut 6-4, 2-6, 7-6 (4) in his quarterfinal. Bublik will meet fifth-seeded Filip Krajinovic after the Serbian defeated Bosnian qualifier Damir Dzumhur 7-5, 6-2.

Poland's Kamil Majchrzak had seven aces in a 6-2, 6-7 (5), 6-4 quarterfinal victory over second-seeded Italian Lorenzo Musetti in Pune, India.

Majchrzak will face sixth-seeded Finn Emil Ruusuvuori, who defeated fourth-seeded Czech Jiri Vesely 6-3, 6-4. Vesely had a 12-5 edge in aces but committed five double faults while Ruusuvuori had none.

Portugal's Joao Sousa was a 6-2, 6-3 winner over fifth-seeded German Daniel Altmaier. Sousa will face Swedish qualifier Elias Ymer, who defeated eighth-seeded Italian Stefano Travaglia won 6-4, 7-6 (4).

Sixth-seeded Albert Ramos-Vinolas of Spain saved eight of nine break points en route to a 7-6 (5), 7-5 quarterfinal victory over fourth-seeded Italian Lorenzo Sonego at Cordoba, Argentina.

Ramos-Vinolas will face Argentine wild card Juan Ignacio Londero in the semifinals. Londero defeated lucky loser Nikola Milojevic of Serbia 6-4, 7-5.

In the other half of the bracket, top-seeded Diego Schwartzman of Argentina rallied past Colombia's Daniel Elahi Galan 3-6, 6-0, 7-5. Schwartzman's semifinal opponent will be Chile's Alejandro Tabilo, who beat Argentina's Sebastian Baez 6-1, 7-6 (4).

