

Felicitating the 43rd Anniversary of The Islamic Revolution to His Iranian Counterpart, Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon Expressed His Satisfaction With the Remarkable Achievements in the Extensive Cooperation Between the Two States

IRAN NEWS

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian Says the Time of the End of the Vienna Talks Depends on The Will of the Western Parties in Terms of Removing Sanctions and Returning to All Their Commitments

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2 DOMESTIC

Message of Islamic Revolution Rejection of Domination



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

Tehran, Minsk Try to Flourish Bilateral Trade



> SEE PAGE 3

Iran Pursues Balanced, Neighbor-Focused Foreign Policy

TEHRAN (MNA) - President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi said Iran still abides by the Islamic Revolution ideals, adding that his administration is still following "Neither West Nor East" foreign policy as designed by the revolution.

Raisi made the comments at a ceremony held on the occasion of the 43rd glorious victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution on Friday at Tehran's Grand Imam Khomeini (RA) Mosalla (Congregational Prayers Site) before the Friday Prayers sermon.

He said that the victory of the Islamic Revolution was a bombshell of light.

See Page 7

43rd Anniversary of Islamic Revolution Marked With Nationwide Rallies



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iranians from all walks of life have taken to the streets across the country to celebrate the 43rd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, which overthrew the former US-backed Pahlavi regime in 1979.

The celebrations began in Tehran and elsewhere at 9:30 a.m. local time (06:00 GMT), with motorbikes

and cars driving through the streets in the Iranian capital toward the iconic Azadi (Freedom) Square.

People were able to attend the rallies on foot in areas where fewer COVID-19 cases per capita have been recorded.

Each year, the occasion is commemorated by nationwide mass rallies. However, this is the second year that health protocols changed the format of the rallies.

On the eve of the 43rd anniversary, fireworks displays were performed in Tehran and other cities at 9:00 p.m. overnight, as people chanted Allahu Akbar (God is the Greatest) in an expression of support for the Islamic Revolution.

More than 6,300 Iranian and some 200 foreign journalists, photographers, and cameramen covered the Friday ceremonies.

In Tehran, revolutionary songs played as marchers waved their national flags.

Professional parachutists put on a live performance over the Azadi Square, depicting the Iranian flag in the capital's sky.

People waived photos of Imam Khomeini, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, and legendary General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated in a U.S. terrorist attack in Baghdad two years ago, as well as the martyrs of the Revolution.

Demonstrators also burnt the flags of the United States and the Israeli regime.

President Ebrahim Ræisi addressed the event during Friday Prayers in the Grand Mosalla mosque of Tehran.

The Iranian nation overthrew the despotic regime of Pahlavi, which was fully supported by the United States in the winter of 1979. The struggle against the shah regime reached full fruition on February 11, 1979.

By December 1978, millions of Iranians had taken to the streets in protest against the policies of the shah - Mohammad Reza Pahlavi - on a regular basis.

Imam Khomeini returned to Iran from exile on February 1, 1979. He was received by millions of people weeks after the departure of the shah in mid-January 1979.

The collapse of the Pahlavi regime became certain on February 11 when the military renounced its loyalty to the shah and joined the Revolution.

Marking the event, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said the Iranian nation has made many sacrifices to safeguard its independence.

"43yrs ago, the agelong struggle of our nation for self-determination, & a free & independent Iran ended in victory," Khatibzadeh wrote in a tweet on Friday.

"Our nation has made many sacrifices to safeguard those values & principles. Our resolve to stand & strive for Iran's rights & interests remains unwavering," he added.

43yrs ago, the agelong struggle of our nation for self-determination, & a free & independent Iran ended in victory.

The rallies this year are of significant importance due to the defeat of Washington's "maximum pressure" campaign in the face of the Iranian nation's steadfastness and the US administration's declaration that it seeks a less confrontational policy toward the Islamic Republic due to the "failed" policy.

In a statement at the end of the events, the demonstrators underlined the necessity of preserving national unity and avoiding any measure that would foment division and sedition in the country.

See Page 7

4 INTERNATIONAL

Russia Launches Belarus Military Drills



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORT

Jazz End Warriors Winning Streak



> SEE PAGE 8

IRGC Urges Explication of Iran's Achievements

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has issued a statement calling for explication of the achievements of the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran "as an antidote to the enemy's media dictatorship and it combined attack on the Iranian revolution and nation".

"In compliance with what the great Leader of the Islamic Revolution laid out and his emphasis, it should be pointed out that the battle line of the revolution is the combined, complicated and smart war by the enemy, which is using every facility, capability and arena, to control and rein in the revolution and turn its survivability into attenuation and death, by changing facts and distorting truths and fabricating upside-down accounts of the history of the Islamic revolution," the IRGC said in a statement.

The IRGC also called on all people and officials to "explicate and clarify" the facts on the past 43 years to neutralize the war waged by the enemy to inspire doubt among people to weaken "the principles and basis of the Islamic revolution".

See Page 7

Japan's Cosmo Reviewing Offshore Wind Power Strategy

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's Cosmo Energy Holdings said on Thursday it is reviewing its strategy for offshore wind power after losing at the public auction for new local sites, though it is sticking to its 2030 target, an executive said on Thursday.

Japan's industry and land ministries late last year selected three consortiums, all led by Mitsubishi Corp, to operate three offshore wind power projects in Akita, northern Japan, and Chiba, near Tokyo.

Cosmo had bid for one of the Akita projects.

"We are in a strategy review as we need to thoroughly strengthen cost competitiveness by going through all of supply chain including construction, operation and management and electricity customers," Cosmo's senior executive officer, Takayuki Uematsu, told a news conference.

"We won't be able to compete unless we expand our thinking to supply chain and become creative like designing a new market," he said, without elaborating.

By 2030 Cosmo plans to boost its wind power capacity to 1.5 gigawatts (GW) from 0.3 GW.

See Page 7

Iran Oil Exports Hit 1.2m bpd in January

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A new report shows that Iranian crude oil exports reached 1.2 million barrels per day in January despite continued American pressure on the country.

The Thursday report by Reuters news agency cited figures by oil industry consultants and analysts showing that Iranian crude exports started to surge in December and have continued to date.

The data suggested that most of Iranian oil shipments have gone to China as individual and private buyers in the country continue to defy illegal sanctions imposed by the US on Iran since 2018 when Washington pulled out of an international deal on Iran's nuclear program known as the JCPOA.

An unidentified source told Reuters that Iranian oil exports in January rose to its peak in US sanctions era to 1.2 million bpd in January and then started to decline slightly later that month.

See Page 7

Fajr 1400 Happy

Opening Dozens of Plans and Projects Investment Above 177 Billion rials

Simultaneously with the Fajr decade, dozens of plans and projects worth more than 177 billion rials were inaugurated in the Opal Parsian complex. A meeting was held by video conference with the presence of Engineer Asgari, the manager of the complex and the head of the units, in the meeting hall of Shahid Amrullah Zanganeh. During the meeting, development projects, railway projects, and technical and support projects were discussed. Weighing schemes, localization schemes, and Hse schemes were also presented. According to the public relations report, in this meeting, Engineer Asgari congratulated the Fajr decade. He expressed satisfaction with the good performance of the programs of this decade. He also expressed his satisfaction for the Mashhad exhibition and thanked the staff. In this meeting, in the form of video conferences, plans and projects of the development unit worth more than 42.80000000 billion Rials were inaugurated. 370 million rials were invested in the railway sector. Also, technical and support unit projects worth 135,000,000,000 billion rials were exploited. The total investment of Opal Parsian Complex in 2021 is worth 177/800,000,000 billion Rials.

Public Relations of Opal Parsian Complex



Iran Among Top Six Countries In Vaccine Production

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – An Iranian lawmaker highlighted the country's progress in the health and medical fields and said Iran is among the six top countries in the world in terms of vaccine production.

Hossein Ali Shahriari, the head of the Iranian Parliament's Health Commission, told Tasnim that Iran has made remarkable progress in the health and medical arenas over the past decades.

Before the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the country faced lack

of physicians, nurses and medical equipment and had to rely on foreign medical staff from countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, he said.

Today, however, 8,000 to 10,000 physicians, dentists and pharmacists graduate from the country's universities every year, the parliamentarian said.

He added that while many patients had to go abroad for treatment and surgery back then, today Iranian hospitals receive patients who come from other countries for treatment.

Message of Islamic Revolution Rejection of Domination

TEHRAN (IFP) - President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi has said the 1979 Islamic Revolution's message was rejecting domination and defending the oppressed.

Raisi was addressing a group of foreign ambassadors on the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

He said the Iranian people staged a revolution to decide their own fate, adding that the cause and values of the Islamic Revolution were universal and any rejection of them is tantamount to rejection of human and ethical values.

Raisi also noted that the Islamic Revolution was the product of the Iranian people's deep faith in Islam's lofty principles and values as well as the struggle for justice and freedom.

He added that the strategic thought of the Islamic Republic of Iran is rooted in the concept of pure Islam and the school of Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Revolution.

The unique feature of our great Imam is that he was able to create a new identity called the Islamic Republic or religious democracy in the turbulent world of politics and in the region and the world, the president said.

Raisi described comprehensiveness, dynamism and intelligence as the characteristics of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic.



He said, "We are trying to create a new chapter of bilateral or multilateral cooperation in diplomacy in order to maintain regional and extra-regional security and to meet mutual needs."

Raisi said to this end, Iran has implemented an important part of the 25-year strategic partnership agreement with China and it's seeking a similar agreement with Russia.

The president added that Tehran has also taken effective steps to improve relations with all neighbors and by strengthening ports and transit corridors, it's paved the way for the development of cooperation with neighbors.

Presiden Blames U.S. Policies as Main Obstacle to Progress in Vienna

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi says the current U.S. administration's adherence to the failed policies of its predecessor with regard to Iran is the main obstacle to making "acceptable progress" in the Vienna negotiations which aim at bringing the 2015 Iran deal back to life.

"The U.S. administration's clinging to the failed policies of the former administration is the major obstacle to making acceptable progress in the negotiations," Raisi said on Wednesday, during a phone call with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

Raisi also said the Islamic Republic is prepared to upgrade the level of its relations and cooperation with other countries, including Japan, irrespective of the fate of the JCPOA.

He said Iran and Japan are founded on glorious and peaceful civilizations, adding that the two countries' expansion of ties would benefit all nations.

"With the existing knowledge of the capacities of the two countries, we can take big steps towards strengthening Tehran-Tokyo relations," the Iranian president said, according to a readout of the call published by his office.

"Tehran and Tokyo can play an effective role in creating and promoting peace and stability in the region and the world by strengthening joint cooperation," he added.

Raisi also said the interference of extra-regional countries is the main destabilizing factor in the region.

Referring to the Yemeni crisis, he underlined the need to have the Saudi-led blockade of Yemen lifted to put an end to the horrific massacre of the defenseless people of the impoverished Middle-Eastern country.

For his part, the Japanese premier extended his congratulations on the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

He said he visited Iran several times during his tenure as Japan's foreign minister, adding, "As prime minister, with my knowledge of the capacities of the two countries, I seek to develop relations and activate joint cooperation capacities."

Malaysia Minister Impressed by Iran's Progress

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Visiting Iran amid celebrations of the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, a Malaysian minister expresses praise for the Islamic Republic's resilience throughout 43 years of US sanctions and enmity.

"I'm impressed by Iran's being able to sustain its development despite the sanctions, and it shows that Iranians are very strong, determined, and resilient towards any kind of oppression," Malaysia's Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, Zuraida Kamaruddin told Press TV's Iran program on Wednesday.

"Thank God, Iran has managed to run the country well for the past 43 years," she added.

The Malaysian official also reflected on the quality of the celebrations, which features the Islamic Republic's inviting foreign officials to visit the



country for the event.

Iran is leading the "right strategy by opening its doors and inviting as many countries as possible to come and visit the country" for the jubilant occasion, the minister said.

"That is something good because when more countries come to Iran, it will send a message to the US that there are many countries that support Iran."

Kamaruddin commented on the U.S. and its allies' incessant but unsuccessful campaign of pressure, which was launched after the victory of the Revolution with the aim of isolating Iran politically and economically from the rest of the international community.

"We cannot be following the rhythm of the United States," she said, adding, "God willing, we will try to find ways how to go about it (neutralizing the American pressure and sanctions) in order to move on because life goes on with or without the sanctions."

Leader Pardons, Commutes Sentences of Over 3,380 Convicts



TEHRAN (PressTV) – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has pardoned or commuted the sentences of a large group of Iranian prisoners on the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

Ayatollah Khamenei on Thursday agreed to pardon or reduce the sentences of 3,388 prisoners eligible for mitigating circumstances, including those found guilty in courts of common pleas and Islamic Revolution tribunals, the Judicial Organization of the Armed Forces and the State Discretionary Punishment Organization.

The Leader's decision came in response to a letter from Iran's Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei regarding prisoners found eligible for receiving the clemency by the relevant judicial authority.

Every year on the anniversary of the victory of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran holds nationwide celebrations for 10 days.

The celebrations start on the anniversary of the return of the late founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, to Iran after many years of exile, and end on the anniversary of the victory of the Revolution on February 11 (the 22nd of the month of Bahman on the Persian calendar) to renew their allegiance to the Islamic establishment.

People from all walks of life also rally in different cities and towns each year on the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution to mark the nation's victory that put an end to the monarchical rule of the US-backed Pahlavi regime.

Pakistan PM Congratulates President Raisi on Islamic Revolution Anniversary

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan in a message to Ebrahim Raisi congratulated the people and government of Iran on the 43rd anniversary of the glorious victory of the Islamic Revolution.

"On the 43rd Anniversary of the Islamic Revolution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I wish to convey our warm facilitation to you and the brotherly people of Iran," the PM said in the message on Thursday.

He said Pakistan and Iran enjoy strong fraternal ties, rooted deep in shared history, and commonalities of faith and culture.

Imran Khan added it is my endeavor to work closely with you to further strengthen our fraternal relations and advance peace, security and development in the region and beyond.

"I also take this opportunity to convey best prayers for Your Excellency's good health and happiness and for the continued progress and prosperity of the brotherly people of Iran," said the Prime Minister.

Meanwhile Speaker of the National Assembly and Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee of Pakistan Army in separate messages to the Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly and the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the

Islamic Republic of Iran congratulated the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

The President and Foreign Minister of Pakistan have also congratulated Iran on the 43rd anniversary of the glorious victory Islamic Revolution of Iran.

Earlier President of Pakistan Arif Alvi had congratulated Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and the government of Iran on the 43rd anniversary of the glorious victory of the Islamic Revolution.

According to the Embassy of Pakistan the President in a message said: On behalf of the people of Pakistan and on my own behalf, I am pleased to convey our sincere facilitation on the 43rd Anniversary of the Islamic Revolution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

"Pakistan and Iran bilateral relations are established on the solid foundations of shared history, common geography and shared values. It is a matter of satisfaction that our fraternal ties continue to grow with the passage of time," he said.

He added: I avail myself of this opportunity to extend best wishes for Your Eminence's good health and personal well-being and for the continued progress and prosperity of the brotherly people of Iran.

3rd Round of Negotiations on Prosecuting Martyr Soleimani Assassination Ends

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Judiciary Deputy Chief for International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi declared the end of the third round of the meeting of the joint investigation committee probing the assassination of Iran's anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani.

Gharibabadi said that the third round of negotiations between the joint committee of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq regarding the investigation of the terrorist attack on Martyr Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani ended in Baghdad, Iraq.

The Iraqi side presented some of the documents requested by the Iranian side regarding this terrorist act, he added.

Pointing to the issuance of a joint statement by the judicial delegations of the two states at the end of the third round of talks, Gharibabadi noted that the two sides agreed on three issues during the meeting:

First, accelerate and continue mutual cooperation, including the exchange of additional documents and information, to advance judicial cases in the two states to ensure justice in this criminal act;

Second, emphasize on investigations completion of the two sides on the various aspects of this criminal act to bring each defendant to justice as quickly as possible;

Third, take all necessary measures to prosecute and punish all the factors involved, decision-makers, plotters, and executors of this criminal act by both sides.

Iran Seeks Preferential Trade Deal With Oman

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's minister of trade Reza Fatemi Amin says the government will pursue an agreement with Oman to allow preferential trade with the Arab country to start in the near future.

Fatemi Amin made the announcement during a Wednesday meeting in Muscat with Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry & Investment Qais Al Yousef.

The Iranian official insisted that a preferential trade agreement (PTA) between Iran and Oman will significantly boost economic and trade ties between the two friendly nations.

He said that one of his senior deputies will organize and chair expert-level meetings with Omani authorities to discuss a potential deal and the list of products that could be covered by it. Under a PTA, countries allow certain products to enjoy preferential trade access such as by reducing or removing tariffs.

Iran is currently in PTA arrangements with six countries as well as with members of the Russia-led EAEU bloc of Eurasian economies.

Iran has intensified its efforts to reach preferential or free trade deals with other countries as part of efforts to offset the impacts of American sanctions that were imposed on the country more than three years ago.

Fatemi Amin travelled to Oman on Tuesday as part of a regional tour that started earlier this week in the United Arab Emirates. The minister and other Iranian government officials have called the tour a success, saying it is a sign that an administration that came to office in August is intent on expanding ties with neighboring countries.

Oman's Al Yousef told Fatemi Amin during their Wednesday meeting that the sultanate will introduce major incentives for Iranians seeking to invest in Oman, including full ownership of property and long-term residency permits, according to remarks covered in a report by Iran's ILNA news agency.

Iran to Expand Balanced Ties With Africa, Latin America, Europe

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Thursday that Iran is determined to bolster good and balanced relation relations with Africa, Latin America and Europe.

He made the remarks in a virtual meeting with Iranian envoys in foreign countries. Amirabdollahian called on the envoys to do their utmost to deepen Iran's mutual ties with other countries within the framework of the new administration's policies and designated missions and pay special attention to the affairs of Iranian nationals.

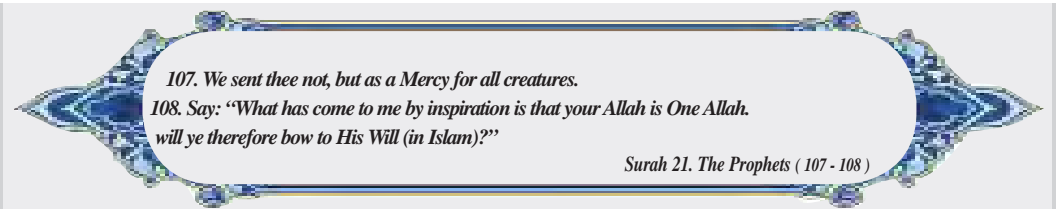
Although Asia and neighboring states are among the highest priorities in the country's foreign policy, he said, adding that Iran is determined to boost its balanced and good relations with countries in other regions, including Africa, Latin America as well as Europe.

Earlier on January 8, Amirabdollahian underlined that the Islamic Republic of Iran attaches significance to the expansion of relations with Latin American countries, Nicaragua in particular. Amirabdollahian made the remarks in a phone conversation with Nicaragua's Foreign Minister Denis Moncada on Friday.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:18
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:01
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:28
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:53



Tehran, Minsk Try to Flourish Bilateral Trade

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – New Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus Mr. Dmitry Koltsov in meeting with Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Mine (TCCIM) Mr. Masoud Khansari explored ways for flourishing the trade between Belarus and Iran and called for removal of the obstacles.

In the meeting, Khansari pointed to the performance of former Belarus Ambassador to Tehran and wished a successful mission for Mr. Koltsov. He also expressed his satisfaction over his visit to Minsk in 2019 heading a trade delegation and said during his he had good meetings with Belarus statesmen as well as private sector activists and it was decided that more trade delegations are exchanged between the two countries and unfortunately the COVID pandemic halted all of them.

Khansari added that during the term of former Belarus Ambassador Yuri Lazarchik the relation between TCCIM and Embassy of Belarus was very good and cooperation between the two countries had increased. He expressed hope that during Mr. Koltsov's term this tie would deepen and get closer more than ever.

He then pointed to the problems resurfaced due to the sanctions in the trade ties between Iran and Belarus and it seems it is important time for taking steps for revival of the past ties and its development. He said that he recommends chambers of commerce of both countries to have online events in order to pave proper grounds for serious development of economic relations.

Then Koltsov, for his part, hailed the performance of TCCIM in cooperation with the Embassy of Belarus and expressed his content that after serving four years as his country's commercial attaches in Iran he has returned as the ambassador of his



country. He then pointed to the high capabilities of the private sectors of both countries for cooperation and expressed hope that in the near future, the pulse of developing bilateral ties at the TCCIM would start beating.

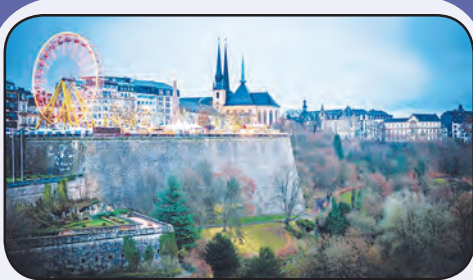
He added that in talks with the Belarus private sector he has raised the idea of exchange of trade delegations which has been welcomed, adding that economic activists in the private sector of Belarus are keen to visit Tehran and to meet with their Iranian counterparts.

Koltsov went on to say that Embassy of Belarus is ready for any cooperation with TCCIM for easing the process for issuing the commercial visas for Iranian traders and said if TCCIM submits to the embassy the list of those Iranian traders who want to travel to Belarus, the embassy can issue visas in days for them.

He noted that many Belarus companies are keen to talk with Iranian traders for trade of goods, adding that he received three requests from Belarus companies just in the last week for the purchase of dried fruits from Iran. He added that the embassy has a large number of programs for broadening ties with Iran which will be seriously pursued this year in order that they get favorable results in 2023.

Koltsov also welcomed Khansari's suggestion for holding a webinar, adding that this online event can be held in the upcoming weeks and before Iranian New Year begins in mid-March.

Iran, Luxemburg Can Cooperate in Field of Food Stuff, Medicines, Dairy



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – A webinar on reviewing the opportunities for economic cooperation between Iran and Luxemburg was held in order to make the economic activists get familiar with the economic capacities of the two countries and it was decided some specialized workshops to be held for promoting trade between the two countries.

The deputy for international affairs of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Mr. Mohammad Reza Karbasi, Head of Iran-Belgium-Luxemburg Joint Chamber of Commerce and Iran's ambassador to Belgium were present also in the webinar.

In the meeting, Karbasi talked about the economic cooperation between Iran and Luxemburg and added that several trade delegations were exchanged between the two countries in 2016 and 2017 and the talks were held satisfactorily.

He added that Luxemburg enjoys having high capacities in banking system, adding that due to the positive trend of the talks, Iran can use Luxemburg in equipping its banking infrastructures.

Karbasi noted that Iran has capacity to increase its exports of dried fruits, plastic materials and mineral materials to Luxemburg, adding that it is necessary direct channels between the related formations to be launched.

Then he called for holding several specialized workshops in the mutual interested fields of the two countries like technology, information technology and construction, reiterating that B2B and online meetings between the economic activists will help the economic ties between both countries to develop. He stated they can hold banking education and training courses for the managers of the private banks of Iran.

Then Head of Iran-Belgium-Luxemburg Joint Chamber of Commerce Ms. Leyla Rostami said that the ground is ready for cooperation with Luxemburg in the field of foodstuff especially dairy products and medicines which are not under sanctions and the direct banking relations with the banks of Belgium and Luxemburg is possible in those fields.

At the end of the webinar, it was decided the chambers of the two countries to hold a webinar for getting acquainted with Iran's economy in order that economic activists of Luxemburg to get familiar with Iran's trade potentials.

3 Aluminum Fishing Pier Stations Inaugurated in Southern Iran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Concurrent with the festivities marking the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the inaugural ceremony of 3 aluminum fishing pier stations were held in the fishing Dayyer Port in Bushehr Province in the presence of officials of the province and manufacturers of the piers.

According to reports, the CEO of Makin Darya Qeshm Industrial Group Mr. Mehdi Zare announced the news and said in line with materializing the Supreme Leader's recommendations regarding the Second Step of the Revolution and the slogan of the year, the aluminum piers have been designed, manufactured and installed by the group aimed at organizing docking of 60 fishing vessels with a budget over 11b tomans and with the investment of Fishery Organization of Bushehr Province and with efforts of the revolutionary staff and youth of Makin Qeshm Darya Group.

He said that aluminum piers have been designed, manufactured and installed with marine grade 6005 and observing all international standards. He added that the cross



bracing system of these piers is with buttress and support.

Zare also criticized some officials for not paying the money for carrying out the project of the group which was done 5 years ago for fishery organization at Abukhazir in Shadgan Wetland. He expressed hope in the 43th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution the related officials would move on course to materializing the slogan of the year which is focused on removing hurdles in way of production.

Then in the ceremony, Deputy Agriculture Minister and Head of Iran Fishery Organization said that for 25 years he has been aware of the problems of those people who are involved in fishery industry and he feels their problems very well. He added that as the Supreme Leader has reiterated, the key for resolving all problems is the jihadi management, adding that the piers should be built in a way to fit the vessels docking there.

Dayyer Port is one of the most important fishing ports of Bushehr Province and it is the biggest fishing port of southern country.

Iran Daily Gas Transmission Capacity by 10 mcm

TEHRAN (Shana) -- The CEO of the Iranian Gas Engineering and Development Company (IGEDC) announced that with the operation of the company's new projects, the daily gas transmission capacity of the country has increased by 10 million cubic meters.

Reza Noshadi said at the opening ceremony of gas supply and petrochemical projects of the Ministry of Petroleum, which was held in the presence of the President and via video conference at the inauguration of Arsanjan Gas Booster Facilities: "Arsanjan and Kheirgoo gas compressors on the eighth national trunkline and the auxiliary unit of Khormuj station on the fifth national trunkline will be inaugurated."

He continued: "With the opening of these projects, the gas transmission capacity will increase by 10 million cubic meters per day to guarantee and stabilize gas supply by the pipeline from the gas fields in the south of the country to the center and north of the country."

Noshadi added the same measure will be taken to strengthen the gas network in the west of the country and export routes in a 70-kilometer range on the Bid Boland-Ahvaz route to the country's gas transmission network.

Inauguration Day of Persian Gulf Star Refinery Is "Day of Allah"

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Vice-President of AhlulBayt (AS) World Assembly says the launch of Persian Gulf Star Refinery with not obeying the infidels is a great jihad and it is considered as "Day of Allah".

During his visit to Persian Gulf Star Refinery, Ayatollah Ahmad Ahmadi said that anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution and the Ten-Day-Dawn is the "day of Allah" and the country in the history of the Islamic Revolution has seen several days of Allah.

Addressing the senior officials of this giant oil complex, he said the day Persian Gulf Star Refinery



was launched was itself a "day of Allah" and the refinery is responsible for promoting this day which happened by jihadi measures and how Almighty God regarded these hardworking forces of the country and created another "day of Allah".

Ayatollah Ahmadi then said that in the religious culture there is two major jihads but the Holy Quran raises the third Jihad which is to disregard the infidels and with doing so, the great jihad happens.

He then noted that great jihad has happened in the refinery, adding that the personnel of the refinery by their jihadi actions have not followed the enemies who wanted to force Iran to follow them.

Legal Process of Equalizing Salaries of Steel Retirees Underway

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Caretaker of the Technical and Insurance Operation of Department of Steel Pension Fund delved into details of recent actions of the fund for reforming and equalizing pensions of steel industry retirees.



Mohammad Mehdi Babakhani said that due to demands of the esteemed retirees for necessity in reviewing the equalization process of salaries and their objections regarding the implementation of current equalization process, the new management of the fund called for immediate review of the current equalization process which was implemented last year and it called for reviewing it in the presence and with participation of representatives of the centers of the retirees. He added therefore this order was put on the agenda of the technical and insurance operation department and other sections of the fund.

Babakhani went on to say that in order to avoid repetition of the past mistake, the technical and insurance operation department based on the emphasis of the respected managing director of the fund called on all related groups like centers and experts of the retiree community to have some meetings with the selected experts of the fund. He added that these meetings were held in three sessions and had good results and the legal process for reforming equalization of salaries is now underway.

He added that according to the agreements in these meetings of representatives of the retirees, reform of equalizing the salaries will be carried out based on the upstream documents and predominantly will include that group of the retirees who have suffered the most and worked hard during their working days.

Babakhani reiterated that of course the implementation of the equalization reform requires financial resources and coordination among the upstream bodies in the upcoming meetings. He went on to say as the respected managing director of the fund has emphasized, the fund is committed to implement the reform in equalizing payments but due to restrictions in financial resources, the fund is unable to pay immediately after approval and it will pay in a logical range of time.

Goharzamin Iron Ore Co. Inaugurates Building of 80 Housing Units



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – In a ceremony held on Thursday and on the eve of the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the project of construction of 80 housing units by Goharzamin Iron Ore Company was inaugurated in-presence and online with presence of First Vice-President, Deputy Minister of Cooperatives, Labour, and Social Welfare, Friday Prayer Leaders of Sirjan, governor of Sirjan and representatives of Majlis, deputy head of Goharzamin Iron Ore Company on management development and human capitals Dr. Mohammad Reza Khezripoor and some officials of Sirjan and media persons.

Addressing the participants, Khezripoor felicitated the auspicious anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution and said that the inauguration of the project for building 80 housing units for the personnel of the company is just a beginning, adding that the company is to launch another project for building 48 housing units that will be inaugurated in the near future.

Honduras President Stops Eviction of Indigenous Community

TEGUCIGALPA (Dispatches) - The eviction of a hundred Lenca indigenous families in Honduras was stopped at the request of President Xiomara Castro after dozens of police officers tried to remove them.

Police arrived at Tierras del Padre, a piece of land 10 kilometers (six miles) south of the capital Tegucigalpa, with a judge and an eviction order stating the site belongs to a private individual.

The 200-hectare property is claimed by a businessman who intends to build 10,000 homes on the land, according to local media reports.

But representatives of the indigenous community say they have a deed registering ownership of the land that dates back to 1739.



Paris Bans Canada-Style Protests on Anti-Covid Curbs

PARIS (Dispatches) - Paris police said they would ban so-called “freedom convoys” inspired by a truckers’ protest against coronavirus restrictions that has paralyzed the Canadian capital Ottawa.

“There will be a special deployment... to prevent blockages of major roads, issue tickets and arrest those who infringe on this protest ban,” the city’s police force said in a statement. The force recalled that people blocking roads faced up to two years in prison, a fine of €4,500 (\$5,140) and a three-year driving ban. Paris’ move comes after a number of convoys of cars, vans and motorbikes set off from around France on Wednesday, inspired by the two-week blockade of central Ottawa by truckers angry at testing and vaccine requirements for crossing the border with the US.



Russia Launches Belarus Military Drills



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia and Belarus launched joint military drills that heightened tensions and added urgency to diplomatic efforts by NATO leaders to avert a feared invasion of Ukraine.

The war games, set to run until February 20, are the latest point of contention between Russia and the West over Ukraine. Kyiv quickly denounced the manoeuvres as “psychological pressure”.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian called the exercises “a very violent gesture” while British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss used a visit to Moscow to accuse Russia of attempting “to undermine Ukrainian sovereignty”.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the build-up was “a dangerous moment for European security”. Western leaders have been warning for weeks that Russia could be preparing to escalate an eight-year separatist conflict in east Ukraine after building up of some 100,000 troops around the former Soviet state. The United States has said Russia is also dispatching some 30,000 troops to Ukraine’s neighbor Belarus for the exercises that started Thursday.

Columns of Russian missile systems rolled across snow-carpeted fields on the eve of the start of the drills in footage released by the defense ministry.

Russia has also sent six warship through the Bosphorus for naval drills on the Black Sea and the neighboring Sea of Azov.

Kyiv denounced their presence as “unprecedented” attempt to cut off Ukraine for both seas.

Moscow and Minsk have not disclosed how many troops are taking part in the military exercises in Belarus.

“The objective of the exercises is to practice suppressing and repelling external aggression with a defensive operation,” the Russian defense ministry said in a statement.

Answering Western concerns, the Kremlin has insisted the Russian troops in Belarus will go home after the exercises.

But Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky said “the accumulation of forces at the border is psychological pressure from our neighbors”.

Kyiv has launched its own military drills expected to mirror Russia’s games in Belarus, but officials have said little about them out apparent fear of escalating tensions.

The diplomatic crisis has spurred weeks of talks between Russian, Western and Ukrainian officials.

Those efforts have drawn cautious optimism for negotiated solution, with French President Emmanuel Macron saying he had secured a pledge from Russian leader Vladimir Putin that Moscow “would not be the source of an escalation”.

Russia has put sweeping security demands to the United States and the Washington-led NATO military alliance with the aim of reducing their role in Eastern Europe and former Soviet states.

Britain’s Truss was the latest Western diplomat to travel to Moscow to sound on Russia’s latest stance.

Biden, Saudi King Discuss Different Issues

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Joe Biden and King Salman of Saudi Arabia discussed energy supplies in the face of soaring fuel prices and developments in the Middle East, including Iran and Yemen, in a telephone call.

“The two leaders committed to ensuring the stability of global energy supplies,” the White House said in a statement.

Salman, head of the largest crude exporter in the OPEC oil production group, spoke about maintaining balance and stability in the petroleum markets, Saudi state news agency SPA said. He emphasized the need to maintain the supply agreement OPEC has with its allies including Russia, a group known as OPEC+.

Last week, OPEC+ agreed to stick to moderate rises in its oil output, with the group struggling to meet existing targets and wary of responding to calls on its strained capacity for more crude from top consumers to cap surging prices.

Global crude prices, which have rallied about 20% this year, are likely to surpass \$100 a barrel because of a weaker-than- expected hit to demand from the Omicron variant of coronavirus, analysts have said.



Sweden Declares Covid-19 Pandemic Over

STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - Sweden scrapped almost all of its few pandemic restrictions yesterday and stopped most testing for Covid-19, even as the pressure on the healthcare systems remained high and some scientists begged for more patience in fighting the disease.

Sweden’s government, which throughout the pandemic has opted against lockdowns in favor of a voluntary approach, announced last week it would scrap the remaining restrictions — effectively declaring the pandemic over — as vaccines and the less severe Omicron variant have cushioned severe cases and deaths.

“As we know this pandemic, I would say it’s over,” Minister of Health Lena Hallengren told Dagens Nyheter. “It’s not over, but as we know it in terms of quick changes and restrictions it is,” she said, adding that Covid would no longer be classified as a danger to society.

As of Wednesday, bars and restaurants will be allowed to stay open after 11pm again, and with no limits on the number of guests. Attendance limits for larger indoor venues were also lifted, as was the use of vaccine passes.

Swedish hospitals were still feeling the strain, however, with around 2,200 people with Covid requiring hospital care, about the same as during the third wave in the spring of 2021. As free testing was reduced earlier this month and effectively stopped from yesterday, no one knows the exact number of cases.

“We should have a little more patience, wait at least a couple of more weeks. And we are wealthy enough to keep testing,” Fredrik Elgh, professor of virology at Umea University and one of the staunchest critics of Sweden’s no-lockdown policy, told Reuters.

“The disease is still a huge strain on society,” he said.

Sweden’s Health Agency said this week that large-scale testing was too expensive in relation to the benefits. Sweden spent around 500 million Swedish crowns per week on testing for the first five weeks of this year and around 24 billion crowns since the start of the pandemic.

Imagery Shows N.Korea Preparing for Possible Military Parade

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Commercial satellite imagery shows possible preparations for a military parade in North Korea, a Washington think-tank said on Thursday, amid expectations that the country could display new military advances or launch more missiles on upcoming holidays.

Several hundred personnel were seen in formation at the Mirim Parade Training Ground in Pyongyang, which is designed to be a replica of the city’s Kim Il Sung Square, where parades are usually held, 38 North, which monitors North Korea, said in a report.

More than 240 buses were parked nearby, but there were no signs of major military hardware, such as North Korea’s ballistic missiles, the report said.

“That could indicate an upcoming event will consist largely of people or that they are yet to arrive,” 38 North said.

The report comes a day after Seoul-based NK News, which covers North Korea, cited informed sources and satellite imagery that indicated possible preparations for a parade, including jet aircraft over Pyongyang and marching formations at the training ground since late January.

North Korea plans to celebrate the 80th birthday anniversary of leader Kim Jong Un’s late father, Kim

Jong Il, on Feb. 16, and the 110th birthday anniversary of his late grandfather and founder of North Korea, Kim Il Sung, on April 15.

Both are major holidays in North Korea, which often uses such occasions to display military might at massive parades full of goose-stepping soldiers and rows of weapons, including in some cases its large missiles.

“North Korea does not announce these kinds of events in advance, but over the last several years, training at the Mirim Parade Training Ground has usually begun one to several months ahead of the festivities,” the 38 North report said.

North Korea conducted a record seven missile tests in January, and has suggested it could resume tests of its longest-range intercontinental ballistic missiles or nuclear weapons for the first time since 2017 amid stalled denuclearisation talks with the United States.

Analysts say North Korea could use the holidays to test a major new missile or other weapon.

A resumption of North Korea’s nuclear weapon or long-range missile tests would “instantly” send the peninsula back into crisis, outgoing South Korean President Moon Jae-in said this week, calling for measures to prevent that from happening.



Indonesia Signs Deal for French Rafale Warplanes



JAKARTA (Dispatches) - Indonesia signed a deal with France to buy six Rafale warplanes as part of an anticipated total order of 42, Jakarta’s defence minister said, as Paris bolsters military ties in the Asia-Pacific.

The agreement was announced as Indonesian Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto met his French counterpart Florence Parly in Jakarta.

“We agreed on the purchase of 42 Rafale. The contract signed today is for the first six, which will be followed by 36 others,” said Subianto.

It is the latest sign of warming ties between Jakarta and Paris, as France rethinks its alliances in the region following the collapse in September of a multibillion-dollar Australian submarine deal.

Paris was left furious by the debacle, saying it had been given no warning that Canberra was negotiating a new defense pact with the United States and Britain.

Australia is now obtaining nuclear-powered submarines as part of the new defense alliance, named AUKUS, with Washington and London to counter a rising China.

In November, France and Indonesia strengthened a strategic partnership agreement during a two-day visit by French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian to the vast Southeast Asian archipelago.

In this tweet, France’s foreign defense minister says that France and Indonesia’s “strategic partnership will benefit from deepening defense ties. France is proud to contribute to the modernization of our partner’s armed forces, which plays a key role in ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific region.”

Indonesia’s first order for French warplanes comes as Jakarta replaces an ageing fleet — consisting mainly of American F-16s and Russian Sukhois — as concerns grow about rising US-China tensions in Asia.

In Jakarta, Parly told reporters that Indonesia had chosen a warplane known for its “technical excellence”, which had demonstrated its “operational capabilities on numerous occasions”.

Indonesia is also reportedly in negotiations to buy about 30 American F-15s, and is participating in a South Korean program to develop a warplane.

Since the Australian submarine deal collapsed, France has been bolstering ties with long-time partners including Japan and India, as well as turning to Southeast Asian nations such as Indonesia. Indonesia is one of several Asian countries that expressed concerns about the AUKUS pact, with Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi warning it could trigger a nuclear arms race in the region.



Darrous Apt (\$2500)
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S/p, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
fireplace
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Elahieh Villa (\$4000)
1400sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, Jacuzzi
L.balcony
yard, pkg
Fully Furn

Parsian

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Kamranieh (\$1800) 2bdrs
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ECB May Raise Rates in 2022

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Interest rates in the single currency bloc may need to go higher as soon as 2022 as the costs of acting too slowly could be “significantly” higher, the new head of the German central bank said.

In an interview with Die Zeit, Joachim Nagel said: “If the (inflation) picture remains unchanged in March, I will be in favour of normalising monetary policy. “The first step is to discontinue the net asset purchases over the course of 2022. Then interest rates could be raised before this year is over.”



Turkey Pitches New Economic Model

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkey’s Treasury and Finance Minister Nureddin Nebati outlined Turkey’s new economic path to investors in London, pledging to keep the exchange rate stable, bring inflation down to single digits and keep dollarization at bay.

Speaking to investors and bankers in a series of meetings on his first trip abroad, Nebati also said Ankara would announce a new scheme on the weekend to get households to convert holdings of gold into Turkish lira.

Nebati met nearly 100 high-level executives on Monday and Tuesday to pitch Turkey’s new economic model based on low-interest rates.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been endorsing a model based on lower borrowing costs, which he says will boost production, employment and exports, and also eventually help Turkey solve its chronic current account deficit problem and contribute to stabilizing the Turkish lira.

To support the drive, Turkey’s central bank has slashed its interest rates by 500 basis points since September to 14%, before pausing the easing cycle last month.

At a press conference held at the Turkish Embassy in London, Nebati said that at the meetings he highlighted Turkey’s dynamic production capacity, strong growth performance, healthy public finance, firm banking sector and low debts.

Stating that the inflation in the country is temporary, he said communication with bankers and investors will be regularly maintained.

Under the new economic policy, the government aims to ease inflation by creating a current account surplus.

Turkey’s annual inflation soared to a 20-year high of 48.69% in January, according to official data.

The lira has been broadly stable since the start of the year following a 44% decline in 2021. It had hit a record low of 18.4 against the United States dollar in December but rebounded after Erdoğan’s announcement of a scheme to boost lira deposits by protecting them against depreciation.

The initiative had helped the lira rally sharply to just over 10 and then settle at current levels just under 14 to the dollar.

Timothy Ash, a senior emerging-market strategist at London-based BlueBay Asset Management, has praised Nebati’s two-day visit to London on Tuesday.

“Nebati did a decent job in London,” said Ash, who met with the minister in London.

Saying that Nebati was well prepped and is good at marketing and selling the Turkey story, Ash said on Twitter, “(He) was open, welcoming to foreign capital, was clear capital controls are off the agenda.”

“The key is the exchange rate anchor – their line is the selloff in December was abnormal and extreme, and where we are now the currency is more defensible,” he was cited by Reuters.

Ash said Nebati described inflation as a major challenge and agreed it was “the biggest problem they have got.”

Japan Offers Gas to Europe Over Ukraine Fears

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan is offering Europe part of its liquefied natural gas imports over fears supplies will be disrupted by tensions surrounding a possible Russian invasion of Ukraine, Tokyo’s trade minister said today.

Multiple gas shipments are already being diverted to Europe by private Japanese firms, Koichi Hagiuda said, declining to give details of how many boats or how much LNG is involved.

More ships will head to Europe in March, but the supplies will be strictly contingent on ensuring domestic demand is met, he told reporters.

Fears are mounting that a conflict in Ukraine could cause an energy crisis in Europe, which depends heavily on Russian gas. Hagiuda said he had received requests from the US and EU ambassadors “to accommodate the need” for the fuel in Europe.

“We have communicated to both the US and EU that this co-operation is to be carried out only to the extent that it does not affect Japan’s electricity and gas supplies,” he said.

Japan was the world’s top LNG importer until last year, and is heavily dependent on the fuel. Reports suggest it may not have much to give, with stockpiles low even as record snow hits parts of the country, according to Bloomberg.

A trade ministry official said the Japanese gas companies will receive market price for the fuel.

Analysts judge it unlikely Russia would completely halt supplies to Europe in the case of conflict, and Japan’s reserves are likely to be insufficient to make up the difference if Moscow did so.

But Tokyo’s offer is seen as symbolic, and comes with frenetic diplomatic maneuvering under way in an attempt to ease tensions with Russia over Ukraine.

French President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday he saw a path forward after two days of talks in Kyiv and Moscow. There have been discussions about a possible summit bringing together the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany.

Russian leader Vladimir Putin is seeking sweeping security guarantees from NATO and the United States, including barring Ukraine from the military alliance.

Maersk Sees Profits Soar on Record Freight Prices

COPENHAGEN (Dispatches) - Danish shipping giant Maersk posted record-beating profits in 2021, as container freight prices continued to soar due to the global supply chain crunch caused by the Covid pandemic.

For the full year, Maersk registered a net profit of US\$18 billion (RM75 billion), the highest profit ever recorded by a Danish company.

For 2022, Maersk predicted a “solid first half” would be followed by a “normalization” of the sector early in the second part of the year.

Demand for shipping plunged at the start of the pandemic, but has rebounded strongly since mid-to-late 2020.

As a result, sales for 2021 jumped by 55 per cent to US\$61.8 billion, with the Ocean container shipping segment soaring by 65 per cent.

Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation almost tripled to US\$24 billion, thanks to lower costs and optimization of its logistics chain, Maersk said.

Its main competitors, Italy’s MSC and France’s CMA CGM, have also posted record profits for 2021.

Shipping customers have had their patience put to the test and had to dig deep into their pockets as the supply chain disruptions plague the container shipping segment.

In the fourth quarter, the sector experienced “exceptional conditions with significant and persisting bottlenecks, while the volumes were down”, Maersk said in its annual report.

Freight costs rose especially on Asian routes to Europe and North America, the Danish group said, with the unit cost at fixed bunker increasing by 13 per cent.

Maersk’s record profits are expected to continue this year, with EBITDA forecast to come in at the same level as in 2021, around US\$24 billion, despite the normalization expected in the second half.

The company, which aims to be carbon neutral by 2050 by turning to green energy for its fleet, said its emissions declined by 42 per cent in 2021.

German Exports Unexpectedly Jump

BERLIN (Dispatches) - German exports rose unexpectedly at the end of 2021, official data showed on Wednesday.

According to Destatis, the country’s Federal Statistical Office, exports rose 0.9% in December on a calendar and seasonally-adjusted basis compared to November, when they increased by 1.8%, and by 15.6% year-on-year. For the year as a whole, exports rose 14.0% to €1,375.5bn.

Most economists had been expecting exports to decline by around 0.2% in December. Imports also beat expectations and rose sharply, however, up 4.7% on November, when they increased 3.4%. Analysts had been expecting a 2.1% decline. Year-on-year, imports rose 27.8%, and increased 17.1% over the year to date, to €1,202.2bn.

As a result, the foreign trade balance in December fell to €6.8bn on a calendar and seasonally-adjusted basis, from a revised €10.8bn in November; for the year as a whole it was €173.3bn. December’s figure was well below consensus expectations of €10.4bn.

Claus Vistesen, chief Eurozone economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, said: “Germany’s trade surplus is now almost gone, indicating that the Eurozone trade deficit widened further at the end of 2021. These data look dramatic, and in some sense, they are. The euro area’s largest economy has suffered a significant hit to its otherwise unshakeable trade surplus. Exports, however, are doing fine.”

Among individual trading partners, Germany exported goods worth €63.3bn to fellow European Union countries in December, and imported goods to the value of €56.3bn.

Exports to the UK dropped 7.6% in December to €5.0bn, while imports slid 18.2% to €2.6bn. For the whole year, the first since the UK officially left the EU, imports slumped 8.5% while exports were down 2.6%.

Carsten Brzeski, global head of macro at ING, said: “Looking at export destinations,



2021 clearly marks a structural shift, illustrating current themes including reshoring, slowing of Chinese growth and different ways to deal with the pandemic. In 2021, the US was the single most important destination for German exports, accounting for almost 9% of all exports.

“Brexit has left its market, as the UK dropped out of the five most important trading partner lists, with German companies exporting more to Austria than to the UK.

“Looking ahead, export order books are filled to the brim. However, we will first need to see industry production picking up again before exports surge as well. It is very simple: without any new production, there won’t be new exports.”

U.S. Crude Stockpiles Drop Unexpectedly, Demand Hits Record High



LONDON (Dispatches) - U.S. crude oil stockpiles fell unexpectedly last week as overall refined product demand reached an all-time record, according to government data on Wednesday, showing how the U.S. economic pace is cutting into the market’s already tight supply.

Crude inventories fell 4.8 million barrels in the week to Feb. 4 to 410.4 million barrels, their lowest for commercial inventories since October 2018, the Energy Information Administration said. Analysts had forecast in a Reuters poll a 369,000-barrel rise.

Overall, the mild softness in oil demand witnessed in early January due to the Omicron coronavirus variant seems to have passed.

U.S. product supplied - the best proxy for demand - peaked at 21.9 million barrels per day (bpd) over the past four weeks due to strong economic activity nationwide. Both U.S. demand for distillates like diesel, along with propane and propylene, surged.

Weekly gasoline product supplied jumped to 9.1 million bpd, though the broader four-week average is slightly below seasonal levels.

“This is a stark rebound of gasoline demand; we’re past Omicron and we have renewed travel demand. Refineries are clearly running more which contributed to the crude drawdown,” said John Kilduff, partner at Again Capital in New York.

Refiners have had a hard time keeping up with demand, as crude runs rose by 329,000 bpd in the last week, EIA said, boosting refinery utilization rates by 1.5 percentage points to 88.2% of their overall capacity.

U.S. gasoline stocks fell by 1.6 million barrels to 248.4 million barrels, the EIA said. Distillate stockpiles, which include diesel and heating oil, fell by 929,000 barrels in the week.

Net U.S. crude imports fell by 1.42 million bpd and crude stocks at the Cushing, Oklahoma, and delivery hub fell by 2.8 million barrels, the EIA said.

South Korean Economy Faces Heightened External Economic Risks

SEOUL (Dispatches) - The South Korean economy is on a recovery track, but external economic uncertainty remains high amid soaring energy costs and monetary policy shifts by the US Federal Reserve, a state-run think tank said Wednesday.

The manufacturing industry has extended solid growth and the latest spike in Covid-19 cases appears to have had limited impacts on the service sector, compared with previous waves of the pandemic, Yonhap news agency reported citing the Korea Development Institute (KDI)’s monthly economic assessment. “However, a continued rise in raw material prices and unstable financial markets indicate economic uncertainty remains high,” the report said.

The South Korean economy is on a recovery path on the back of robust exports of chips and autos. Asia’s fourth-largest economy expanded 4 per cent last year, the fastest growth in 11 years.

Private spending gained ground in the fourth quarter despite the upsurge in Covid cases in the latest sign that the negative impact by the pandemic on the service sector appears to have declined.

Private spending grew 1.7 per cent in the fourth quarter of last year from three months earlier, a turnaround from a 0.2 per cent on-quarter fall, according to central bank data.

But external economic risks have increased amid surging oil prices and uncertainty about monetary policy normalization by the Fed. South Korea’s exports rose 15.2 per cent on-year in January to a monthly record high of \$55.32 billion. But the country logged the largest trade deficit last month as a hike in oil prices raised import bills.

Oil prices have spiked on tight supplies and escalating geopolitical tensions between Russia and Ukraine.

Dubai crude, South Korea’s benchmark, soared to \$90.91 per barrel on Monday, up from \$77.12 at the end of last year. South Korea depends mainly on imports for its energy needs. Volatility in the financial market has also increased amid the prospects that the Fed is likely to accelerate its monetary tightening.

The Korean currency has sharply fallen against the US dollar in recent months with the won dropping to a 19-month low of 1,206.40 per the greenback on February 3. Yields of three-year government bonds rose 6.6 basis points to 2.303 per cent Tuesday, the highest in nearly four years.

The Bank of Korea expects the South Korean economy to increase 3 per cent this year after the 4 per cent growth last year. The finance ministry puts its 2022 economic growth outlook at 3.1 per cent.



Iran to Double Petchem Output by 2032

TEHRAN (Shana) - The CEO of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) announced that the production capacity of Iran's petrochemical output will be more than double by 2032.

Morteza Shahmirzaei said at the official opening ceremony of Ibn Sina Petrochemical Project, which was attended by the President and the Minister of Petroleum: "Currently, 68 petrochemical complexes are

operational with a total annual production capacity of 90 million tons." The CEO of the National Petrochemical Company noted: "According to the plans, all petrochemicals will be produced within the country. Also, by 2032 (8th Development Plan), the current production capacity of petrochemical products will more than double, ie 200 million tons per year."



Dozens of SpaceX Internet Satellites Lost to Geomagnetic Storm

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Up to 40 SpaceX high-speed internet satellites have been knocked out of orbit by a geomagnetic storm shortly after launch, but pose little threat to Earth as they burn up in the atmosphere, the company said.

Geomagnetic storms are caused by ejections of the solar corona into space, resulting in disturbances to the Earth's upper atmosphere and increased drag on objects in low orbits.

The latest 49 satellites from the Starlink network launched from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida on February 3 and successfully assumed their initial orbit, with their nearest approach to the surface 130 miles (210 kilometers) high.

The company places them into this region to carry out final safety checks before flying further into space.

On February 4, however, they were struck by the space weather event, Elon Musk's company said in a statement late Tuesday.

"These storms cause the atmosphere to warm and atmospheric density at our low deployment altitudes to increase. In fact, onboard GPS suggests the escalation speed and severity of the storm caused atmospheric drag to increase up to 50 percent higher than during previous launches," it said.

The Starlink team commanded the satellites into a safe mode, where they would fly edge-on -- like a sheet of paper -- to minimize drag as they sought shelter from the event.

But despite the evasive maneuver, most were unable to raise their orbits, and as many as 40 "will reenter or already have reentered the Earth's atmosphere."

The company insisted they posed "zero collision risk" with other satellites and are designed to disintegrate upon re-entry, with no debris expected to hit the ground.

The UK Space Agency agreed in a blog post that there was "virtually no risk" since the satellites are built without any dense metallic components and should burn up



entirely, but said it was monitoring closely. NASA has not yet commented.

Starlink is a "constellation" of internet satellites that now number more than 2,000 and provide coverage across most of the planet.

The first batch was launched in May 2019, and SpaceX currently has regulatory approval for 12,000 satellites, with plans to expand even further.

Astronomers have raised concerns about their impact on ground-based astronomy as they add to a congested environment in Low Earth Orbit (LEO).

There are approximately 4,000 active satellites in this space, which extends to 1,200 miles above the surface, as well as 15,000 pieces of debris like rocket bodies and defunct probes, according to the UK Space Agency.

Dutch Museum Grapples With History of Indonesian Independence



AMSTERDAM (Dispatches) - A bullet-torn shirt and photos of freedom fighters are among the exhibits documenting Indonesia's struggle for independence from the Dutch in a groundbreaking show at Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum.

"Revolusi! Indonesia Independent", which opens to the public on Friday, is designed to "open a discussion" on a troubled era between the Netherlands and one of its most prized colonies, organisers say.

The aim is to examine from both Indonesian and Dutch perspectives the southeast Asia country's fight for freedom, from declaring its independence in August 1945 to Dutch recognition in 1949 after four years of bloody fighting.

"We really wanted to tell these personal stories that give fragments of this very important time," Rijksmuseum director Taco Dibbits told AFP at a preview.

"We wanted to show this and open a discussion about it."

The exhibition features objects belonging to 23 eyewitnesses of Indonesia's independence struggle.

One poignant exhibit is a bullet-ridden shirt that belonged to Tjokorda Rai Pudak, a 42-year-old Indonesian independence fighter who was shot dead on October 9, 1946, a day after he was arrested by Balinese militia supported by Dutch troops.

Another is the small watercolour paintings of Mohammad Toha, 11 at the time, who documented the landing of Dutch colonial forces in the Javanese city of Yogyakarta in December 1948.

The aquarelle paintings, tiny so that they could not be found, show Dutch bombers over the city, Dutch paratroopers landing and victims at a funeral.

Also on show is a morning coat made by Dutch woman Jeanne Van Leur-de Loos out of silk maps used by the British army. "The more you tell these stories, the closer you get to the past," said Bonnie Triyana, Indonesian historian and guest curator of the exhibition.

In recent years the Netherlands has finally started to grapple with the legacy of its history of colonialism.

The Rijksmuseum last year held an exhibition on the Dutch history of slavery.

But the three-century Dutch occupation of Indonesia, once known as the Dutch East Indies, in particular remains a tender subject in the Netherlands.

Last month a group representing victims of Dutch colonialism laid charges against the Rijksmuseum and its director for a term used in the exhibit.

The word "bersiap" -- meaning "be prepared" -- is used in the Netherlands to refer to the time just after World War II when Dutch citizens, Chinese and others suspected of sympathizing with the colonial forces were being targeted by independence forces. The group said it was a "racist and insulting term", used to marginalize a group of citizens of Dutch-Indonesian descent.

Dutch prosecutors however on Wednesday quashed the charges, saying the term "does not contain any negative conclusions about Indonesians as a group because of their race".

Yemen Civilian Deaths Double Since UN Monitors Removed

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Civilian deaths and injuries in Yemen's civil war have almost doubled since UN human rights monitors were controversially removed in October, a non-governmental organization said.

The ejection of monitors had opened the door to "unchecked, horrific violations", the Norwegian Refugee Council said, urging their reinstatement.

It said 823 civilians were killed or injured in the four months before the end of monitoring, and 1,535 in the four months after their departure.

The report added that civilian casualties caused by air strikes, a tactic favored by the Saudi-led coalition battling Huthi rebels, had multiplied by 39 in the same period.

"The removal of this crucial human rights investigative body took us back to unchecked, horrific violations," country director Erin Hutchinson said in a statement.

"Who is responsible for the deaths of these children and families? We will probably never know because there is no longer any independent, international and impartial monitoring of civilian deaths in Yemen."



The UN Human Rights Council voted to disband its Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen in October, in a move that was strongly criticized by human rights groups.

It was the first time that the United Nations' top rights body had rejected a draft resolution since it was founded in 2006. The resolution, brought forward by European nations and Canada, was

defeated by 21 votes to 18. "The people of Yemen have been abandoned. Betrayed. Yet again," Amnesty International's secretary general Agnes Callamard said at the time.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed directly or indirectly in Yemen's seven-year war, while millions have been displaced in what the UN calls the world's biggest humanitarian crisis.

"The UN member states should urgently reinstate the monitoring body to ensure that parties to the conflict stop committing grave breaches of international humanitarian law with impunity," Hutchinson said.

"With no one to hold perpetrators accountable, civilians will continue to be killed by the thousands and (to be) the hardest hit by the escalation of the conflict."

Iran's Service Sector Inflation Rate Hits Record High

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Statistics Center of Iran said the producer inflation in the service sector in the season was 46.3, up 1.2% compared to the same period in 2020.

According to Eghtesdanews Website, one of the most important ways of assessing inflation in the consumer sector and what people in society experience at any given time is to examine price changes on the production side.

In other words, if the cost of production grows in any consumer sector in a country, this growth will subsequently be transferred to the consumers and will increase inflation in the sector.

The source added in that vein, monthly consumer inflation in January showed that this figure reached 3.6 percent and stood at its 5-month peak. A closer look reveals that this is the second record in the last fourteen months.

In the first month of winter, service inflation accounted for 1.8 percent, explaining more than half of the month's 2.4 percent inflation.

The seasonal and point trend also have shown a downward trend in the rate of producer inflation in the service sector.

In this regard, the inflation of services in the fall of 2021 was equal to 10 percent, which is about 1.1 percentage points lower than the previous season.

Point inflation also showed a 2 percentage point decrease compared to the summer of 2021, which is equal to 45.8 percent.

Despite the decrease, the producer inflation rate in this sector is still high in Iran on a point scale. One example of the hikes in the service sector is that of the education sector.

Producer seasonal inflation in the education sector was 22.5 percent in the fall of 2021, the highest seasonal inflation in the last two years. Point inflation in the sector also rose, reaching its highest level in ten years this fall.

This figure is 34.2 percent, which is unprecedented in the last decade.

Iran Oil...

FROM PAGE 1

Figures by SVB International, a consulting firm that tracks Iranian oil supply, showed that crude exports from the country rose to 1.085 million bpd in January, up from 826,000 bpd in December. The data showed that there has been no difference in the volume of shipments to date.

Consulting firm Petro-Logistics, another oil flow tracking company, provided figures to the Reuters showing that Iranian crude exports started to increase to over 1 million bpd in December before they fell back to around 700,000 bpd in January.

The new data confirms statements in recent weeks by Iranian government authorities suggesting that the country has managed to increase its oil exports since a new administration took office in Tehran in early August.

However, there was no confirmation by Iranian oil and foreign ministries about the report by Reuters.

The report comes as Iran and world powers have resumed talks in Vienna to revive the JCPOA. Experts say a breakthrough in the talks would allow Iran to immediately increase its oil supply to a pre-sanctions level of 2.5 million bpd.

43rd Anniversary of...

FROM PAGE 1

The nation "under the wise guidance of the Leader and according to our revolutionary vision has realized that the crooked and evil-minded enemy is trying to downplay the glorious actions and epic progress in various fields through a combined attack which exploits their media dictatorship," the statement read.

They stressed the need to make concerted efforts to fend off threats against the country and to defend the country's inalienable right to pursue its peaceful nuclear program and advance its defensive capabilities.

While condemning the positions of senior Western officials on Iran's defense program, the statement thanked the efforts of the Iranian negotiators in Vienna sanctions removal talks and asked them to adhere to the guidance of the Leader and pay attention to the laws passed by the parliament.

They also underscored their full support for the Resistance Front in Palestine as the first issue of Muslims around the world and condemned the brutal crimes conducted by Saudi Arabia against the people of Yemen and the international community's silence in this regard.

Iran Pursues Balanced...

FROM PAGE 1

Bahman 22 (Feb. 11) was a manifestation of divine power under the leadership of Imam Khomeini (RA), he said, adding that the Divine power astonished everyone how a nation came to power by relying upon the assistance of God and overthrew an authoritarian government and established a government under the rule of the religion.

"In our foreign policy, we seek balanced relations with the world and attach special importance to neighboring countries" the Iranian president went on to say.

"We pin hope on our people," Raisi said, adding that "We never pin hope on either New York or Vienna."

Turning to the slogans of the Islamic Revolution, President Raisi said, "What the Islamic Revolution is echoing is 'freedom, morality, rationality and justice' and these slogans are still alive."

The Islamic Revolution came to being under the wise leadership of Imam Khomeini (Ra) to overthrow the corrupt and foreign-backed regime of Shah and to establish a system based on religion, according to the president.

Salient characteristics of the Islamic Revolution should be taught to the new generations, he said, adding identifying elements of the Islamic Revolution must be accurately identified.

He then pointed to the ongoing negotiations between Iran and P4+1 in the Austrian capital of Vienna and stated, "We cannot pin our hope to the result of negotiations since US and Western parties have breached their promises repeatedly so that they cannot be trusted at all."

Rallies to mark Bahman 22 (Feb. 11) were held nationwide on Friday morning to mark the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran on February 11, 1979.

People in pre-planned areas attended the rallies on their motorcycles or vehicles in accordance with health protocols set by the health officials to prevent the further spread of coronavirus.

IRGC Urges Explication...

FROM PAGE 1

The IRGC also stressed that it will work to improve its defensive capabilities using domestic potential, which it said has been "a strategic advantage" of Iran. The force warned that it will consider negligence in this regard as helping the "psychological warfare" and combined operations of the enemy against the revolution.

Iran marked the 4rd anniversary of the Islamic revolution that toppled the US-backed Pahlavi regime, on Friday.

Japan's Cosmo...

FROM PAGE 1

"We'll advance our existing offshore projects and expand the scale of onshore farms," Uematsu said.

Japan plans to install up to 45 GW of offshore wind power by 2040 to curb emissions.

For the year to March 31, Cosmo raised its net profit forecast to a record 115 billion yen (\$993 million) from a November estimate of 93 billion helped by soaring oil prices, appraisal gains on its inventory and earnings in oil development segment.

Net profit for April-December jumped nearly five-fold to 79.9 billion yen as its refineries kept a high run rate of 94%.

"Our annual run rate is expected at around 95%," Uematsu said.

Global investors are closely watching the outcome of U.S.-Iran nuclear talks which resumed this week.

Cosmo is not considering resuming imports of Iranian oil yet, Uematsu said.

Shaqiri Joins Chicago Fire From Lyon

PARIS (Dispatches) - Chicago Fire have signed Switzerland winger Xherdan Shaqiri from Olympique Lyonnais on a contract until 2024, the Major League Soccer (MLS) club announced on Wednesday, bringing a swift end to his time with the French side.

Shaqiri only joined Lyon from Liverpool in August to strengthen the Ligue 1 side's attacking options but scored just twice in 16 appearances in all competitions.

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Norris to Race for McLaren Until 2025

LONDON (Dispatches) - Lando Norris will remain a McLaren Formula One driver until at least the end of 2025 after committing to a new four-year deal, the Woking-based former champions said.

The 22-year-old, whose four podium finishes earned him sixth in the overall standings and secured fourth in the constructors' battle for McLaren in 2021, had been handed a multi-year contract extension last year.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 12, 2022

Jazz End Warriors Winning Streak

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Donovan Mitchell scored 14 points and grabbed 10 rebounds as the Utah Jazz halted Golden State's nine-game NBA winning streak with a 111-85 victory.

Bojan Bogdanovic scored 23 points to lead six players in double figures for the Jazz, who out-scored the Warriors 48-20 in the paint and out-rebounded them 52-35.

"We took care of business as a group," Mitchell said after Utah's fourth straight victory. "That's all that matters."

Mitchell was playing his third game after missing eight with concussion symptoms. He handed out eight assists and said he didn't mind departing late in the fourth quarter -- to a standing ovation -- shy of a triple-double.

"I'm coming back from a concussion, I'm trying to get into shape," he said. "They're a good team, they make you work."

Jordan Poole paced the Warriors with 18 points and Stephen Curry added 16, but Golden State lost by their biggest margin this season.

In Portland, the Anfernee Simons scored 29 points and Jusuf Nurkic added 19 with 12 rebounds as the Trail Blazers snapped a six-game losing streak with a 107-105 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers.

The Lakers, seeking to bounce back from an embarrassing 131-116 loss to the Milwaukee Bucks on Tuesday, had 30 points from superstar LeBron James.

But despite shooting 55.4% from the field the Lakers couldn't hold off the undermanned Blazers.

Six-time All-Star Damian Lillard remained sidelined by an abdominal injury. His longtime backcourt partner CJ McCollum was traded on Tuesday as the Blazers embark on a rebuilding phase.

"Disappointed, angry," coach Frank Vogel after watching the Lakers let go of a nine-point third-quarter lead. "This was a game we had to get."



Anthony Davis scored 17 points for the Lakers. Point guard Russell Westbrook sat out with lower back tightness, missing a game for the first time this season amid trade speculation that has intensified amid his recent struggles.

DeMar DeRozan scored 36 points to power Chicago to a 121-109 victory over the Charlotte Hornets that kept the Bulls in third place in the Eastern Conference.

The Bulls snapped a two-game skid to stay a hair in front of the Cleveland Cavaliers, who beat the San Antonio Spurs 105-92.

"We need it," DeRozan said of the victory. "We can't afford to drop any games."

With that in mind, DeRozan was an efficient 13 of 19 from the field, including draining three of his four attempts from three-point range.

"Just taking what they gave me, not forcing anything," said DeRozan, who also pulled down five rebounds and handed out four assists."

Zach LaVine added 27 points with seven rebounds and Nikola Vucevic scored 18 points with 15 rebounds for Chicago.

LaMelo Ball, newly named to his first All-Star Game, led Charlotte with 33 points, nine rebounds and five assists, but the Hornets -- ninth in the East -- dropped their sixth straight.

In Cleveland, two other rising talents looking forward to their first All-Star Game squared off: the Cavs' Darius Garland and Dejounte Murray of the Spurs.

Garland, back after missing four games with a sore back, connected on 12 of 15 shots from the floor on the way to 27 points with six assists.

Murray Marks Return to Top 100

ROTTERDAM (Dispatches) - Andy Murray marked his return to the top 100 for the first time since 2018 with a 7-6 (8/6), 6-4 win over Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik at the Rotterdam tournament.

Former world number one, and three-time major winner, Murray had too much court guile for world number 31 Bublik who won his maiden ATP title in Montpellier at the weekend.

"There were some tough moments in the first set for both of us," said wildcard Murray, now at 95 in the world.

"I just managed to come through at the end of it. Some great returns off some big second serves from him at the end and I did a good job."

"It's not easy playing against someone like that, huge serves, a lot of drop shots and you've got to keep your focus and I did that well tonight."

Murray next faces third-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime after the Canadian overcame a slow start to beat qualifier Egor Gerasimov of Belarus, 3-6, 6-2, 6-2.

Barcelona to Appeal Dani Alves' Two-Game Suspension

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Barcelona will appeal a two-match suspension given to Dani Alves for the red card he received in their home win over Atletico Madrid at the weekend, the La Liga club said.

The Catalan club beat Atletico 4-2 at Camp Nou, with Alves given a straight red card in the 69th minute after the referee ruled he had stamped on Yannick Carrasco.

The sending off came after the 38-year-old Brazil international had scored one goal and set up another.

Barcelona sit fourth in LaLiga on 38 points after 22 matches, 15 points behind leaders and rivals Real Madrid who have played a game more.

Next up for Barcelona in the league will be a fixture against Espanyol on Sunday.

Man City Go 12 Points Clear

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City surged 12 points clear at the top of the Premier League with a 2-0 win against Brentford, while Tottenham's top four bid suffered a blow in a dramatic 3-2 defeat against Southampton.

Pep Guardiola's side extended their unbeaten run in the league to 14 matches thanks to Riyad Mahrez's first half penalty and Kevin De Bruyne's strike after the interval at the Etihad Stadium.

City were held to a 1-1 draw at Southampton in their previous league game, but they got back on track to pile the pressure on second placed Liverpool, who host Leicester on Thursday in one of their two games in hand on the champions.

City made six changes to the team that beat Fulham in the FA Cup last weekend, with Jack Grealish and Kyle Walker dropped just days after Guardiola was forced to defend the pair for a night out in Manchester.

Footage on social media showing Grealish, Walker and Mahrez outside a venue in Manchester.

But Guardiola did not have an issue with his players, joking that they would be fined for failing to invite him.

Strolz Wins Olympic Combined Gold



YANQING (Dispatches) - Austria's Johannes Strolz bounced back from being dropped from his team to emulate his father in winning Olympic alpine combined gold.

Strolz, sitting fourth after the opening downhill, produced the fastest slalom run to clock a combined time of 2min 31.43sec to top the podium just as his father Hubert did at the 1988 Calgary Olympics.

Norway's Aleksander Aamodt Kilde added silver to his super-G bronze, finishing 0.59sec slower than the winner, with Canada's James Crawford taking bronze at 0.68sec,

a just reward after he finished fourth in the downhill and sixth in the super-G.

The result crowned a remarkable comeback for Strolz, whose poor form on the World Cup circuit led to him being dropped from the demanding Austrian team.

It resulted in the 29-year-old funding his own way on the circuit and working for a time as a traffic cop, but his rise in form was clear for all to see.

Strolz still prepares his own skis, but this season had a breakthrough victory in the Swiss resort of Adelboden despite starting with the lowly bib number of 38 normally worn by rank outsiders.

His gold was Austria's second in alpine skiing at the Beijing Games after Matthias Mayer won the super-G.

World Cup Will Be Health Benchmark for Global Sporting Events

DOHA (Dispatches) - FIFA President Gianni Infantino said this year's World Cup finals in Qatar will become a "benchmark" for holding future global sporting events during a health crisis.

The Qatari organizers of the 32 nation event that starts November 21 and runs till December 18 said they are "cautiously optimistic" it will be the first mass gathering of sports fans for a global sports event since the coronavirus pandemic erupted two years ago.

Spectators have largely been forbidden from attending last year's Tokyo Summer Olympics — save for a few events outside the Japanese capital — and the ongoing Winter Olympics in China.

FIFA announced this week that requests have been made for 17 million tickets for the first World Cup in the Arab region and sought to reassure fans about safety measures during an online health conference organized by the Qatar authorities.

Football has a duty "to make sure this not only the best World Cup ever but also the healthiest World Cup ever," Infantino said in a recorded statement for the event.

He added that the health and security standards will be "a benchmark for future sporting events of this scale."

The same message was given by World Health Organization director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus who highlighted the "unique challenges" faced by organizers because of the pandemic.

WHO has been working with the Qatar government on health security, infectious diseases, food safety, co-ordination and communication during the World Cup.

"The lessons learned from Qatar's experience in this World Cup will help us all in designing health and safety measures for other large scale events," Tedros added.

Neither FIFA nor the Qatar organizers, who have spent billions of dollars preparing for the event, have said what would happen if a new coronavirus wave threatens the event.



Chen Wins Olympic Figure Skating Gold

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Nathan Chen won a dominant figure skating gold for his first Olympic title with reigning champion Yuzuru Hanyu falling twice on the ice and failing to win a medal in Beijing.

One of the most eagerly anticipated events of the Games came as the IOC refused to comment on a reported doping case involving another figure skater, 15-year-old Russian sensation Kamila Valieva.

Eight golds were up for grabs on the sixth day of competition in the Chinese capital, with the Americans Chen and Chloe Kim, in snowboard halfpipe, blitzing the opposition to win two of them in style.

An Olympic title had been the only major prize eluding three-time world champion Chen, but he finally won the gold with an overall score of 332.60, while the Japanese duo of Yuma Kagitani, on 310.05, and Uno Shoma took silver and bronze. Hanyu was fourth.

An elated Chen said: "I'd always of course dreamed about making the Olympics and winning the Olympics but I was like... I don't know if I can make that happen."

"I haven't really had time to process fully but it's amazing so far."

Hanyu was chasing a third Olympic gold but having started the day eighth after a disappointing short program, the Japanese icon went for broke with a free skate that included an attempt at a quadruple axel — something no skater has ever landed in competition.

That remains the case after the "Ice Prince" tumbled twice, once trying to nail the notoriously difficult jump.

"Honestly, it feels like everything has gone wrong this time around, but I did my best," said the 27-year-old Japanese skater, who only arrived in Beijing on Sunday.

Skating to Rocket Man by Elton John, Chen lived up to his nickname "Quad King" in a routine in which the 22-year-old landed five quadruple jumps, to rapturous cheers from the crowd.

After the U.S. won their first gold in Beijing with snowboarder Lindsey Jacobellis on Wednesday, they now have two more in quick succession.

