

**Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian Left Tehran for Munich to Attend the 58th Session Of the Munich Security Conference Which Will Be Held on Feb. 18-20**

# IRAN NEWS

**Health Ministry Announced on Friday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic In Iran Increased to 134,607 with 187 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

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**Iran Ready to Help Resolve Crisis in Ukraine Peacefully**



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## 3 DOMESTIC

**Iran Should Take Advantage of Mexico's Agro, Livestock Capacities**



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## Tehran Rejects Report On Deal in Vienna Talks

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh rejected fake news carried by certain western media about the ongoing JCPOA negotiations in Vienna.

Iran has rejected a report by Reuters news agency about a deal having been drafted in the Vienna talks on the revival of the 2015 Iran deal, saying that it is only meant to boost the position of the Western parties to the talks and has nothing to do with what is happening on the ground in the Austrian capital.

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## Enemies Seek to Deprive Iranians of Peaceful Nuclear Energy



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei says enemies are seeking to deprive Iranians of peaceful nuclear energy, stressing once again that the Islamic Republic has never sought nuclear weapons.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting via video conference with thousands of people from Iran's East Azarbaijan Province on Thursday, marking the anniversary of the popular uprising of the people of Tabriz, which took place on February 18, 1978.

"You see how oppressively the enemy front is focusing on the issue of our nuclear energy. They [the enemy] impose sanctions [on us] because of a nuclear energy [program] that they know is peaceful. And whatever they may say about Iran being a certain amount of time away from producing a [nuclear] bomb is nonsensical and meaningless," the Leader said.

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In a conversation with Engineer Jokar, the founder of Maral Setareh Tourism Complex, it was stated;

## The Need to Support Micro-Tourism



One of the main problems in the field of tourism is the use of appropriate strategies to encourage and support companies to invest in this field. Unfortunately, the tourism economy in the country has not been considered. All influential and role-playing organizations in this field must work more seriously. The benefits of the tourism economy will be capillary and include the entire network of society, and all citizens will benefit from it.

Every year, with Nowruz approaching and the beginning of the travel season, this issue becomes more trendy. It should be noted that our country, Iran, is an attractive tourist destination, but due to lack of infrastructure, it is not able to attract foreign tourists. Our country, even in the field of domestic tourism, can not meet the needs of travelers. In this regard, Engineer Abolfazl Jokar Ghahroudy, the founder of Maral Setareh Tourism Complex, said in an interview with our correspondent: "Currently, the infrastructure for attracting foreign tourists in the country is not available." Supporting micro-tourism is very important. From my

point of view, as an investor in the intermediate complex of the country, in the current situation, facilities should be considered in order to support micro-tourism. Micro-tourism means that in the last days of each week and during the official holidays of the country, arrangements are made for travel within the country. With the aim of welfare of passengers on the country's roads, I have built intermediate complexes in the country.

"Since 2009, after studying tourism, I have decided to build service-welfare complexes," said the tourism activist about the features of these welfare service complexes. Weak intermediate services were evident in the country. From the health service to the quality of service and food, it was often unsatisfactory for travelers. In the first step, by researching the road chain complexes in Germany and their localization, I completed and operated the first service-welfare complex at 30 km of the Qom-Kashan highway, called Maral Setareh. Fortunately, this complex was welcomed by the audience from the very beginning with its distinctive services. After that, I established three other complexes in Isfahan province, Shahreza-Abadeh route, Semnan province, Miandasht region, and Khorasan Razavi province, Zafaranih region. Also, the first phase of the Tehran-Qom complex has been launched. The first phase of Maral Setareh Siah Bisheh complex at 60 km of Chalous road includes a gas station and a shop and will be put into operation in March this year. Kerman Bayad Complex is also under construction.

Regarding the benefits of such complexes, Jokar told our correspondent: "Currently, very good complexes have been built in the country, but the characteristic of Maral Setareh complexes is that they are chained." At present, we

do not have a chain of welfare services on the country's roads. Our services are offered in all Maral Setareh collections with the same quality and reasonable price. For example, the same services that are provided in Maral Setareh Complex of Qom Province are provided in Maral Setareh Complex of Shahreza or Semnan with the same quality and the same price. This is a relief for road travelers. For example, if a traveler from Kashan intends to travel to the holy city of Mashhad and leaves in the morning, he can have breakfast at the Maral Setareh complex in Qom - Kashan. He can have lunch at Maral Setareh Complex in Semnan and dinner at Maral Setareh Complex in Khorasan Razavi Province.

This tourism activist further points to the job creation of such complexes and adds: In total, we have created 652 direct jobs in 7 Maral Setareh complexes. Insured employees and managers work directly in the complex and assist in providing all services. All complexes include the same services including gas and diesel fuel stations, prayer halls, large parking lots, toilets, all types of restaurants including classic, traditional and fast food. It also includes a variety of stores from coffee shops to handicrafts, perfume and cosmetics stores, toy stores, bookstores, bags and shoes and supermarkets.

Engineer Jokar emphasizes in another part of his speech: I have not received even one Rial of facilities in the construction and operation of these seven complexes. Of course, I have never seriously sought a loan.

"This is a very difficult task," he said of his future plans. Obtaining permits, construction in the deserts of the country without the least facilities and infrastructure, is very difficult and time consuming. But with all these interpretations, I am developing it as much as I can and financially allow.

Maral Setareh, the founder of the tourism complex, says about the obstacles to the development of such complexes: "The long time for issuing the necessary permits and the number of relevant permits discourage investors from starting work." It is interesting to know that to build a road complex, we need 17 permits from offices. These departments include the district, the Department of Roads and Urban Development, Environment, Cultural Heritage, Water and Sewerage, Electricity Company, Natural Resources, Agricultural Jihad, Iran Oil Pipeline and Telecommunication Company, National Regional Oil Company, Minister of Construction Communications Company, Company Regional Water, Telecommunication Company, Gas Company, Veterinary Office, Housing Foundation and Labor and Social Welfare Office. In the most optimistic conditions, it will take at least 2 years to obtain these permits.

He said: "Lack of coordination between organs such as the Agricultural Jihad, the Roads Organization and the Cultural Heritage, as the main custodians of this sector, is one of the problems in this area."

In the end, Jokar pointed out that "laws and regulations are not the same in different provinces and there is a taste in dealing with an issue." "The existence of different and contradictory sections and unnecessary and cumbersome rules is one of the challenges," he added. "Non-implementation of the provisions of some decrees, regulations and contracts", "long intervals of working groups and commissions", are some of the existing obstacles for investors and those interested in this field. He stressed the need to support tourism, which has been the most vulnerable area in the past two years due to covid-19 pandemic conditions.

## 4 INTERNATIONAL

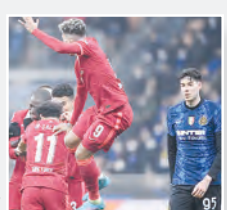
**Bayern Munich Held to Draw, Liverpool Wriggle Past Inter**



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**U.S. Says War Appears Imminent in Ukraine**



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## Tehran, Doha to Form Joint Gas Extraction Study Group

TEHRAN (IRNA) - A informed source in Iran's Oil Ministry told IRNA that the oil ministers of Iran and Qatar will discuss gas swap, common stances in global market and forming joint study group on the sidelines of the upcoming GECF in Doha.

The Gas Exporting Countries Forum will be held next week in Qatar and the Iranian oil minister will meet his Qatari counterpart on the sidelines, the source told IRNA's economic correspondent on Thursday.

The two ministers will discuss gas swap, common positions in gas trade and global markets, and establishing joint knowledge-based companies in the field of oil and energy, according to the source.

The oil ministry source also said that they are expected to discuss forming a joint working group to study the reservoir of South Pars gas field.

The source also noted that training human resources and exporting Iran's technical, engineering services to Qatar will also be included in the two ministers' discussions.

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## Pakistani President Calls For Using Local Currency To Boost Trade With Iran

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - The President of Pakistan, who held an important meeting in Gwadar last month with the aim of strengthening border cooperation with neighbors, has directed concerned authorities to develop mechanism for use of local currency to boost trade with Iran.

Daily Business Recorder it its report said that President Arif Alvi has directed State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to make all necessary arrangements in this regard.

The paper said the President gave these instructions to both SBP and FBR at a high-level meeting held in Gwadar last month and attended by Chairman Senate, Deputy Speaker National Assembly, Finance Minister, Shaukat Tarin, Minister for Maritime Affairs, Ali Zaidi, Commerce Advisor, Abdul Razak Dawood, Corps Commander, Quetta and officials of provincial government.

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## Asian Refiners Eager To Resume Iranian Oil Imports

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Asian refiners, traditionally big buyers of Iranian oil, are keen to resume imports from Iran if there is an agreement to revive a 2015 nuclear deal, which could pave the way for more supply on global markets and soften prices.

Most Asian buyers halted Iranian oil imports in 2019 after former U.S. President Trump withdrew from the nuclear deal with Iran and re-imposed sanctions on Tehran's oil exports.

Indirect talks between Iran and the United States on the nuclear deal resumed last week. Western diplomats have indicated they hoped to have a breakthrough by now, but tough issues remain unresolved.

Oil prices are at their highest in more than seven years as fears of disruption in Russian energy supplies have boosted Brent and U.S. crude futures. Refiners are also paying record spot premiums for crude produced in Europe and the Middle East as producers struggle to meet a robust recovery in demand after the pandemic.

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# Iran Among Defense Powers Maintaining Regional Security

TEHRAN (MNA) – Tehran Friday Prayers leader says that Iran is among the defense powers maintaining the security for the region and the Islamic world.

Stating that all the authority and achievements of the Establishment in the region, the world and Islamic Iran during the last 4 decades [since the victory of the Islamic Revolution] are due to the steps that have been taken towards development and progress, Seyyed Mohammad Hassan Aboutorabi-Fard said that today, the Islamic Republic is one of the defense powers that provide security in the region and the Islamic world.

## Iran Ready to Help Resolve Crisis in Ukraine Peacefully

**TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Referring to the crisis in the relations between Ukraine and Russia, the Iranian Foreign Minister said that Iran is ready to provide any necessary assistance and take any necessary action to resolve the crisis peacefully.**

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian held a phone conversation with his Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Kuleba on Thursday afternoon. The two sides discussed bilateral issues and international developments.

The Iranian foreign minister thanked his Ukrainian counterpart for congratulating him on the occasion of the National Day of the Islamic Republic of Iran and also the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Amir-Abdollahian said the two countries have great potential for bilateral cooperation in cultural, economic and trade fields, adding that the presence of a large number of Iranian students in Ukraine shows the good capacities of the two countries to develop cooperation.

Amir-Abdollahian also stressed the determination of the new Iranian administration to expand and develop bilateral relations between Iran and Ukraine in different fields.

Referring to the crisis in the relations between Ukraine and Russia, the top Iranian diplomat expressed satisfaction with the easing of tensions and expressed hope that the current situation would be resolved through dialogue and diplomatic channels without the intervention of third countries.

Amir-Abdollahian emphasized that “We want to maintain peace and stability in the region.”

He stressed that Iran is ready to provide any necessary assistance and take any necessary action to resolve the crisis peacefully.



The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba, for his part, also congratulated his Iranian counterpart again on the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution and the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Kuleba said Iran and Ukraine have always enjoyed good and stable relations and that no other party has so far been able to influence the good ties between the two sides.

While thanking Iran for its principled stance on the Ukraine crisis, the top Ukrainian diplomat said, “We are not after a war and we want the issue to be resolved diplomatically and peacefully.”

He also referred to the growth of the volume of trade between Iran and Ukraine, expressing hope that this volume will increase more than before.

## CBI Negotiating With S. Korea to Release Frozen Funds

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran said on Thursday that they were holding talks with South Korea to release funds frozen due to U.S. sanctions.

CBI Public Relations Director-General Mostafa Qamari-Vafa said that Iran and South Korea hold negotiations in Seoul to release seven billion dollars of Iranian funds blocked in South Korean banks.

The funds have been frozen since four years ago under the pretext of limitations imposed by US sanctions, according to Qamari-Vafa.

Iran has so far emphasized the necessity of removing the illegal limitation over its funds.

Meanwhile, South Korean media have published reports suggesting that Seoul was planning to resume oil trade with Iran after a three-year halt.

## Iran, Uzbekistan to Hold Joint Commission Conference

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade of Iran plans to organize a joint commission conference with Uzbekistan in the coming days.

Director General of the US-Europe Office of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) Mohammad-Reza Karimzadeh said on Friday that the 14th Iran-Uzbekistan Joint Commission will convene in Tehran on February 20-21, 2022.

Expertise committees have held talks in recent days to coordinate preparing draft for a memorandum of understanding between Uzbekistan and Iran on economic, investment, customs, transportation, energy, health, scientific, technological, tourism, cultural and agricultural arenas, Karimzadeh added.

The director general also went on to say that given the importance of enhancing relations between private sectors of both countries, the organizers plan to hold a seminar on trade opportunities of the two nations on the sidelines of the conference at the venue of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines & Agriculture on February 21.

As to the significance of the conference in developing trade and economic relationship between Uzbekistan and Iran, the Iranian official noted that Uzbekistan is one of the important and target states in terms of export destination of Iranian commodities.

Iran's exports to Uzbekistan have witnessed a growth in recent months, Karimzadeh said.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari said on February 17 that the Islamic Republic is going to hold two joint economic commissions with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in Tehran in coming days separately.

It is expected that holding such joint economic commissions will help sign promising agreements for future cooperation in different fields, Safari noted.

According to the deputy foreign minister, an expertise delegation will visit Tehran to discuss collaborations with officials in Iran's agriculture sector.

Pakistan and Iran have so far shown determination to enhance economic and trade ties between private and administrative sectors of both countries, Safari added.

## Developing Iran-Pakistan Border Terminals Results in Security, Stability

TEHRAN (IP) – Majlis Vice-Speaker considered developing Iran-Pakistan border terminals and markets a guarantee for maintaining borders' security and stability.

In a meeting with Pakistani Ambassador to Tehran Rahim Hayat Qureshi on Wednesday, Ali Nikzad called the fight against terrorism, drugs, fuel smuggling, and human trafficking among the pillars of bilateral cooperation and stated that Iran's capabilities in agriculture, industry, construction, and economy had provided good opportunities for developing relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan.

Rahim Hayat Qureshi, for his part, referred to the long-standing cultural commonalities of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan and noted that a look at the common historical and civilizational fields between the two countries had provided an opportunity to expand bilateral cooperation.



## Brazil Seeks to Reach Trade Balance With Iran



SHIRAZ (IRNA) - Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply of Brazil Tereza Cristina Corrêa da Costa Dias emphasized that she pursues trade balance with Iran in her trip to the Islamic Republic.

Addressing participants in a meeting with the Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines & Agriculture of Fars province on Thursday, the minister noted that the Latin American country wants to maintain exports to Iran and expand imports from the Islamic Republic in order to reach a trade balance in agricultural exchanges.

As to the goal of her visit to Iran, she said that Brazil is keen to enhance agricultural cooperation, because all countries should help supply qualitative and affordable foodstuff worldwide.

Given technological capacity and suitable lands for cultivation in Brazil, the country is ready to attract Iranian investors; so, the face-to-face negotiations can help reach consensus in this regard, she argued.

Referring to the fact that agriculture and animal husbandry are modern and developed in the Latin American country, the minister said that Brazil can assist other countries in terms of food security because of its advancement in this field.

She also mentioned statistics of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), saying that demands for foodstuff will rise up to 60 percent; thus, food producing countries should develop and implement new methods of cultivation and harvest.

The minister pointed to the fact that trade between Iran and Brazil is being conducted via intermediary countries, adding that the bilateral businesses focus on products such corn, soybean and so on.

Brazil is importing urea chemical fertilizer from Iran, she said, expressing hop that the item will expand to fertilizer for products such as pistachio, almond and saffron.

Tereza Cristina Corrêa da Costa Dias heading a delegation comprising of 30 Brazilian merchants arrived in Fars province on Thursday; then, they will discuss facilitation of trade and economic ties with Iranian officials in Tehran.

## Enemies Overpowered by Iran

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran has amassed such great capabilities that the enemies have become impotent in the face of its power in all areas, Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami said.

The Iranian military forces have strongly stood against the enemies on the ground, in the air and at the sea and blocked their way, Major General Salami said after a visit to the IRGC Navy bases in Iran's southern province of Hormozgan.

He added that Iran's great power and might have made the enemies incapable, important and frustrated, in a way that the adversaries have become unable to make any move.

In remarks in September 2021, the top commander said the enemies of the Islamic Republic are facing a lose-lose situation with a sense of “strategic frustration”.

The enemy will have to pay a cost if it chooses to stay and will feel the shame of escape if it runs away, Major General Salami warned.

## Islamic Revolution Has Its Roots in Ashura, Arbæen

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance says that the Islamic Revolution school has its roots in Ashura and Arbæen.

The closing ceremony of the seventh edition of the International Arbæen Award was held on Wednesday at the Islamic Culture and Communication Organization in Tehran.

The International Arbæen Award is a cultural-religious event held every year on the initiative of the Islamic Culture and Communication Organization, aiming to spread the culture of resistance and Ashura and show the manifestations of affection for Imam Hussein (AS).

Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaili stated at the ceremony that today, Arbæen has become a bright spot for the promotion of the school of the Islamic Revolution and the path of resistance in the region, and that is why this ceremony has faced a media boycott by the arrogant countries.

In the seventh edition of the International Arbæen Award, despite COVID limitations, the award call was well received, and works from 24 countries were sent to the secretariat and were evaluated by the jury.

The Secretariat of the Arbæen International Award received over 4,800 works in five categories: Photos, films, travelogues, cyberspace activists, and books. The event welcomed participants from more than 24 different countries, including Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Germany, UAE, UK, Bahrain, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, Algeria, Russia, Japan, Serbia, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Congo, Malawi, Mexico, and India.

First Announcement

## Tender invitation

Invitation to public tender for  
**N-FORMYLMORPHOLINE (NFM) // 6000 kg**



**Tabriz petrochemical company intends to procure its required quantity of N-FORMYLMORPHOLINE for OLEFIN production plant from reputable & reliable producer and supplier of said product. Interested suppliers should submit their request to below email in order to get tender documents until March 01.**

**Deadline for submission of offers for tender is: March 13, 2022**

**Email: me.rahimi@tpco.ir**

**Phone No.: +98-41-34282592**

Tender	No	Quantity
N-FORMYLMORPHOLINE (NFM)	PVS-9931547	6000 kg

**Public Relations of Tabriz Petrochemical Company ( Public Stock )**

**First turn published: February 19, 2022**

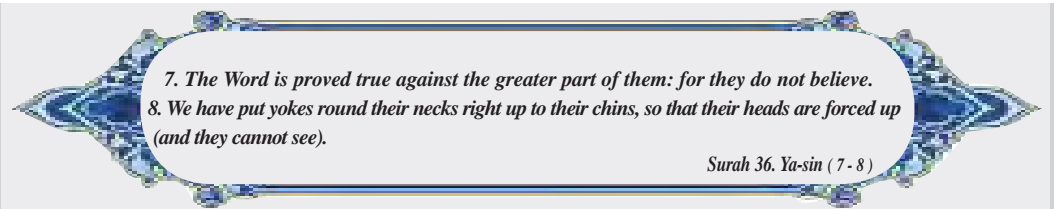
**Second turn published: February 24, 2022**





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:18
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:08
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:21
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:45



## Iran Should Take Advantage of Mexico's Agro, Livestock Capacities

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

**TEHRAN – Iran's Ambassador to Mexico Alireza Ghazili says economic laws and regulations of Mexico are a major hurdle in way of Iran's trade with this country and sanctions are considered a major obstacle because Iran cannot strengthen its trade and economic relations with Mexico with the current banking mechanism which obeys Mexico's regulations.**

Speaking in a webinar on reviewing trade capacities between Iran and Latin America, Ghazili said that currently there are good transportation infrastructures in Mexico, adding that Mexico has 125 active ports and 65 airports that 53 airports are international and neighboring with the U.S. is one of the important advantages of this country that can be very effective in the economic fields.

Pointing to the trade exchanges between Mexico and the U.S., he said last year 5m trucks from 50 border checkpoints plied between Mexico and the U.S. and there is strong trade exchange between the two states.

Gharizi added that Mexico is currently among the top 15 world economies, noting that Mexico is the second biggest economy after Brazil in the Latin America and agriculture accounts for 4.1%, industries for 30.7% and services for 65% of Mexico's GDP.

Pointing to the foreign investment in Mexico, he said that foreign investment in Mexico is around \$25b annually and the foreign investment in the country between 1999 and 2021 was around \$600b as the U.S. with \$281b leads the investors in Mexico.

Gharizi said that Mexico has free trade agreements with 50 countries and it has free trade agreements with 23 countries. He reiterated that Mexico's economy is export-centered and 90% of Mexico's exports are done based on the free trade and the U.S. and Canada are the major trade partners of this country.



Speaking on the trade opportunities for cooperation between Iran and Mexico, Gharizi said that since Mexico market has access to the regional markets, the U.S. and Canada, it can be a good opportunity for increasing and strengthening economic ties between Iran and Mexico. He added that abundant workforce, vast resources and mines in Mexico are of the major advantages and properties of Mexico market.

He added that Mexico was 8th agro product exporter in 2020 and it has been above countries like India and Argentina with exporting agro products worth \$41b and the country has been one of the leading meat exporters and Iran can take advantage of the livestock and agro capacities of Mexico because all of these products have halal marks.

Gharizi went on to say that one of the major economic challenges of Mexico in way of Iran's trade with this country is the market-oriented economic regulations of Mexico and this is considered a challenge for Iran which is under the cruel sanctions because Iran cannot strengthen its economic relations with Mexico with the current banking mechanism.

He went on to say that long distance between Iran and Mexico, lack of information about the economic capacities of the two countries, lack of shipping line and lack of proper marketing are of the major challenges ahead of developing the trade relation between Iran and Mexico.

He pointed to the low trade volume of economic relations between Iran and Mexico, saying that while long distance issue is considered a challenge for broadening economic relations with Mexico, Iran's trade with Brazil has been around \$5b and major basic commodities have been imported from Brazil and this has questioned the issue of long distance how Iran can have such a trade with Brazil while failing to have such a trade with Mexico.

Gharizi also criticized lack of shipping line between Iran and Mexico and said while Iran is under sanction, it has shipping line with Brazil but it has been unable to have it with Mexico.

# War to Halt Iran-Ukraine Trade

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN – A member of board of directors of Iran-Ukraine Joint Chamber of Commerce says in case war breaks out in Ukraine, the trade between Iran and Ukraine will come to a halt.

Speaking to ILNA, Seyed Reza Noorani said that many Iranian companies have received big plots of land in Ukraine and they are busy in production of wheat and grains.

Talking about the latest trade condition between Iran and Ukraine and possible war in Ukraine, Noorani said that

Ukraine is not a major destination for Iran's agro product exports and in case war breaks out in Ukraine, like any other war-hit countries the exports and trade will halt until the war ends.

He said he believes that Russia-Ukraine war will be political than economic and if the war breaks out it will not last too long. He added that therefore due to the political nature of the war and due to its likely short period, there will have no major impact on Iran-Ukraine trade in the long term.

Noorani went on to say that before anything happens in Ukraine, the price of oil has soared and it has affected the final cost of the products and in case war starts, the first pressure of the final cost will be on the transportation cost which will be multiplied due to the unsafe roads in the war-hit areas and the cost of transportation with ship will also increase because of the rise in the fuel price.

He reiterated that if war happens, Iran's trade with Russia will also be overshadowed although the trade exchange with other Eurasian Union states may continue as before.

Noorani went on to say that one of the important developments in trade between Iran and Ukraine in recent years has been the start of extraterrestrial farming of Iranians in Ukraine, adding that many big Iranian companies in Ukraine have received large plots of land for farming and production of wheat and grains, adding that Ukraine has considerable amount of



chernozem and fertile lands, and in farming the amount of consumed fertilizer is low and products are organic.

He stated that there is also good cooperation in industrial sector between Iran and Ukraine and there is joint chamber of commerce both in Iran and Ukraine and the economic connection of the two countries via the chambers can increase, expressing hope that the domestic policies would be in a way that promoting exports would play the first role.

This year Iran's imports from Ukraine have been around \$111.7m while exports have been only \$48m. The trade volume is around \$160.3m which shows 76% growth comparing to last year.

## Tehran Favors Expansion of Commercial, Economic Ties With Austria

VIENNA (IRNA) - Deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy Mehdi Safari stressed Iran's serious will for reaching a good agreement in Vienna nuclear negotiations.

He made the remark here Wednesday in a meeting with his Austrian counterpart Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal.

He added that Tehran favored expanding comprehensive commercial and economic ties with Vienna.

He said that the Islamic Republic of Iran is quite serious in its will to achieve a good agreement in



Vienna negotiations, adding that the Iran-Austria comprehensive economic and commercial ties, too, need to expand based on bilateral agreements.

The Austrian diplomat, too, stressed that his country fully supports the ongoing nuclear talks in Vienna, expressing

hope that they will soon lead to an agreement for all involved sides.

"We, too, wish to expand economic and commercial ties with Iran," added he.

## Iran Ready to Establish Joint Vocational Schools With Armenia

TEHRAN (ITNA) - Minister of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare voiced Iran's readiness to establish joint vocational schools with Armenia.

Hojjatollah Abdolmaleki made the remark in a phone talk with his Armenian counterpart, Narek Mkrtychyan.

He said that the Islamic Republic of Iran's economic diplomacy is the expansion of commercial ties and investments with the neighboring countries. The Iranian labor minister said that joint regional cooperation needs to be in line with the blossoming of our country's neighbors' potentials.

He described Armenia as an important and strategically significant country in Iran's foreign economic diplomacy and said pursuing the proper implementation of the previously signed memoranda of understanding which have not fully accomplished will be in the agenda of future bilateral cooperation.

### Iran, Kazakhstan to Hold Joint Economic Cooperation Summit in March



TEHRAN (MNA) –Ministry of Agriculture announced that the 17th Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Economic Cooperation summit will be held in Tehran in March.

Chaired by the Iranian Minister of Agriculture, the summit will be held in the framework of economic cooperation between Iran and Kazakhstan in different fields such as trade, commerce, agriculture, transportation, investment, technology, culture and energy on March 2-3, 2022.

Heading a 54-member high-level delegation from the public and private sectors, consisting of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Energy, Agriculture, Economy, Transport and Trade, Kazakhstan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Trade and Integration will attend the summit.

According to the report, CEOs of 25 private companies in various economic fields are accompanying the Kazakh delegation.

The 16th Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Economic Cooperation summit was held two years ago in the Kazakh capital, Nur-Sultan, in which a document on economic cooperation was signed between the two countries.

## Iran, Nakhchivan Expand Cooperation in Air Transportation

BAKU (IRNA) - Iran's Consul-General Ahmad Hosseini and Director of Nakhchivan International Airport Mənsur Gül Məhəmmədli met on Wednesday to explore ways to expand air transportation cooperation.

Məhəmmədli detailed the latest activities of the airport and said that there has been plans to increase cooperation with some Iranian airports.

He said that the airport has had interactions and talks to establish new communications between Iran and Nakhchivan in air transportation sector.

Hosseini, in turn, pointed out the existing cooperation between airports in Iran and in Azerbaijan Republic and Nakhchivan, describing such cooperation as an introduction to more interaction and integration.

He said that Iran's Consulate General was ready to cooperate in this regard.

## HOSCO Top Unit in Base Metals Category



**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN – During the 19th Festival of National Production, National Pride which was held in the presence of Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade and the Prosecutor-General, Hormozgan Steel Company (HOSCO) was selected as the top industrial unit in the category of base metals manufacture and the CEO of the company Mr. Ataollah Maroufkhani was honored with plaque of appreciation and statue for his efforts and value creation.

In a year named as the year of supporting production and removal of hurdles and on the eve of the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Hormozgan Steel Company was selected as the top industrial unit in the base metals manufacture category after the jury evaluated the performance of the company.

The 19th festival of National Production, National Pride was held at Tehran's Permanent International Fairground concurrent with the 20th anniversary of the foundation of Iran Industry, Mine and Trade House.

## Colorful Role of PGSOC in Fulfilling Its Social Responsibility

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN – Persian Gulf Star Oil Company (PGSOC) with expansion of the role of its international customers in fulfilling social responsibilities always emphasizes developing the local communities.



According to the public relations of the company, in line with broadening common activities with an approach on sustainable development, Persian Gulf Star Oil Company has raised a proposal to one of its international customers for fulfilling its social responsibilities and it has led to signing of a MoU on cooperation for increasing the educational infrastructures of Hormozgan Province.

In this action which was taken after studies on the needs of the province for expansion of educational areas, the agreement for cooperation with the Hormozgan Province governor general was signed for construction of an 18-class school at the Payambar-e Azam Satellite Town in Bandar Abbas.

The implementation of this project will lead to development of infrastructures of Hormozgan Province and it is a step in line with materializing goals of fulfilling social responsibilities of the biggest gas condensate refinery of the world. Persian Gulf Star Oil Company besides its important task of providing major part of the national fuel products is one of the leading industries in observing its social responsibilities and has taken into consideration improving the living of the local communities with a sustainable development approach.

Aid services and support during the devastating earthquake in the town of Fin and helping the residents of the quake-hit areas and immediate construction of housing units in the villages of Western Gisha and Zarto are parts of the unique actions of the company in this regard.

Advancing the project for construction of the 264-bed Persian Gulf Star Oil Hospital and participating in other projects like launching a center for vaccination have been of the other actions of the company in line with observing its social responsibilities.



## Hong Kong Considers Mass Testing

HONG KONG (Dispatches) - Hong Kong's coronavirus battle intensified on Thursday as authorities reported that new cases had multiplied by 60 times so far this month, and the city's leader said city-wide testing was being considered in the global financial hub.

Hospitals have been overwhelmed with some patients, including the elderly, left lying on beds outside in chilly, sometimes rainy weather, in shocking scenes that prompted an apology from authorities in the Chinese-controlled city.



## Japan Eases Virus Border Rules for Workers, Students

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan will ease its strict virus border rules to allow students and businesspeople into the country from March, but tourists will still be barred, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Thursday.

The move comes with growing pressure on Japan from the business community and academics to loosen the border restrictions, which are the toughest in the G7 but have broad support from Japanese voters.

Japan has barred tourists since the early days of the pandemic, and has in some cases prevented even existing foreign residents from entering the country.



## U.S. Says War Appears Imminent in Ukraine



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - U.S. President Joe Biden said on Thursday there was now every indication Russia was planning to invade into Ukraine, including signs Moscow was carrying out a false flag operation to justify it, after Ukrainian forces and pro-Moscow rebels traded fire.

Moscow, for its part, ejected the number two official from the U.S. embassy and released a strongly worded letter to the United States accusing Washington of ignoring its security demands.

Biden's remarks came shortly after Ukraine and pro-Russian separatists exchanged fire across a frontline that divides them, in what Western officials described as a possible pretext created by Moscow to invade.

"We have reason to believe they are engaged in a false flag operation to have an excuse to go in. Every indication we have is they're prepared to go into Ukraine and attack Ukraine," Biden told reporters as he departed the White House.

Biden ordered Secretary of State Antony Blinken to change his travel plans at the last minute to speak at a United Nations Security Council meeting on Ukraine. "The evidence on the ground is that Russia is moving toward an imminent invasion. This is a crucial moment," U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, told reporters.

Russia denies planning to invade its neighbor and said this week it was pulling back some of the more than 100,000 troops it has massed near the frontier. Washington says Russia is not withdrawing, but in fact sending more forces.

"We see them fly in more combat and support aircraft. We see them sharpen their readiness in the Black Sea," Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said at NATO headquarters in Brussels. "We even see them stocking up their blood supplies."

"I was a soldier myself not that long ago. I know firsthand that you don't do these sorts of things for no reason," said Austin, a retired Army general. "And you certainly don't do them if you're getting ready to pack up and go home."

Ukraine and pro-Russian rebels gave conflicting accounts of shelling across the front in the Donbass separatist region. The details could not be established independently, but reports from both sides suggested an incident more serious than the routine ceasefire violations reported regularly in the area.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Moscow was "seriously concerned" about reports of an escalation.

Britain's Foreign Secretary Liz Truss called the reports "a blatant attempt by the Russian government to fabricate pretexts for invasion."

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the pro-Russian forces had shelled a kindergarten, in what he called a "big provocation". The separatists, for their part, accused government forces of opening fire on their territory four times in the past 24 hours.

## Ottawa Protesters Vow to Stay as Canada Warns of Extremists

OTTAWA (Dispatches) - Protesters continued their three-week-old blockade of the core of Canada's capital on Thursday after officials warned of extremist elements present among them who want to overthrow the government.

On Wednesday, police in Ottawa handed out flyers warning truck drivers and others paralyzing the downtown core that they should leave or face arrest, but there was little sign of imminent action to move the nearly 400 vehicles out.

While the demonstrators protest against vaccine mandates and pandemic restrictions, they also have made clear their opposition to Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and some have said they want to kick him out of office.

A portion of the protesters "have strong ties to a far-right extreme organization with leaders who are in Ottawa," Canada's Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino said, referring to the arrest of 13 people in Alberta earlier this week linked to a



border blockade there that has since disbanded.

They had guns and ammunition and police have charged four of them for conspiracy to commit murder. While the Ottawa protest has been loud and rowdy, it has been non-violent.

"I'm not afraid," said a protester in Ottawa on Wednesday who declined to give his name. "We're here peacefully and we will remain peacefully. Even if they attempt to arrest us, we will be arrested peacefully."

On Monday Trudeau invoked emergency powers in order to end the protests. Justice Minister David Lametti said the emergency legislation would be presented to the House of Commons on Thursday.

"We are going to take back the entirety of the downtown core and every occupied space," Interim Ottawa Police Chief Steve Bell said in a statement on Thursday, adding that the action would be taken in "coming days" and that it would "take time" to do right.

## Kosovo President Accuses Russia of Destabilizing Balkans

PRISTINA (Dispatches) - Kosovo's president accused Russia on Thursday of using its traditional ally Serbia to "destabilize" the Balkans, as Moscow faces off against the West in the Ukraine crisis.

Russia, which has long backed Serbia in its disagreements with the West, does not recognize Kosovo as an independent state and has blocked it joining the United Nations. Kosovo, like Ukraine, hopes eventually to join NATO and the European Union.

Ethnic Albanian-majority Kosovo declared independence from Belgrade in 2008. "Today Kosovo, the region but also the whole globe is facing dangers caused by the aggressive course of Russia," President Vjosa Osmani told parliament in a speech to mark the 14th anniversary of her country's independence.

Osmani added that Russia was using "its traditional ally Serbia... to cause destabilization in the Balkan region".

Tensions between Pristina and Belgrade over Kosovo's treatment of some 120,000 ethnic Serbs living on its territory are a serious obstacle - along with factors such as endemic corruption - to the country's efforts to join NATO or the EU.

Russia has massed more than 100,000 troops near its border with Ukraine, triggering Western fears of an invasion, and on Thursday the United States repeated its warning that a war could be imminent. Moscow denies any plans to invade but is seeking sweeping security guarantees from the West, including an end to NATO's further eastern enlargement.

Arber Vllahiu, an independent political analyst, drew a parallel between Moscow's stance on Ukraine and the Balkans.

"Russia has a big interest not only in stopping Ukraine from joining NATO but also in preventing the western Balkans, including Kosovo, from joining the EU and NATO," said Vllahiu, a former ambassador of Kosovo to the Czech Republic.

## Kuwait's Interior and Defense Ministers Resign

KUWAIT CITY (Dispatches) - Kuwait said Thursday the interior and defense ministers had resigned, after they protested the manner of parliamentary questioning of ministers in the oil-rich Persian Gulf emirate.

A royal decree said the resignations of the two ministers, both members of the royal ruling family, had been accepted.

Interior Minister Sheikh Ahmed Mansour al-Ahmed Al-Sabah was replaced in a caretaker role by Oil Minister Mohammed al-Fares, government spokesman Tariq al-Mazram said.

Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah was replaced by Sheikh Ahmed Nasser al-Mohammed Al-Sabah, the foreign minister and now also acting defense minister.

The two ministers quit after parliament questioned the foreign minister -- also part of the royal family -- over corruption claims and alleged misuse of public funds.

While the foreign minister survived a no confidence vote on Wednesday, Sheikh Hamad and Sheikh Ahmed said the lengthy grilling was an "abuse" of power.

"The abuse of constitutional tools is what prompted the resignations," Sheikh Hamad, the former defense minister, was quoted as saying by Kuwaiti media.

"Interrogations are a constitutional right... but parliamentary practices are hindering us from fulfilling the aspirations of the Kuwaiti people."

Kuwait has been shaken by disputes between elected lawmakers and successive governments dominated by the ruling Al-Sabah family for more than a decade, with parliaments and cabinets dissolved several times.

Kuwait is the only Persian Gulf Arab state with a fully elected parliament, which enjoys wide legislative powers and can vote ministers out of office.

A new government was sworn in December, the country's fourth in two years, after the last one resigned in November amid political deadlock.



## Lula's Lead Over Bolsonaro Narrows

BRASILIA (Dispatches)

- Leftist former President

Luiz Inacio Lula da

Silva's lead has narrowed

to 9 points from 14 in

one month, but he would

still win a second-round runoff soundly if Brazil's election were held today,

according to a new poll published on Wednesday.

Lula is expected to challenge far-right incumbent President Jair Bolsonaro in the October vote. Both men are already in campaign mode, although

neither has declared his candidacy.

In a polarized field, Lula has campaigned on the advances in reducing

poverty during his two-term presidency from 2003 to 2010, while

Bolsonaro has recently ramped up government spending on social

programs that helped his popularity in the pandemic.

The survey by PoderData, the polling division of news website

Poder360, said 40% of voters would vote for Lula, versus 31% for

Bolsonaro. In January, the survey found 42% support for Lula and 26%

for Bolsonaro.

Other pollsters, such as Quaest and Ipespe, have registered little or no

variation in support for Bolsonaro and Lula, who could have enough

support for a first-round victory in some recent simulations.

Bolsonaro's former Justice Minister Sergio Moro, who as a federal

judge jailed Lula on corruption charges that were later annulled, was

favoured by 9% of voters in the survey, two percentage points higher than

in the previous poll.

Center-left candidate Ciro Gomes, a former governor of Ceara state vying

for the left-wing supporters disillusioned with Lula, dropped 3 percentage

points to 4% of those surveyed, just one point ahead of Sao Paulo Governor

Joao Doria.

PoderData polled 3,000 voters by telephone in 243 cities between Feb.

13-15. The survey has a margin of error of 2 percentage points.





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## Mali Debt Defaults Due to Sanctions Exceed \$93m

DAKAR (Dispatches) - Mali has defaulted on more than 53.99 billion franc CFA in interest and principal payments since January due to regional sanctions, data from the West Africa monetary union's debt agency Umoa-Titres showed.

The defaults highlight Mali's worsening economic situation due to severe sanctions, which include border

closure and financial restrictions, imposed on the country by the regional bloc over the delay of election by the country's military junta.

The data showed Mali missed payments on interest on treasury bonds on four occasions since the end of January. It also missed a Feb. 10 deadline to pay the principal on a treasury bond, a note from the debt agency to investors said.



## Inflation in UK Leaps to Nearly 30-Year-High of 5.5%

LONDON (Dispatches) - Consumer prices in the United Kingdom rose at the fastest annual pace in nearly three decades in January, official data showed Wednesday, heaping more pressure on the costs of living and reinforcing views that the central bank will hike rates for a third consecutive meeting.

The annual rate of consumer price inflation rose to 5.5% in January, the highest since March 1992, when Britain was emerging from a long period of inflation-feeding high wage deals, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said.

The reading came above expectations from economists in a Reuters poll for it to hold at December's 5.4%.

Prices have soared globally over the past year, in large part owing to surging energy prices, while consumers are facing also higher food costs as economies reopen from pandemic lockdowns.

"We understand the pressures people are facing with the cost of living," British Finance Minister Rishi Sunak said in response to Wednesday's data.

"These are global challenges," he added.

Earlier this month the Bank of England (BoE) revised up its inflation forecasts to predict inflation will peak at around 7.25% in April, when a 54% rise in regulated household energy bills take effect, squeezing households hard.

"This morning's upside surprise to U.K. inflation serves to underscore a recent global trend: higher and more persistent inflation has caught central banks on the back foot and opened the door to more interest rate hikes this year," said Ambrose Crofton, global strategist at JPMorgan Asset Management.

As inflation reaches the highest levels in decades, lagging rises to workers' wages, central banks are deciding on how fast to raise interest rates. The BoE has already raised interest rates twice since December - lifting rates to 0.5% from 0.1% - and financial markets expect a further rate rise to 0.75% or 1% on March 17 after the BoE's next meeting.

Two-year British government bond yields hit their highest since 2011 shortly after the data was released.

Financial markets expect BoE interest rates to rise to 2% by the end of 2022, though most economists say they will not get close to that level.

"There will probably then be another hike in May taking interest rates to 1.0%, but we think that's where the (BoE) committee will pause as the inflation outlook becomes more benign," said Thomas Pugh, an economist at RSM UK.

The latest "increase in CPI inflation... will add a bit more pressure on the Bank of England to continue raising interest rates rapidly," said Paul Dales, chief U.K. economist at Capital Economics.

The British central bank does not expect inflation to return to its 2% target until early in 2024. The bulk of economists think inflation will fall faster.

Higher energy prices have been the biggest single factor lifting British inflation so far, although global pandemic-related supply-chain problems have raised the price of many other goods too. Markets expect energy prices to fall sharply next year, and there are some signs of easing global supply chain pressures.

But working-age households are facing their biggest annual disposal income squeeze in 30 years - not least because Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government plans to put up payroll taxes for workers and businesses in April.

## Irish Trade With N. Ireland See Big Post-Brexit Bounce

DUBLIN (Dispatches) - Cross-border trade between Ireland and Northern Ireland saw a huge boost in the first full year after Brexit, official Irish figures released on Wednesday showed.

The data from Ireland's Central Statistics Office (CSO) showed imports from Northern Ireland in 2021 increased by €1.5 million (RM9.5 million) to €3.9 million, a dramatic 65-per cent rise on 2020.

In the same period, exports from the Republic of Ireland to the province increased by 54 per cent to €3.7 million. The rocketing trade will be seen as a direct result of post-Brexit arrangements created by the controversial Northern Ireland protocol.

The arrangement - part of the UK's divorce deal with the EU - retained frictionless trade on the island of Ireland by keeping Northern Ireland in the Europe's single market and customs union, but erected an effective trade barrier in the Irish Sea.

The protocol has proved deeply unpopular with Northern Ireland's pro-UK unionist politicians.

They argue checks on goods have negatively impacted trade between mainland Britain - comprising England, Scotland and Wales - and Northern Ireland, and driven a constitutional wedge between the province and the rest of the UK.

The CSO's numbers showed a trade deficit of €9.6 million with the rest of the UK, excluding Northern Ireland, in 2021.

Irish imports from Great Britain amounted to €15.4 million, a decrease of €2.4 million, 13 per cent less than in 2020, with exports to Great Britain in 2021 increasing by 17 per cent, according to the CSO.

Earlier this month Paul Givan, the unionist leader of Northern Ireland's power-sharing executive, resigned from his position in protest against the Northern Ireland protocol.

The move plunged the province's politics into disarray ahead of May elections, further complicating post-Brexit negotiations between London and Brussels.

A series of business leaders in Northern Ireland have, however, spoken in support of current arrangements, which have allowed them to keep one foot in the European market.

## India's Economy Set to Grow at More Than 9% in Current Fiscal

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - High frequency indicators show that India's economy is well on its way to growing at above 9 per cent as projected in the advanced estimates for the current fiscal. This has been indicated by the finance ministry's monthly economic review, which was released.

The review for the month of January 2022

has further noted that the impact of the third wave of Coronavirus pandemic on economic activities has weakened, compared to the previous two waves, and this is likely to help economic indices grow positively.

"India is experiencing the subsiding of the third wave induced by Omicron variant of COVID-19. Although quickest of the three waves to reach the peak, it has been the least fatal thankfully," the review said.

Global inflation and energy prices are likely to be influential in determining India's rate of inflation, it said.

With the monetary policy committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India having retained forecast for the current fiscal at 5.3 per cent, the inflation for the current year is set to close within its tolerance band of 4±2 per cent.

The finance ministry in its review further stated that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its January 2022 update has lowered its global growth estimate for 2022. Yet India is the only large and major country listed by the IMF whose growth projection has been revised upwards in 2022.

The budget for 2022-23, the review said, "has strengthened the direction set for India's economy by the previous year's budget. The capex budget, higher by 35.4 per cent over current year's budget estimates and rising to 4.1 per cent of GDP after inclusion of grants-in-aid to states for capital works, will power the seven engines of GatiShakti to reduce the infrastructure gap and facilitate private investment in the country."

Rising consumption levels consequent to employment generation by government's capex will also induce private investment, it further observed.

## Soaring Costs, Weak Recovery Threaten Aircraft Maintenance Market

LONDON (Dispatches) - Rising labor costs and a weak recovery in the widebody market are emerging as new risks to the global aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) sector as shop visits begin to rebound after a severe COVID-19-related recession.

The MRO sector, worth an estimated \$68.4 billion in 2021, according to consultancy Oliver Wyman, has been battered by retirements of older planes, which typically require more maintenance, and reduced flying hours for the rest of airlines' fleets. That has led to less wear and tear on parts and given airlines with grounded planes the ability to conserve cash and postpone shop visits.

Industry delegates at the Singapore Airshow, Asia's biggest aviation event, said that the outlook was improving but that labor costs were rising. They said the recovery was lumpy and focused on specific areas where air travel was rebounding, such as narrowbody aircraft and dedicated freighters, with older passenger widebodies lagging well behind.

"There is a general labor shortage and the only way to get labor back to work is higher rates," said Kailash Krishnaswamy, senior vice president of aftermarket services at Spirit AeroSystems. "Inflation is definitely a challenge."

For his company, the business has been solid in the Americas, where it services narrowbodies but less so in Belfast, where it had done a lot of work on Airbus A330 widebodies, many of which have been retired.

"We are trying to pursue a lot more narrowbodies in Belfast that we used to not do in 2019," Krishnaswamy said.

A recent survey by broker Jefferies on aftermarket demand in aerospace found participants

expected an 11% increase in sales this year. Half believed engines would be the area with the biggest recovery this year, although many airlines deferred engine maintenance during the pandemic. But Jefferies said the expected rise may be due to the low base in 2021.

Rolls-Royce said in December that large-engine flying hours were at only 50% of 2019 levels due to the uneven nature of the aviation recovery, but its civil aerospace president, Chris Cholerton, said on Wednesday that flying hours were expected to increase significantly this year.

Shop visits are on the rise and Rolls-Royce plans to hire more workers in Singapore this year, he said.

"The modern aircraft - the 787s, the A350s, A330neos, probably by before the middle of this year, they'll be back to where they were in 2019," Cholerton said. "The reduction in flying hours is from the parking of capacity from older aircraft."

## Russia Ready to Re-Route Energy Flows If Hit by New Sanctions



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia would be ready to re-route supplies to other markets should new Western sanctions target its energy sector, finance minister Anton Siluanov said.

Siluanov did not say how Moscow would divert its energy exports but said that Russia's foreign exchange reserves, National Wealth Fund and a budget surplus should shield its economy and banks from any possible sanctions hit.

The United States and its allies are considering new sanctions including against Russia's largest banks, economy and energy sector, with export controls possible, in the event that Moscow invades its neighbor Ukraine.

The Kremlin denies it has any such intention.

"Any export curbs would result in rising prices. And if such restrictions are to be applied then increases in prices should largely offset such curbs," Siluanov told reporters, as Russia's budget is highly dependent on energy sales both to European Union member states and Asia countries.

Russian imports account for 46% of Europe's solid fuels such as coal, 26% of its crude oil and 38% of the region's gas, Moody's research estimates, pointing out that even a brief cut in gas supply would further boost energy prices and inflation.

"An intensification of inflationary pressures could also increase pressure on the European Central Bank and other central banks to tighten monetary policy," Moody's said.

Eurozone inflation hit a record 5.1% in January, fuelling expectations that the ECB would have to end its bond buying scheme and raise interest rates for the first time since mid-2011.

Russia's options to re-route pipeline gas from Europe, which is supplied via routes not connected with Asian markets, are limited. But traders say Moscow may have greater flexibility with oil exports of which around a half, or some 2 million barrels per day (bpd), are delivered to Europe by the sea.

## China's Factory Inflation Hits Six-Month Low on Gov't Curbs

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's factory-gate inflation cooled to its slowest pace in six months in January, official data showed today, as government measures to control surging raw material costs weighed on producer prices.

The producer price index (PPI) increased 9.1 per cent from a year ago, the data showed, slower than the 9.5 per cent growth tipped by a Reuters poll and a 10.3 per cent gain in December, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said in a statement. It was the weakest pace since July.

Consumer price inflation also slowed year-on-year in January, the data showed.

The world's second-biggest economy faces multiple headwinds, weighed down by persistent weakness in the property sector and strict anti-coronavirus measures that have sapped consumer confidence and spending.

But steady falls in factory-gate price inflation from October's 26-year high have provided a buffer to downstream firms struggling with high raw material costs and supply shocks.

Globally, inflation is likely to persist for some time, but China's ability to cope with abnormal price fluctuations has improved, the country's state planner said earlier this month.

The supply of energy sources such as coal, oil and gas will be "guaranteed", the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) said, noting it expects producer price inflation to slow further this year while consumer price inflation picks up.

China's consumer price index (CPI) inched up 0.9 per cent last month from a year earlier. Economists in a Reuters poll had expected a 1 per cent rise, after a 1.5 per cent uptick in December.

Analysts believe cooling inflation could provide room for the central bank to ease policy to support the slowing economy.

China's central bank has cut interest rates and pumped more cash into the financial system to lower borrowing costs, with more easing steps expected.





# Iraq; Main Business Partner of Western Kermanshah

KERMANSHAH (IP) - The head of the Industry, Mining, and Trade Organization of Kermanshah province, west of Iran, said that Iraq is the leading destination for the export of goods from Kermanshah. Mohsen Darabi, the head of Kermanshah Province Industry, Mining, and Trade Organization, said: “After Iraq, Afghanistan is the second-largest export destination from

Kermanshah, and Pakistan, Turkey, UAE and the Republic of Azerbaijan are in the next ranks.” Darabi emphasized: “ From the exports that have been done from the borders of Kermanshah in the last nine months, in terms of value, the share of Parviz Khan border has been 37%, Somar 19% and Sheikh Salleh 16%.



# Spanish Drama “Alcarras” Wins Berlin Film Festival

BERLIN (Dispatches) - The 72nd Berlin film festival awarded its Golden Bear top prize Wednesday to Spanish director Carla Simon’s semi-autobiographical drama “Alcarras,” about a family of peach farmers fighting for their future. This year’s Berlinale was held in-person for the first time in two years but was a shorter competition than usual, with strict regulations for audiences as COVID-19 infections are peaking in Germany. There were 18 films from 15 countries vying for the Golden Bear, with the jury led by Indian-born American director M. Night Shyamalan (“The Sixth Sense”). Simon, 35, dedicated the prize to her family, saying that “without them and my closeness to this world I wouldn’t have been able to tell this story.” The Berlinale is now the third major European film festival in a row to award its top prize to a woman director, following Cannes and Venice last year. German-Turkish comedian Meltem Kaptan, 41, won the festival’s second ever gender-neutral acting prize for her performance in “Rabiye Kurnaz vs George W. Bush.” The film by German director Andreas Dresen tells the true story of a mother’s battle to bring her son back from Guantanamo Bay.

Kaptan dedicated the award “to all the mothers whose love is stronger than borders.” Six of the festival’s seven top prizes went to women, including the gong for best director, clinched by France’s Claire Denis for “Both Sides of the Blade.” A tense pandemic-era love story, the film stars Juliette Binoche as a woman caught between two men — her longtime partner Jean and her elusive ex Francois. The Hollywood Reporter called it a “smart, moody, superbly acted melodrama,” while Britain’s Screen Daily said Binoche and co-star Vincent Lindon, who plays Jean, were “at the top of their game.” “The Novelist’s Film,” an understated drama from South Korean director Hong Sang-soo with a small cast of characters who reconnect by chance in the suburbs of Seoul, bagged second prize. Variety called it a “gently circuitous, conversation-driven charmer,” while the Hollywood Reporter praised its “sly humor and insights into the insecurities of the artistic process.” Third prize went to “Robe of Gems,” a gritty Mexican crime drama from writer-director Natalia Lopez Gallardo that explores the trauma inflicted on families in Mexico when relatives go missing.

The award for best screenplay went to Laila Stieler for her work on “Rabiye Kurnaz vs George W. Bush.” “Everything Will be OK,” Cambodian Rithy Panh’s exploration of a dystopian future where animals have enslaved humans and taken over the world, won a Silver Bear for artistic contribution. And Michael Koch’s meditation on death and loss set in the Alps, “A Piece of Sky,” received a special mention. Set in Catalonia, “Alcarras” follows the story of the Soles, a large, tight-knit family who spend their summers picking peaches in their orchard in a small village. But when they are threatened with eviction due to new plans for the land, which include cutting down the peach trees and installing solar panels, the family members start to grow apart. Jury chief Shyamalan praised the film’s cast of non-professional actors, who he said were able to “show the tenderness and struggle of family” and highlight “our connection and dependence on the land around us.” Variety called it a “lovely, bittersweet agricultural drama,” praising Simon’s “warm affinity for this alternately parched and verdant landscape.” Simon, who grew up in the village of Alcarras and whose family also grow peaches, dedicated the prize to the “small families of farmers that cultivate the land every day for this food to get to our plates.”

# MP: West Must Accept Iran’s Conditions in Vienna

TEHRAN (IFP) - A member of the Iranian Parliament’s National Security and Foreign Policy Commission has criticized the US for sticking to sanctions on the Islamic Republic while the Vienna talks continue. Zohreh Elahian described the Vienna talks aimed at sanctions removal and revival of the 2015 nuclear deal as tough and serious. She told IRNA if the Western side is determined to reach a deal, it must accept Iran’s conditions and remove all nuclear-related sanctions. She underlined the need for verification of a possible agreement in Vienna, noting that the government will not wait for the result of the Vienna talks. Elahian said the current administration is seeking to strengthen the country’s economic diplomacy and improve relations with neighbors with the aim of neutering

anti-Iran sanctions. Elahian also urged the U.S. and Europe to stick by their commitments following a possible deal in Vienna. Elahian noted that if the Vienna talks do not result in sanctions removal, then Iran will put the notion of strengthening its economic diplomacy on the agenda more than ever before to help blunt the impact of the sanctions. She said the selling of 1 million barrels of oil per day proves that the current Iranian administration has managed to properly come up with solutions to neuter the sanctions. Elahian also touched on the 25-year strategic partnership deal with China, saying it paves the way for selling oil and for the imports of technology to Iran as well as foreign investments in the country.

## Asian Refiners Eager...

FROM PAGE 1

With the prospect of a new Iran deal, South Korea, previously one of Tehran’s leading oil customers in Asia, said on Wednesday it had held working-level talks on resuming imports of Iranian crude oil and unfreezing Iranian funds. A major South Korean refinery is watching the developments at the nuclear talks, a company source said, as Iranian crude oil is cost-competitive and easy to process compared with other grades such as Mexican oil.

## Tehran, Doha to...

FROM PAGE 1

The GECF consists of Algeria, Bolivia, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela and Oman that produced 42 percent of world’s gas and possess 70 percent of the global gas reserve. The organization also operates 38 percent of global gas pipeline transit and 85 percent of global LNG trade.

## Tehran Rejects Report...

FROM PAGE 1

On Thursday, Reuters claimed that it has gained access to a 20-page draft agreement allegedly clinched by the participants in the Vienna talks, which stipulates a sequence of steps to be implemented once it has been approved by the remaining parties to the deal. It added that the agreement starts with a phase, including Iran suspending enrichment above 5% purity and other measures such as unfreezing of about \$7 billion in Iranian funds stuck in South Korean banks under US sanctions. Reuters further claimed that the draft also includes the release of a number of Iranian nationals, who also hold American and European citizenships and have been sentenced to jail terms on grounds of taking measures against the country’s national security. The Reuters report also alleged that the draft has also noted that the removal of some particularly sensitive sanctions could also require Iranian and US officials to meet directly, which has so far been categorically rejected by Iranian officials. Later on Thursday, Iran’s Nour News website, which is close to the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), carried out a report refuting the Reuters claim and stressing that it only aims to depict a false image of what is going on in Vienna in order to boost the Western parties’ standing in the negotiations and prove that they have gained major concessions from the Iranian side. “Iran has stated from the beginning that as long as the United States does not take the necessary steps to remove sanctions, the Islamic Republic will not do anything to reduce its nuclear activities, which are in line with its obligations under the JCPOA,” the report said, referring to the 2015 Iran deal, officially known as the Joint

Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Nour News website further rejected Reuters’ claim that the release of American and European prisoners held in Iran is part of the Vienna draft agreement, stressing that the issue of a possible prisoner swap has nothing to do with the ongoing talks in the Austrian capital. “The United States was the party that withdrew from an agreement on the exchange of prisoners, and Iran is ready to act in this regard within the framework of previous agreements,” the report noted. Nour News website added, “Contrary to Reuters’ claim that direct negotiations between the United States and Iran are a prerequisite for reaching a final agreement in Vienna, the Iranian delegation has no plan for direct talks with the American side.” In a relevant development and later on Thursday, Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman also reacted to Reuters’ false report in a tweet, saying, “Misinformation disguised as reporting is dangerous.” Khatibzadeh added, “The final deal to let the US return to the JCPOA will be far from the unsourced spin making the rounds. It won’t be a bilateral agreement either.” Russia’s chief negotiator to the Vienna talks also took to Twitter on Thursday, accusing “the opponents of the nuclear deal” of “trying to create an unhealthy atmosphere around final stage” of the Vienna talks. Mikhail Ulyanov said the opponents of the deal “are becoming more and more proactive in the public space” as the negotiating parties “are getting closer to an agreement on restoration of #JCPOA.”

## Pakistani President...

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The president, who wants clear timelines for implementation on the decision taken in the meeting, directed all stakeholders particularly Government of Balochistan, chairman FBR, Advisor on Commerce and Investment to expedite the process of establishing border markets as well as facilitation of people on all crossing points at Afghan and Iran border. It was also decided that all relevant departments will harness the trade potential of each border according to the demands of local people. With regard to provision of electricity to Gwadar from Iran, it was decided that demand of 120 MW already made to Iran will materialize on an urgent basis with continuous supply for the entire year. Alvi also directed that all issues including outstanding dues and uninterrupted supply from Iran in future should be resolved in the next meeting with Iranian counterparts. The meeting also discussed progress on measures to be taken to insure presence of relevant departments e.g. FBR/Customs and FIA on border crossing points and timelines to be shared with Government of Balochistan. The president directed that all relevant departments including FBR, Customs, FIA, industries etc. should have adequate presence at borders as relevant departments are not providing their services on all border crossing points. With regard to trade in local currency, President Arif Alvi directed Governor State Bank of Pakistan, Reza Baqar and Federal Board of Revenue to make all necessary arrangements for trade in local currency with Iran and Afghanistan. The president also directed that all private banks should open branches on all crossing points. The governor, SBP, who was taken on call assured his complete assistance and support. The meeting discussed Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) import and relevant issues in detail. President Alvi directed that federal and provincial governments should undertake all efforts for maximum facilitation of LPG imports and maximum capitalization at the Iran border. On high Iranian tariffs, the president directed PM Advisor on Commerce and Investment, Abdul Razak Dawood as well as FBR that it may be taken up with Iran on urgent basis to endorse and bolster trade for the benefit of the people on both sides. He maintained that maximum comparative advantage should be harnessed.

## Enemies Seek to...

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“They know we are not seeking that; that we are not looking for a nuclear weapon. We are looking to benefit from nuclear energy in peaceful ways. They know this. [But] They do not want the Iranian nation to achieve such an outstanding scientific progress and that’s why they are pressuring us,” Ayatollah Khamenei added. The Leader said that Iran will urgently need nuclear energy, and that if the country fails to take action today, it will be too late in 20 years. The Leader warned that enemies have been attempting to make the Iranians, especially the youth, stray from the path of the Islamic Revolution using two tactics: economic pressure and a smear campaign of lies and allegations against the pillars of the Revolution through Western media. “The enemies are using two tools to divide the people and the establishment and to engineer the people’s views and thoughts: economic hostility and media enmity,” said the Leader, calling on the nation and the youth to counter the two conspiracies. The Leader added that the enemies “level accusations against the centers that play a role in the Revolution’s progress.” Ayatollah Khamenei explained that economic pressure can be foiled through hard work at home, diplomatic efforts and neutralization of the sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic. The Leader praised the Iranian negotiators for working on the diplomatic front to persuade the Westerners to lift the sanctions placed on the nation. “However, the major task is to neutralize the sanctions through [engaging in] domestic production and economic activities on the one side, and foiling the enemy’s media campaign and mudslinging, on the other,” Ayatollah Khamenei noted. Ayatollah Khamenei highlighted the role of the people in the victory of the Islamic Revolution. “The Islamic Revolution emerged victorious thanks to the presence of the Iranian nation and not guns and political ploys and playing,” the Leader said. The Leader praised as “astonishing” the infrastructural progress that the country has made in the years that ensued the Islamic Revolution. As a case in point, Ayatollah Khamenei pointed to Iran’s scientific achievements in the past four decades and said the country’s growth rate has been “multiple times higher than that of the rest of the world.” The Leader said the Iranian nation’s perseverance has been fruitful not just inside the country but also across the region. “You witness today that the resistance movement in regional countries is growing and the grandeur of America and [global] arrogance is broken. The nations are speaking out against America. We should appreciate this and keep up the Revolution’s progress,” the Leader noted. Ayatollah Khamenei also hailed the massive participation of the Iranian people in recent celebrations marking the 43rd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, which overthrew the former US-backed Pahlavi regime, despite the coronavirus pandemic, economic problems and the campaign of lies launched by foreigners. He said the Islamic Revolution’s goals were bringing about social justice, power, a Muslim society and, ultimately, a modern Islamic civilization, calling on everyone to make efforts toward fulfilling the objectives.



## Atletico Problems Deepen

MADRID (Dispatches) - La Liga champions Atletico Madrid fell to a shock 1-0 defeat at home to basement club Levante, who picked up only their second win of the season.

Gonzalo Melero's goal in the second half inflicted a sixth defeat in 10 league matches on Atletico, deepening their problems a week before they host Manchester United in a Champions League last-16 first leg.

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## Woods a Long Way From Return

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Golf superstar Tiger Woods remains confident he'll return to top flight competition, but the timetable remains a mystery one year after a car crash left him with devastating leg injuries.

"I can come back, yes," Woods said on the eve of the Genesis Invitational at Riviera Country Club, where the 15-time major champion is the tournament host. The 46-year-old reiterated that he doesn't envision playing a full US PGA Tour schedule, and admitted that so far he has no idea when he will be ready to return.

# Bayern Munich Held to Draw, Liverpool Wriggle Past Inter

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former European champions and German heavyweights Bayern Munich were lucky to escape with a point in the Champions League round of 16, pushed to the very edge in a 1-1 draw with Austrian underdogs RB Salzburg.

It took a last-minute equalizer from Kingsley Coman to cancel out Salzburg's opener by Chukwubuike Adamu and rescue Bayern's record unbeaten away run in the competition, which now extends to 22 games.

Salzburg began the first-leg tie with the same energy and enthusiasm as their raucous home crowd, but it was the German giants who registered the first major chance when Serge Gnabry forced a save from Philipp Kohn.

Despite that, Bayern found themselves behind in the 21st minute after Adamu, who'd been substituted onto the field early to replace the injured Noah Okafor, sweeping a clever Brenden Aaronson touch past keeper Sven Ulreich to make it 1-0.

Ulreich was tested again by Aaronson, and Salzburg could have had a chance to make it two after Karim Adeyemi looked to be tripped over in the penalty area by defender Benjamin Pavard, but was over-ruled after a VAR check.

Bayern winger Leroy Sané had the only other major chance of the first stanza, fizzing the ball wide of the far post.

Despite dominating possession and registering twice as many shots as Salzburg, it was the home side who could have made it 2-0 in the second were it not for some individual brilliance from an outstretched Pavard to block yet another Adamu shot.

Coman ultimately saved Bayern's blushes



in the 89th minute, as he did against PSG in the 2020 Champions League final, latching onto a flick by Thomas Müller at the far post and drilling low and hard beneath Kohn to make it 1-1.

The return leg will be played in Munich on March 9.

Buoyed by the return of Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mané from international duty, as well as the teenage Harvey Elliot, who made his Champions League debut five months after dislocating his ankle, Liverpool snatched two late goals against Italian champions Inter Milan at the San Siro on Thursday.

Brazilian striker Robert Firmino celebrated his 150th club appearance by coming off the bench to give the Reds the lead in the 74th minute before Salah extended his club record of scoring in successive European away games (eight) in the 83rd.

While the first half was as open and gripping as one would expect from two high-intensity European heavyweights, neither side was able to register a shot on target in the opening 45.

Lautaro Martínez came closest first, sweeping a shot past Alisson's far post moments after Salah galloped in behind Inter's back-line, only to have his misplaced back-heel intercepted by the covering Alessandro Bastoni.

## Murray Mauled By Bautista Agut in Qatar

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former World number one Andy Murray suffered a brutal 6-0 6-1 defeat by Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut in the second round of the Qatar Open.

Murray, twice a champion at the event, never got anywhere near the form he showed the previous day in beating Japan's Taro Daniel, lasting little over an hour against the second seed.

The 34-year-old took Bautista-Agut to duce on serve in the opening game but managed only five more points in the set.

Murray did hold serve to get on the board at the start of the second set, but Bautista Agut reeled off the next five games to move into the quarter-finals.

It was three-time Grand Slam champion Murray's heaviest Tour defeat since also managing only one game against Roger Federer in the ATP Finals in London in 2014.

Top seed Denis Shapovalov reached the last eight with a 6-4 6-0 victory over Slovakia's Alex Molcan.

## Lakers Rally To Beat Jazz

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Anthony Davis went down hard but LeBron James picked up the Los Angeles Lakers and carried them to a 106-101 NBA victory over the Utah Jazz.

James scored 15 of his 33 points in the fourth quarter, when the Lakers erased a 12-point deficit.

James keyed the comeback, his contribution including a huge dunk off a pass from Russell Westbrook that put the Lakers up by two with 2:08 remaining.

They wouldn't trail again on the way to a victory that looked unlikely when star forward Davis rolled his ankle shortly before halftime when he landed on Rudy Gobert's foot after rising to collect a pass.

Davis, who had 17 points on seven-of-nine shooting, clutched his ankle in pain before he was helped off the court by teammates.

The Lakers said X-rays were negative, and Davis would receive treatment over the upcoming All-Star break.

Davis was averaging 23.3 points and 9.1 rebounds per game this season. He had already missed 17 games with knee trouble.

"It's very deflating to see AD go down the way he did," Lakers coach Frank Vogel said. "There's an energy you have to overcome and there's how we adjust tactically.

"Credit our guys for hanging in there and continuing to fight," added Vogel, who said Westbrook was a key motivator during the timeouts.

"And what we saw LeBron do was just remarkable," Vogel said. "At this point in his career, to take over in the fourth quarter the way he did with just energy and will and determination was just really something special."

Westbrook finished with 17 points and seven rebounds for the Lakers, who had 15 points from Malik Monk.

Donovan Mitchell led Utah with 37 points.

The Lakers' win, which ended a three-game losing streak, was just one of the comeback victories that livened up the night.

In San Francisco, Monte Morris drained a three-pointer over Stephen Curry at the final buzzer to lift the Denver Nuggets to a 117-116 victory over the Golden State Warriors, who led by eight with less than three minutes to play.

## Mbappe Happy at PSG, But Undecided Over Future



PARIS (Dispatches) - France international Kylian Mbappe said he is happy at Paris St Germain, but the forward still remains undecided over his future at the Ligue 1 club as rumours continue to swirl over a possible move to Spanish giants Real Madrid.

On Tuesday Mbappe scored a late winner as PSG defeated Real 1-0 in the first leg of the pair's last-16 match-up in the Champions League.

The 23-year-old's PSG contract is due to expire at the end of this season.

"I've not decided my future. I play for Paris Saint Germain, one of the best clubs in the world," Mbappe told broadcaster Movistar

after Tuesday's match.

His goal triggered wild celebrations from PSG fans, and Mbappe was asked whether Tuesday's acclaim might play a part in shaping his decision.

"No, I've not decided," he replied. "I give my best and then we will see what happens next season."

PSG turned down an offer of around €160 million from Real for Mbappe last August, even though the player had less than a year left on his contract.

Now Mbappe, who has 22 goals and 16 assists in all competitions for PSG this season, is expected by many to move to Real on a free transfer at the end of this campaign, having so far resisted offer to sign a new deal with the Parisian club.

"How to ignore the (transfer) context? It's easy, you have to play football," Mbappe told broadcaster Canal Plus.

"We ask too many questions, we say too many things. We talk about PSG and Real, two big clubs.

"I'm a PSG player, I'm always very happy."

## Canada Beat U.S. for Fifth Women's Ice Hockey Gold

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Canada beat Rivals the United States 3-2 to win women's Olympic ice hockey gold on Thursday, avenging an emotional loss in the final four years ago and capping a dominant run in Beijing.

Canada led 3-0 in the second period and held on to win, despite being out-shot in the game 40-21, to collect the country's fifth Olympic gold.

No other country has won women's ice hockey gold in the seven Olympic Games since the event debuted in Nagano in 1998. Canada have won five of those and the USA two.

"It's just so good. It's a great feeling," said Marie-Philip Poulin, who scored twice in the game. "It was one hell of an effort. This is redemption."

The United States came in ranked number in the world, but once play got under way in Beijing a Canadian victory began to seem like a foregone conclusion. The Canadian women blitzed the competition, finishing 7-0, including an earlier 4-2 win over the Americans.

Canada outscored their opponents 57-10 throughout the tournament and Canadian players occupied the top six spots on the Beijing points leaderboard.

"It is insane. I can't stop shaking. It's a dream come true," said forward Sarah Fillier.

Canada pounced early with first-period goals by Sarah Nurse and Poulin, the two top points leaders in Beijing.

Poulin made it 3-0 in the second period, but Hilary Knight gave the Americans a glimmer of hope by scoring a breakaway goal despite the US being shorthanded due to a penalty.



## Fan Violence in German Lootball Leads to Costs of €44m Annually

BERLIN (Berlin (Dispatches) - Fan violence related to professional football matches in Germany leads to costs of nearly €44 million annually, according to a report by Germany's Ifo Institute on Wednesday.

The study looked at data from German municipalities from January 2011 to May 2015 in which fan violence ended up costing German police, public prosecution offices and courts a total of €194 million.

The report added that instances of violence rose considerably in cities when they hosted professional football matches, with an estimated 38,268 football-related assaults taking place over the period studied.

The increase in violence was found to be "particularly high" on matchdays featuring local derbies.

"First to third division football matches in these cities lead to 21.5 per cent more acts of violence than would otherwise be expected on those days of the week," said Helmut Rainer, director of the Ifo Center for Labor and Demographic Economics.

"The victims are mainly young men between the ages of 18 and 29. But almost one-fifth of the additional violence on game days can be explained by attacks on police officers.

"It's not events during the matches or the match results that are the trigger, but rather a desire to be recognized as a member of a fan group."

The registered acts of violence were taken from crime statistics published by the police.

