

Iranian State-Owned Animal Feed Importer SLAL Is Believed to Have Purchased 120,000 Tons of Feed Barely, 120,000 Tons of Feed Corn And 180,000 Tons of Soymeal, European Traders said on Friday

IRAN NEWS

Health Ministry Announced on Saturday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to 134,798 With 191 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

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FM Hopes JCPOA Talks Will Lead to Good Agreement

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says he hopes the ongoing talks between Tehran and the P4+1 group of countries on the revival of the 2015 deal in the Austrian capital of Vienna will lead to a "good agreement in the near future."

Speaking in Germany on the sidelines of the 58th Munich Security Conference (MSC), Amir-Abdollahian said the meeting would be an opportunity to announce the Iranian administration's foreign policy and its stance on regional issues, not least the current crises in West Asia.

"As for the Islamic Republic of Iran and the active initiatives it has put on the negotiating table, we are very close to a good agreement."

"But it is the Western parties that must show their true initiative and flexibility and determine these negotiations will lead to a result within the next few days or weeks (with their approach to Iran's initiatives)."

The top Iranian diplomat emphasized that there are still some outstanding issues in the Vienna talks but Iran's lead negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani and members of his team would continue the negotiations with seriousness in order to reach a good agreement.

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Iran-EU Trade Rises 9% in 2021



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - New report shows that the value of trade between Iran and the European Union reached €4.863 billion in 2021, registering a nine-percent growth compared to the previous year.

According to the data released by the European Union's statistics office Eurostat, the trade between Iran and the European Union during 2020 stood at €4.458 billion, Tasnim news agency reported.

Iran exported €922 million worth of commodities to the union during January-December 2021 to register a 29-percent rise year on year.

Based on the released data, the exports from Europe to the Islamic Republic in the said year also increased by five percent, standing at €3.941 billion.

Iran had imported €3.745 billion worth of commodities from the European Union states in 2020, while exporting €713 million to the region.

Among European countries, Germany was Iran's top trading partner in 2021, accounting for about a third of Iran's trade with the European Union. Germany exported €1.449 billion worth of goods to Iran while importing €274 million worth of commodities from the Islamic Republic. The country's total trade with Iran was 1.723 billion euros.

Italy was Iran's second-biggest trading partner with €528 million euros of commodity exchanges. The country exported €450 million worth of goods to Iran while importing €178 million worth of products from the country.

The Netherlands stood in third place with a trade of €481 million. The country exported €443 million euros worth of goods to Iran and imported €38 million.

Iran mainly exports foodstuff and livestock, beverages and tobacco, raw materials, mineral fuels, and vegetable oils to the European countries, while foodstuff, beverages and tobacco, mineral fuels, vegetable oils, and chemicals are also the main products imported from the union.

The value of trade between Iran and the European Union had reached €3.4 billion during the first nine months of 2021, a two-percent growth compared to the same period last year.

According to the data released by the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA), Iran exported €54 million worth of commodities to the union during the said nine months, while importing goods valued at €2.7 billion.

Iran Warns Europe Over Supporting MKO Terrorists

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Iranian Judiciary official has warned Europe that its support for the anti-Iran terrorist Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) will come at a price just as it did with the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group.

Kazem Gharibabadi, the Judiciary chief's deputy for international affairs and secretary of the country's High Council for Human Rights, on Friday censured the European Parliament for supporting the MKO and referring to it as 'political opponents'.

It is shameful for members of the European Parliament to pursue their own political interests and turn a blind eye to the crimes committed by the MKO, which has killed over 12,000 innocent Iranians and still continues its terrorist activities while freely traveling through European countries, he said.

"The Europeans should know that as their support for Daesh has backfired on them in a way that more than 4,000 Daesh members were European citizens and created insecurity for them, their support for the MKO will equally be costly," the senior Iranian human rights official said.

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ViewPoint Theft in American Style

For decades or better to say for centuries major global arrogant countries have been busy with looting the wealth of the nations under different pretexts and in different styles and in recent decades the American style has been the dominating style in looting the wealth of nations and the U.S. officials have been using modern style of theft which is either sanction or confiscation of the wealth.

Last week the U.S. administration had a controversial decision which shocked the world, and even some of its allies have criticized this decision and called it "theft".

U.S. President Joe Biden's decision to effectively seize the Afghan central bank's funds in the United States and repurpose half of the money as compensation to the victims of the 9/11 attacks drew rebuke and accusations of "theft" against Washington.

Biden issued an executive order last Friday that would split \$7.1b belonging to Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) almost evenly between humanitarian assistance to the struggling country and funds to cover judgments from lawsuits that 9/11 victims and their families had filed against the Taliban in U.S. courts.

This arrogant decision drew criticisms from friends and foes of the U.S. "The people of Afghanistan had nothing to do with 9/11; that is an undeniable fact," Bilal Askaryar, an Afghan-American activist, told Al Jazeera.

"What Biden is proposing is not justice for 9/11 families, it is theft of public funds from an impoverished nation already on the brink of famine and starvation brought on by the United States' disastrous withdrawal."

The U.S.-backed Afghan government collapsed in August of last year, with the Taliban capturing Kabul amid the pullout of US troops from the country after a 20-year war.

Washington, which had negotiated its withdrawal with the Taliban, quickly moved to freeze DAB's US-based assets. The 9/11 victims' families then sought the money through the courts. One particular case that had obtained a default judgment against the Taliban in 2012 became central in that effort.

The plaintiffs originally sued a host of entities and individuals across the Middle East and Afghanistan - many at odds with one another and adversarial to al-Qaeda, which carried out the attacks in 2001. The defendants included former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Lebanon's Hezbollah, Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei - and the Taliban.

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OPEC+ Would Seek to Bring Iran Into Oil Supply Deal

LONDON (Dispatches) - OPEC+ will work to integrate Iran into its oil supply-limiting accord should agreement be reached on reviving its nuclear deal with world powers, sources close to the group said, seeking to avoid market share competition that could hit prices.

A successful outcome to the talks could lift U.S. sanctions on Iran's exports, according to the International Energy Agency, potentially bringing 1.3 million barrels per day (bpd) of Iranian oil back into the market. That could ease tight global supply and take some heat out of a rally that has taken benchmark prices to just a few dollars short of \$100 a barrel.

Due to the impact of sanctions on its exports, Iran is exempt from the existing deal between the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies, known as OPEC+, to limit oil supply. While that exemption allows Iran to boost output, OPEC+ would eventually seek to bring Iran into the accord, sources said.

"It is very likely OPEC will adjust Iran into the deal, as there is no other option," said an OPEC+ source, who added that an agreement on reviving the nuclear accord looked close.

A source familiar with Iranian thinking said Iran would first seek to restore its lost output, but would likely, after talks with OPEC+, agree to a quota. Iran is one of the five founding members of OPEC.

Iran is pumping about 2.5 million bpd, some 1.3 million bpd less than in 2018 when former U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the nuclear accord and re-imposed sanctions, drastically cutting Tehran's oil income.

"With the lifting of sanctions, Iran will increase its oil production according to its facilities, capabilities and interests, to compensate for its lost oil revenues," the source familiar with Iranian thinking said.

"In my opinion, OPEC+ will set a quota for Iran's oil production but will apply it gradually, and Iran will accept the quota with some bargaining to show its support for OPEC."

OPEC Secretary General Mohammad Barkindo, asked if OPEC+ would work out a new supply agreement that included Iran, said the group's track record gave grounds for confidence. "Having survived the last five years since the establishment of the historic partnership between OPEC and non-OPEC that helped us to navigate through two oil cycles, we have every reason to remain reasonably optimistic going forward," he told Reuters.

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Demand for Russian Grain Growing in Iran

TEHRAN - The demand for Russian goods in Iran is growing from year to year amid shortage of areas under crops and growing consumption in the country, Chairman of the Russian-Iranian Business Council Vladimir Obydenov told TASS in an interview.

"The demand for grain from the Russian Federation is growing increasingly in view of shortage of cultivation areas and rising consumption," Obydenov said. "It is worth to remind that Iran came out on top among Russian grain buyers in 2021. It is obvious such trend will continue," he said.

"The Russian market is being progressively filled with Iranian goods," the chairman said. "Fruits and vegetables of high quality from Iran are slowly but steadily consolidating their hold on shelves of our stores, competing increasingly with products from Turkey, Egypt and Azerbaijan," he noted.

"Iranian industrial goods: petrochemical products, laundry and home care and construction materials are gradually taking their niche in Russia," Obydenov added.

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President Raisi to Depart for Qatar on Monday

TEHRAN (IRNA)- President Ebrahim Raisi will travel to Qatar on Monday to meet Qatari Emir and attend a Summit Meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF).

President Raisi will embark on a two-day visit to Qatar on Monday at the official invitation of Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

Qatar will host a summit of top natural gas exporters, including Iran, in the coming days.

Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, in a meeting on Jan 27, 2022, submitted an official invitation of the Qatari Emir to Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to attend a Summit Meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF).

President Calls for Smart Monitoring for Containing COVID

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi stressed the need for more rigorous implementation of health protocols and the implementation of intelligent controls to counter the growing trend of coronavirus pandemic.

Speaking on Saturday at the meeting of the National Task Force Against Coronavirus, Raisi appreciated the efforts of all agencies and medical staff across the country in the fight against the disease, and said, "Although the situation of coronavirus in the country is much better than in the past, but the amount of cases and deaths is very high and urgent action must be taken to deal with it".

The President called on the people to strictly observe health protocols and to refrain from gatherings, and stressed to the authorities, "By no means should the rise in the number of infected people, especially corona victims, become commonplace, both for those involved and for the people".

"The death of even one person because of corona is high and should not happen. Justifications such as the fact that in the past the death toll had risen to 700 should never lead to the normalization of the pandemic conditions," he said.

Raisi also stated, "The Ministry of Roads and Urban Development and other related agencies such as municipalities ought to follow health protocols carefully on flights, subways and other means of public transport".

"We must not allow the lives of people, especially children, to be endangered by neglecting to follow health protocols," he said, referring to the rising incidence of children with the new variant of coronavirus.

In another part of his speech, Raisi emphasized the validity of the previous resolutions and decisions of the National Task Force Against Coronavirus.

In the end, Raisi once again stressed the need to strictly follow the health protocols



and added, "In addition to following the guidelines, intelligent controls must be fully implemented to significantly reduce the incidence of corona".

In this meeting, it was decided that the kindergartens will be closed for another week and the telecommuting of working mothers who have young children will be extended for another week.

Meanwhile yesterday, in order to support production in carrying out the recent orders of the Supreme Leader of the Revolution, President Raisi issued instructions to prevent and combat the smuggling of goods and currency.

Raisi, in order to support production in carrying out the recent orders of the Supreme Leader of the Revolution, issued instructions to prevent and combat the smuggling of goods and currency.

According to the President's announcement, all agencies related to the Anti-Trafficking in Goods and Foreign Exchange Law were obliged to implement the necessary measures and arrangements in the announcement within the prescribed period and to inform the people about the measures taken.

The guidelines for preventing and combating smuggling include important and practical points, such as "organizing border markets" to "fully coordinating systems to combat smuggling of goods and currency".

Also, all intelligence, security and penitentiary agencies are obliged to use all their power to identify the branches and agents active in the field of smuggling of goods and currency and to implement the issued rulings.

Azerbaijani Envoy Announces Date of Meeting of Intergovernmental Commission With Iran



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - The next meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission on Economic, Trade and Humanitarian Cooperation between Azerbaijan and Iran will be held in Baku on March 10 and March 11, 2022, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Iran Ali Alizada said, Trend reported.

He made the remark during a meeting with Governor of East Azerbaijan Province Abedin Khorram.

The ambassador noted that the commission will discuss a number of issues, including the opening of the Khudafarin border checkpoint, the construction of a new border bridge and other agreements reached between the two countries.

Alizada also added that 132 kilometers of the joint border between Azerbaijan and Iran have been liberated from Armenian occupation. The liberation of the territories has created new opportunities for the development of cooperation between the two countries. By activating border connections, the potentials can be used the best.

"Great opportunities, such as customs and tax benefits, as well as infrastructure opportunity have been created for companies and investors in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan from occupation, and companies from the East Azerbaijan Province are invited to the territories," he said.

During the meeting, the Governor of the East Azerbaijan province Abedin Khorram said that the policy of the current Iranian government is to create close ties with all countries, especially neighboring countries. Azerbaijan is a friendly and brotherly country in Iran's foreign policy, and the existing ties between the two countries should be strengthened and developed.

Khorram stressed that during the visit of the Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Rostam Ghasemi to the liberated territories of Azerbaijan, the Iranian delegation witnessed that Azerbaijan has begun great work to reconstruction of these territories.

The governor also pointed out that the establishment of the Khudafarin border checkpoint will allow create new opportunity for the development of relations between the two countries.

FM Warns of Afghan Refugee Crisis, Yemen Disaster

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has warned of the burden of a new wave of refugees from Afghanistan in the aftermath of the Taliban takeover of the Central Asian country and also stated that the ongoing Yemen crisis has reached a critical point that requires concerted international efforts.

Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in a meeting with United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on the sidelines of the 58th Munich Security Conference (MSC) in southern Germany on Friday evening.

The Iranian foreign minister stressed the need for the continuation of humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people and the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan with the involvement of all ethno-political groups in order to effectively address the lingering problems in the country.

He pointed to the continuing influx of refugees from Afghanistan, warning that the trend could result in the spread of terrorism as well as illicit drug production and trafficking, which would subsequently undermine regional and international stability and security.

The top Iranian diplomat also called for greater assistance by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to Afghanistan's neighboring states, including Iran.

Afghanistan has been in the grip of a major humanitarian disaster, worsened by the freezing of assets worth billions of dollars by the United States and its allies.

Since last August, international aid, which financed nearly 80 percent of the war-ravaged country's budget, has been suspended and nearly \$9.5 billion in assets belonging to Afghanistan's central bank have been frozen by Washington, contributing to the pitiable plight of millions of Afghans.

This is while unemployment has skyrocketed in the country and civil servants' salaries have not been paid for months, as banks are out of cash and the government is grappling with a dearth of funds.

Amid the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation, hunger now threatens 23 million Afghans, or 55 percent of the total population, according to the UN.

Amir-Abdollahian also pointed to the ongoing Yemen conflict, saying the crisis has reached a "critical point."

"Efforts should be increased in order to reach a political solution to the [Yemen] conflict and prevent the deterioration of the humanitarian catastrophe there," he added.

Iran, India FMs Meet to Boost Economic Ties

TEHRAN (IP) - On the sidelines of the 58th Munich Security Conference Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran met with his Indian counterpart to expand economic cooperation between the two countries.

The 58th Munich Security Conference in 2022 is underway in person, with the participation of a limited number of heads and ministers of different countries, from February 18 to 20, despite the widespread Omicron variant outbreak.

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has traveled to Germany on Friday to attend the 58th Munich Security Conference.

Amirabdollahian and Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, foreign ministers of Iran and India, met on the sidelines of the conference and agreed to expand economic cooperation between the two countries.

Referring to the vast potential for the development and comprehensive expansion of relations between Tehran and New Delhi, Amirabdollahian announced Iran's readiness to implement the projects agreed upon between the two countries.

The Iranian and Indian foreign ministers also discussed the latest situation in Afghanistan, emphasizing the two countries' common view on the need for a comprehensive government

with the participation of all political and ethnic groups in Afghanistan.

Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, for his part, announced his country's readiness to open a credit line for economic and trade cooperation with Iran.

Deputy Speaker of Pakistani Parliament in Tehran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Speaker of National Assembly of Pakistan arrived in Tehran yesterday to meet with country's senior officials at the invitation of his Iranian counterpart.

Heading a parliamentary delegation, Qasim Khan Suri left for Tehran from Islamabad International Airport at the invitation of Ali Nikzad, the Deputy Speaker of Iranian Parliament.

The deputy speaker of the Pakistani Parliament is scheduled to meet his Iranian counterpart and some other senior officials of the Islamic Republic to discuss bilateral cooperation, strengthening economic, parliamentary, and border relations.

This is Qasim Khan Suri's first official visit to Iran as deputy speaker of the Pakistani Parliament. His visit to Tehran comes just days after Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi's important visit to Islamabad.

In addition to Tehran, Qasim Khan Suri is scheduled to visit the cities of Mashhad, Qom, and Isfahan.

During a meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Mohammad Ali Hosseini in Islamabad, he expressed satisfaction on the fruitful results of his upcoming visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran and vowed to expand close cooperation between the two friendly, brotherly, and neighboring countries.

U.S. Should Abandon Failed Sanctions Policy

TEHRAN (MNA) - A member of Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission said that it is better for Europe and the U.S. to abandon the failed policy of sanctions and confrontation with Iran and accept Iran's nuclear knowledge.

The Islamic Republic has advanced in nuclear science, which is the most important science of the day and has many applications in the medical industry and various sciences, and has achieved a valuable position, said Abbas Golroo.

The United States, with its failed sanctions policy, cannot limit the Islamic Republic's nuclear knowledge, he added, saying that it is better for Europe and the US to abandon the failed policy of sanctions and confrontation with Iran and accept Iran's nuclear knowledge.

Of course, the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready for any constructive interaction with the parties, he said.

Covid Did More Damage Than Iran-Iraq War

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

"We have been dealt more damage by Covid-19 than we were in eight years of war," Iran's deputy health minister has said. In a speech welcoming the new president of Gorgan University of Medical Sciences, Younes Panahi also issued a fresh call for people to stick to health protocols as Omicron sweeps through Iran.

"We know we'll reach the sixth peak in the first week of March," Panahi said. "Our advice has always been to follow all health procedures in full, in addition to getting vaccinated."

Panahi did not make it clear if by "damage" he was talking about fatalities, casualties or the economic cost of Covid-19 compared to the Iran-Iraq war. Some 1-2m people were injured during the Iran-Iraq war from 1980 to 1988, and around 500,000 lost their lives.

The Health Ministry's official statistics put the number of deaths from Covid-19 in Iran at 134,000.

Tehran Dismisses Bogus Rumors of Chinese Military Deployment

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian Oil Ministry has dismissed rumors of China's military deployment to Iran to protect its energy projects there, saying such claims could be a reaction to Tehran's gains from enhanced economic ties with Beijing.

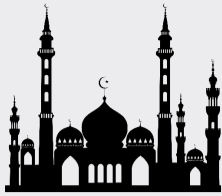
"Over the past days, rumors have resurfaced about the deployment 5,000 Chinese security forces to the sidelines of oil and gas projects being implemented by Chinese firms," the ministry said in a statement on Friday.

The projects are part of the 25-year partnership deal between Iran and China in a variety of sectors. In mid-January, the sides announced the launch of the agreement, which has sharply irked the Western states.

The statement said such "amateurish news fabrication" came earlier from certain businessmen supporting the ex-Iranian administration. This time, the rumors were spread by British media outlets covering oil and gas news, it added.

"The spread of such rumors are related to the [Iran's] success in paving the ground for attracting investments in recent months as well as to a remarkable rise in Iran's oil exports," the statement added.

It said such rumors are in the first place designed by certain "domineering" countries in order to harm Iran's relations with other world countries. The rumors then get circulated by currents that seek unconditional submission to the West's cruel demands, it added.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:18
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:09
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:20
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:44

9. And We have put a bar in front of them and a bar behind them, and further, We have covered them up; so that they cannot see.

10. The same is it to them whether thou admonish them or thou do not admonish them: they will not believe.

Surah 36, Ya-sin (9 - 10)

Tehran Calls for Balance In Trade With Brasilia

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Agriculture Minister Javad Sadatinejad in meeting with visiting Brazilian Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply Ms. Tereza Cristina called for balancing the current trade between Iran and Brazil which is currently in favor of Brazil considerably.

In the meeting, Sadatinejad said that unfortunately there is no trade balance between Iran and Brazil and major part of Brazil's imports from Iran is urea fertilizer and only 2% of Iran's agro products are exported to Brazil while agro products account for 50% of Brazil's exports to Iran. He called on Brazilian minister to promise on working on promoting Iranian agro products in Brazil, and for the long-term plan both countries use ship-against-ship policy.

Sadatinejad reiterated the lowest amount of pesticides or fertilizers are used in Iran's agro products and they are predominantly organic and holding joint exhibition is a good idea that Tehran welcomes it. He added Iran is neighboring with 17 countries and it can be a hub for livestock inputs in the region and Iran can distribute Brazilian inputs in its neighboring states.

He added that cruel sanctions have increased pressures on the people but the nation has stood against it considerably. He added that barter trade is the best means to skirt sanctions to resolve payment. He noted Brazil is one of the major urea and phosphate fertilizers consumers in the world as everybody knows well that Iran is one of the biggest producers of these petrochemical products in the world.

He reiterated that Iran has billion tons of phosphate soil which can be exported and the two countries can work to provide the ground for exports of Iranian agro products to Brazil.

Sadatinejad noted that Iran seeks strategic approach for providing national interests of both countries and pursue it seriously.

He said one of the hurdles is the tariff system of Brazil, adding that Brazil has levied 120% tariff on Iranian agro products while Iran's tariff is only 4%. He also criticized the bureaucratic process in way of trade between the two countries and called for its removal, adding that both countries should provide the ground for activating the preferential trade between the two states and expand barter trade. He reiterated that Iran has turned into a hub in the world for procuring urea and Brazil is one of the top producers of livestock inputs.

He also called for establishing the trade line for pistachio and saffron between the two countries and preparing a long-term roadmap in the field of agriculture is very important for both countries.

Then Brazilian Minister Cristina said that the trade tie between Iran and Brazil is in good point and they can expand it as both countries have progressed well in agro and foodstuff sectors.



She added that Brazil can import 2m tons of urea from Iran and the tariff system is a point which should be noticed and she will reflect Iran's complaint over the tariff system to the Brazilian government, reiterating that this tariff is not just for Iran and includes all countries.

She added that trade is a reciprocal issue and there should be a balance between the two countries and it is not fair a loaded ship from Brazil to dock in Iran and returns unloaded.

She went on to say that her country was not yet self-sufficient in producing wheat and Iran could supply part of that if it were interested.

Cristina said Brazil intended to increase imports from Iran while exporting to the country achieving a leveled economic exchange.

By 2050, food demand will increase by 60 percent, and food-supplying countries need to make progress and come up with new ways to grow and harvest," Brazil's agriculture minister recalled.

Cristina stated that the purpose of her trip to Iran is to increase bilateral relations between the two countries in the field of agriculture.

Noting that Brazil is currently buying urea chemical fertilizers from Iran, which is important for the agricultural sector, Brazilian senior official added Brazil needed fertilizers to boost the production of sugar cane which is the main part of the Brazilian agriculture.

The Brazilian minister noted that direct and face-to-face talks could help resolve issues between the two countries, saying: "Because of the technology capacity and the ground we have, Brazil is ready to attract Iranian investors."

"Iran imports materials from rival countries that we can import to Brazil at a competitive price," she said, "Rice is exported to Iran in small quantities; Sugar or cotton in the same way; we can interact more in this area."

The Brazilian agriculture minister said her country didn't much care about the sanctions and that she believed the development of the Tehran-Brasilia must be focused on boosting bilateral interests.

At the end of the meeting Sadatinejad and Cristina signed a MoU on developing agro cooperation between Iran and Brazil.

Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Economic Cooperation Summit to Be Held in Feb.

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Ministry of Agriculture announced that the 17th Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Economic Cooperation summit will be held in Tehran in February.



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 February 21-22, 2022.

Earlier some media outlets had reported that the meeting will be held on March 2-3.

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.

IME Posts Higher Records in Value and Volume of Trades

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 2,514,000 tons of commodities with a total trading value of almost \$702m, posting growths of 39% in volume and 40% in value of trades compared to the figures of the previous week.



According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange traded on its metals and minerals trading floor 2,200,000 tons of commodities valued at almost \$472m.

Commodities sold on this floor included 1,059,000 tons of cement, 626,000 tons of iron ore, 400,486 tons of steel, 92,000 tons of sponge iron, 10,000 tons of cast iron, 7,100 tons of aluminum, 6,980 tons of copper, 1,000 tons of coke, 935 tons of zinc ingots, 150 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 21 tons of precious metals concentrate and 1 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the IME saw trade 304,048 tons of commodities on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor valued almost \$222m.

The exchange customers purchased on this floor 116,840 tons of bitumen, 90,265 tons of polymeric products, 45,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 24,000 tons of lube cut, 22,907 tons of chemicals, 3,750 tons of sulfur, 2,609 tons of base oil, 800 tons of slops wax and 150 tons of argon.

Last but not least was the IME's side market with 8,820 tons of commodities traded on it.

Forming Joint-Stock Cooperative Best Way of Privatization of Tehrani Soccer Clubs

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC) believes forming joint-stock cooperative is the best solution for privatization of two famous Tehrani soccer clubs of Persepolis and Esteghlal and it is the best way of handing over the shares of the two clubs to its fans.

Bahman Abdollahi said that establishing the joint-stock cooperative can be a new chapter in the process of expanding the role of cooperatives in the national economy.

He added that establishing the joint-stock cooperative is a suitable platform for privatization of these two famous clubs. He also supported the remarks of Tehran Friday

Prayers Leader who called for handing over the shares of the two clubs to its fans and there should be some restriction for purchase of the number of the shares in order that the shares are distributed among the fans.

Abdollahi reiterated that the nature of the cooperatives is in a way that it does not have most of the problems of the non-cooperatives and there is possibility for membership of all fans, veterans and enthusiasts of these teams in the cooperative.

He went on to say that ICC since years ago has begun broad studies regarding privatization of clubs in the form of joint-stock cooperatives and has sent results of its studies to the related organs and ministries.

He reiterated that the cooperative can offer many services to the fans of the clubs in different sectors.

Abdollahi added that privatization of Persepolis and Esteghlal provides the ground for transparency and answering questions and in fact participation and ownership of the fans in the framework of cooperative is one of the vital factors in creating good management and ownership in the soccer clubs.

He stated joint-stock cooperative is some kind of joint-stock company which is formed in accordance with the trade law.



Owners of Expensive Housing Units Evades Paying Tax

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - According to the Iranian Supreme Audit Court, the owners of expensive and empty housing units paid no taxes in the first ten months of 1400.

According to a continuous report by the court, despite the designation of "the end of February [this year] as the deadline for depositing taxes on expensive residential units" in the budget law of 1400, the amount of its materialization by the end of January was still zero percent and the amount of tax collection on "uninhabited residential units" was also lacking due to its "failure to ratify the executive regulations".

Mahmoud Mahmoudzadeh, deputy minister of roads and urban development, announced on December 9 that two million and 300,000 vacant housing units were identified in the country and said that the acquisition of 900,000 units was in the hands of government agencies.

Mahmudzadeh had said this April that Iran had 10 times more empty homes than England.

The existence of so many empty houses in the country that do not pay taxes is announced by the Iranian authorities, while the Central Bank of Iran in November published a report on the growth of 50 to 55 percent of rents in Tehran and its suburbs.

Steel Ingot Output Volume Exceeds 29m Tons

TEHRAN (MNA) - A study of performance of major mining and mineral industrial companies shows that more than 29,765,707 tons of steel ingot and steel products were produced in country in the first 10 months of current Iranian calendar year.

According to statistics, large mining and mineral industrial companies managed to produce 18,001,873 tons of steel ingot and 11,763,834 tons of steel products in the first 10 months of the current year (from March 21, 2021, to Jan. 22, 2022), showing a four and three percent decline respectively as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

Another statistic showed that the country produced 42,835,030 tons of iron concentrate, showing a three percent growth as compared to the same period of last year.

In addition, 42,950,856 tons of conglomerate was produced in the country, registering an 11 percent hike as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

These large companies also managed to produce 1,021,457 tons of copper concentrate during the same period, showing a two percent growth.

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

TENDER NO.:

08-21-9540001

N.I.S.O.C.
NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH
OILFIELDS COMPANY
AHVAZ-IRAN

National Iranian South Oilfields Company (NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

Items	Material Description	Quantity
01	CASING, API GRADE P-110, SEAMLESS 7 IN. 35 PPF, DRIFT:5.879 IN.	500 LE

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their " Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.nisoc.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded.

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 27,904 EURO or 7,616,134,820 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: www.nisoc.ir-material-procurement-management-tab

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P., NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI, IRAN

PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D., SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL

NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex, Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran

Tel. No.: 061 34 12 35 89 Fax No.: 061 34 45 74 37

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Six African Nations to Get Own mRNA Jab Production

BRUSSELS (AFP) - Six African countries have been chosen to establish their own mRNA vaccine production, the World Health Organization said Friday, with the continent largely shut out of access to Covid jabs.

Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia were selected as the first recipients of technology from the WHO's global mRNA vaccine hub, in a push to ensure Africa can make its own jabs to fight the Covid and other diseases.

"More than 80 percent of the population of Africa is yet to receive a single dose. Much of this inequity has been driven by the fact that globally, vaccine production is concentrated in a few mostly high-income countries," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a ceremony on the sidelines of an EU-Africa summit in Brussels.



Germany Cannot Supply Ukraine Weapons

MUNICH (Dispatches) - German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock defended her country's decision not to send weapons to Ukraine to fend off a possible Russian invasion, saying its World War Two past meant it had a duty to seek other ways to secure peace.

Germany was Ukraine's biggest donor, for example, Baerbock said in a panel at the Munich Security Conference with her U.S. counterpart Antony Blinken, who agreed that Western powers were working in a complementary, coordinated way.

"This is our strength - we are standing all together but using our different roles of support, with our different histories," Baerbock said.



U.S. Unwilling to Adequately Perceive Russia's Key Security Demands



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Te United States and other NATO countries are yet unwilling to perceive Russia's key security demands adequately, Russian President Vladimir Putin said after talks with his Belarusian counterpart Alexander Lukashenko on Friday.

The Russian leader said that at the request of his Belarusian counterpart, he briefed him on the latest contacts with the leaders of Western states on long-term and legally binding security guarantees for Russia from the United States and NATO. Putin said that he considered "it quite natural that the Belarusian allies are also concerned over this issue."

"We discussed the situation developing with regard to Russia's demands to the West whose key points stipulate that NATO should abandon its designs on eastward expansion, assume the commitment of not deploying strike weapons near the Russian borders and return to the alliance's military potential and infrastructure in Europe as of 1997 when the Russia-NATO Founding Act was signed. As I have already spoken about, the United States and other members of the alliance are yet unwilling, unfortunately, to perceive these three core elements of our initiative adequately," the Russian president said.

At the same time, the Western counterparts formulated a whole number of ideas on European security, intermediate- and shorter-range missiles and military transparency as the issues that Russia also favors discussing, Putin pointed out.

"And we are ready to move along the negotiating track on condition that all the issues will be discussed comprehensively, without being separated from the key Russian proposals whose implementation is a top priority for us," the Russian leader stressed. Russian military drills are "purely defensive" and "not a threat to any other country," Putin added.

He said: "These military exercises, drills, are purely defensive and are not a threat to any other country."

"They were planned and all the objectives of these drills have been achieved."

Earlier on Friday, Russia announced it was going to be holding nuclear drills on Saturday and Putin would personally be overseeing the exercise, along with Lukashenko. Meanwhile Belarus President Lukashenko in the press conference said that Belarus will build its port near St. Petersburg.

"I am grateful to Vladimir Vladimirovich for giving relevant instructions following my request. We need a port. In violation of international agreements, they closed access to routes and ports where we worked. This is a violation of international norms: if a state does not have access to the sea, the states that have such access have no right to close it. It's a violation. I asked the Russian president to help us with this, to ensure there is no red tape, bureaucracy; it's not about money, we have money for this. The Russian president gave a relevant instruction so that we could build our own port near St. Petersburg and transship millions of tons of cargo there," Lukashenko said. "Instructions were given in my presence so that we could start this construction immediately."

Mudslides, Floods Kill at Least in Brazil

PETROPOLIS (Dispatches) - The death toll from mudslides and floods in Brazil's colonial-era city of Petropolis rose to 117 and was expected to increase further as the region reels from the heaviest rains in almost a century.

Heavy downpours in the afternoon, when the city recorded some 6 cm (2.36 inches) of rain, caused even more soil instability and disrupted efforts to find survivors and clean up the debris. Up to 4 cm of rain is expected overnight in the region, according to meteorologists.

"There are at least six children here and there may be more from the neighbors," said Fabio Alves, a resident, who noted rescuers were not searching that area. "We are estimating more than 10 people buried here and we need help," he said.

More than 700 people had to leave their homes and take shelter in local schools and other makeshift accommodation. Rio de Janeiro Governor Claudio Castro on Wednesday compared the damage to a war zone.

"I am here hoping to find my wife. I'm sure she's here. The downstairs neighbor said she was on the balcony when the mudslide hit," said Marcelo Barbosa, another resident.

There is conflicting information regarding the

number of victims of the tragedy. The police said more than 100 people are missing while the prosecutor's office said at least 35 people are missing.

During the day, the local morgue was forced to use a refrigerated truck as a back-up as more victims were being brought in while other bodies still awaited to be identified by their families.

Rio de Janeiro's civil defense head Leandro Monteiro worked overnight, with poor lighting on soggy ground to find survivors. He is among the more than 500 rescue workers, along with neighbors and relatives of the victims who are still searching for loved ones.

"I've been living here for 44 years and never saw anything like that... All my friends are gone, they are all dead, all buried," resident Maria Jose Dante de Araujo said.

The downpours, which on Tuesday alone exceeded the average for the entire month of February, caused mudslides that flooded streets, destroyed houses, washed away cars and buses, and left gashes hundreds of meters (yards) wide on the region's mountainsides.

It was the heaviest rainfall registered since 1932 in Petropolis, a tourist destination in the hills of Rio de Janeiro state, popularly known as the "Imperial City" as it was the summer getaway of Brazilian royalty in the 19th century.



Leading Edge Russian Forces At Ukrainian Border

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's claims it was pulling forces back from the border are false, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement on Friday, adding that "on the contrary, we see additional forces going to the border including leading edge forces that would be part of any aggression."

Blinken also said that everything Washington has seen happening on Russia's border with Ukraine in the past 24 to 48 hours is part of a scenario of creating false provocations designed to elicit a response. The U.S. top diplomat was speaking at the Munich Security Conference alongside German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock.

Earlier on the same day, the U.S. ambassador to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Michael Carpenter said that Russia's buildup of military personnel threatening Ukraine probably totals up to 190,000 during a meeting on the Ukraine crisis.

Attack on Ethiopia Refugee Camp Kills Five

ADDIS ABABA (Dispatches) - Fighting in northern Ethiopia's Afar region has "engulfed" a camp housing refugees from neighboring Eritrea, the UN said, killing five people and forcing thousands to flee.

The attack earlier this month is the latest blow to the more than 100,000 Eritrean refugees living in Ethiopia, whose camps have been repeatedly caught up in a grinding 15-month war.

It also underscores the growing toll of fighting in Afar, which has emerged in recent weeks as the most active front in the conflict pitting Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) rebel group.

Survivors of the Bahrale camp attack in Afar reported that "at least five refugees were killed and several women were kidnapped" after armed men entered on February 3, the UN refugee agency said in a statement.

"Family members lost one another in the chaos of fleeing the camp," the statement said. The Bahrale camp is situated near the border between Afar and Tigray, the home region of the rebels.

The TPLF controls most of Tigray and in January announced it had expanded operations into Afar, claiming it had been provoked by attacks on its positions by pro-government forces.

Friday's UN statement did not specify which forces the survivors had accused of targeting the camp.

However AFP interviewed several survivors this week in the Afar capital Semera who said they believed the TPLF was responsible. "I had never seen anything like that," refugee Mahamooda Ahmed said, recalling what he described as an assault on civilians, with no pro-government combatants in the area.

"I had never seen soldiers open fire on civilians. There were no soldiers for them to fight. It was civilians, including women and children. And they were using very heavy weapons."

Niger Accepts Foreign Forces To Secure Border

PARIS (Dispatches) - President Mohamed Bazoum says Niger has accepted that French and European Special Forces will be deployed into its territory from Mali to boost security near the border with its neighboring country.

Bazoum's comments on Friday came a day after France and European allies announced they would begin withdrawing troops from Mali fighting armed groups operating in the western portion of Africa's Sahel region.

"Our goal is for our border with Mali to be secure," Bazoum said on Twitter, adding that he expected threats from the armed groups to rise in the area following the departure of the forces.

"This area will be even more infested and the terrorist groups will strengthen. We know that they are destined to extend their influence," Bazoum said, adding the deployed forces would be able to respond to threats from armed groups in the area.

Some 2,400 French troops that were part of the forces deployed in Mali to combat groups linked to al-Qaeda and ISIS (ISIS), and about 900 special forces in the French-led Takuba task force, are expected to leave Mali in coming months.

Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso have struggled to contain armed groups that have killed hundreds, displaced millions and made swathes of territory in the tri-border West African Sahel area ungovernable.

Maïkol Zodi, a leader of a movement that has been leading protests against foreign troops in Niger, said on Thursday that their presence was illegal.

"It is unacceptable and intolerable to accept this redeployment on our territory. If they do, we will treat them as an occupying force," Zodi said.

Mali has struggled to regain stability since 2012, when ethnic Tuareg rebels and loosely aligned armed groups seized the northern two-thirds of the country.

Forces from former colonial power France intervened and helped beat the armed groups in 2013, but the fighters regrouped in the desert and began carrying out regular attacks on the army and civilians. They have since exported their methods to neighboring Burkina Faso and Niger where violence has skyrocketed in recent years, leaving a grave humanitarian crisis in its wake.



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6bdrs, S/p
S, J, terrace
green yard
Nicely Furn

Farmanieh (\$1700) 2bdrs
Farmanieh (\$2200) 3bdrs
Farmanieh (\$2800) 4bdrs
All with S/p, S, J, & F.F

Shahrak-e-Gharb Villa (\$5000)
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terrace, green yard, & F.F

(\$2000)
Dibaji Apt
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S/p, S, J, & F.F

Darrous (\$1800) 3bdrs
Darrous (\$2600) 4bdrs
Both with S/p, S, J, & F.F

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Britain Sees Record Investment in £10b Cyber Sector

LONDON (Dispatches) - British cyber security firms raised more than £1b in 84 deals last year, as foreign investors tapped into growth in capabilities such as network security and threat monitoring, government data showed.

Companies that received new investment included Bristol-based Immersive Labs, which raised £53.5 million, and London-headquartered Tessian, which secured more than £52 million, the government said in its Annual Cyber Sector Report.

Employment across the industry rose 13 per cent, with more than 6,000 new jobs created, to bring the total number of people working in cyber in Britain to 52,700, the report said.



Inflation, Geopolitical Risks Threaten Recovery

LONDON (Dispatches) - Finance leaders from the Group of 20 major economies view inflation and geopolitical risks as threats to a global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that already is "asynchronous" due to uneven access to vaccines, a draft communique obtained by Reuters showed.

The G20 finance ministers and central bank governors, meeting both virtually and in Jakarta, pledged in the draft to use "all available policy tools to address the impacts of the pandemic," but warned that future policy space was likely to be "narrower and uneven."

"We will continue to strengthen the resilience of global supply chains. We remain vigilant of the impacts of these challenges on our economies," the G20 finance ministers and central bank governors said in the draft statement, which will be finalized on Friday, when their meeting concludes.

"We will also continue to monitor major global risks, including those arising from (current) geopolitical tensions and macroeconomic and financial vulnerabilities," the ministers said.

The statement contained no direct reference to the crisis on the Ukraine-Russia border, and the word "current" in brackets indicates that it may be deleted. Russia is a member of the G20.

Fears that Russia might invade Ukraine overshadowed the start of a meeting that was expected to focus heavily on growing risks from inflation and monetary tightening to control it. Indonesian President Joko Widodo issued a direct warning that tensions over Ukraine could disrupt the recovery, adding "now is not the time for rivalry." Moscow has denied it is planning an invasion of its neighbor.

The finance leaders said in the draft communique that inflation is currently elevated in many countries, prompted in part by "supply disruptions, supply demand mismatches and increased commodity prices, including energy prices." "Central banks will act where necessary to ensure price stability in line with their respective mandates, while remaining committed to clear communication of their policy stances," the ministers and governors said, adding that central bank independence was crucial for credibility.

They confirmed a commitment to "well-calibrated, well-planned and well-communicated exit strategies to support recovery, with due consideration for individual country circumstances."

The G20 finance leaders voiced support for ensuring timely and affordable access to COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics and other medical supplies for low- and middle-income countries, according to the draft.

They asked the G20 Joint Finance-Health Task Force to report by April on options to establish a fund for pandemic preparedness, for further work in July and in October with G20 health ministers.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen earlier on Thursday urged her G20 counterparts to back the proposed fund, with needed health system investments estimated at \$75 billion.

The G20 finance leaders affirmed their commitment to developing the rules and other instruments to implement a global tax agreement reached last year to put the new rules into effect in 2023.

Australian Unemployment Holds at 13-Year Low

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Australia's unemployment rate held at a 13-year low in January as a surge in coronavirus cases took more of a toll on hours worked than on jobs, and hiring still rising moderately in the month.

Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics on Thursday showed employment rose 12,900 in January, pipping forecasts of a flat outcome and following two months of exceptional gains.

The unemployment rate stayed at 4.2%, matching the lowest reading since 2008 when it bottomed out at 4.0%. The impact of the Omicron wave was felt most in hours worked which slid 8.8% as employees stayed home sick or were forced to isolate.

Yet these workers remained attached to their jobs and unemployment barely moved, setting the stage for a quick rebound now that coronavirus cases have tapered off.

"As cases have fallen sharply we expect the impact on the labor market to fade in February," said Ben Udy, an economist at Capital Economics.

"It highlights the resilience of the labor market and supports our forecast that the RBA will hike rates in June."

The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) has been aiming to drive unemployment to 4% or lower in the hope of reviving wage growth after years of sub-par growth, and is now near that goal.

The tightening labor market combined with rising inflation also suggests a rate rise is getting closer. RBA Governor Philip Lowe last week said it was plausible a hike could come later in the year should the economy recover as expected.

Markets are wagering the 0.1% cash rate could rise to 0.25% as early as June, and keep climbing to 1.25% by year end. Among the major local banks, CBA is tipping a first rise in June, Westpac sees August, ANZ September and NAB November. Much will depend on how wages progress with the ABS wage price measure for the December quarter due next week.

Analysts look for an uptick to 2.4%, which would be the fastest pace since 2014 but short of the 3%-plus desired by the RBA.

Still, the central bank recently emphasized it was looking at a wider suite of labor cost indicators and not just wages to decide when to tighten policy.

Analysts took that as a sign the RBA could hike even with wages running at less than 3%.

"ABS data, private surveys and our internal data that captures salaries paid into CBA bank accounts indicates that wages growth has further accelerated," says Gareth Aird, CBA's head of Australian economics. He also expects the consumer price report for the March quarter to show an alarming acceleration in core inflation to 3.5%, up from 2.6% and above the RBA's 2-3% target band.



Iraq Strengthens Grip on India Oil Market

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's imports of oil from Iraq surged in January to a 29-month high of about 1.3 million barrels per day (bpd), making up nearly a third of the supplies to Asia's third largest economy, data from shipping and industry sources show.

Iraq's importance as a key supplier is set to grow this year as at least two Indian refiners have increased their annual oil import deals with the second biggest OPEC producer.

India imported 4.6 million bpd of oil in January, a decline of about 1% from the previous month and about 3% from the year earlier, data compiled by Reuters showed. Imports from Iraq were the highest since Aug. 2019.

From April 2021 through January 2022, the first 10 months of this fiscal year, India, the world's third biggest oil importer and consumer, shipped in 4.2 million bpd of oil, up 6.5% from a year ago, as refiners raised runs to meet rising fuel demand.

India's oil imports in February and March could rise as state refiners, which make up 60% of its total capacity of 5 million bpd, traditionally raise runs in the final fiscal quarter to meet production targets set by the government.

Indian refiners buy medium to heavy grades from the Middle East under annual deals at official selling prices (OSPs) and rely on the spot market for most of their requirement for sweet light oil, mainly from West Africa.

Brent crude's premium to Dubai swaps, or the spread between low- and high-sulphur crude, averaged \$4.58 a barrel in November, said Refinitiv analyst Ehsan Ul Haq.

Turkey's Central Bank Leaves Policy Rate Unchanged at 14%

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's central bank held interest rates unchanged at 14% for a second meeting on Thursday, in line with the market expectations.

All 22 economists earlier surveyed by Bloomberg expected the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT) to keep the benchmark one-week repo rate unchanged. Economists surveyed by AA Finance also predicted that the policy rate would remain at 14%. The median of economists' year-end policy rate expectations was 14%.

The bank said in a statement that it is expecting the disinflation process to start on the back of measures taken and financial stability along with the decline in inflation thanks to the base effect.

It also underlined the level of capacity utilization and other leading indicators showing that domestic economic activity remains strong thanks to robust external demand.

"Strengthening of the improving trend in the current account balance is important for price stability," the statement said, adding: "The committee assesses that extending long-term Turkish lira investment credit will play a significant role in achieving this target."

The bank also said the share of sustainable components of economic growth continues to increase, with the current account balance expected to post a surplus in 2022.

Turkey saw a 48.69% annual hike in consumer prices in January.

In January, the bank sent an open letter to the government to explain why inflation diverged from its target of 5% and the measures to reach its goals concerning prices.

The statement also underscored that the bank is currently conducting a "comprehensive monetary policy review" to achieve permanent price stability, and the strategy it adopted to boost the use of Turkish lira in the country - known as "liraization" - would be "the most crucial part of this process."

The lender in 2021 followed a period of aggressive rate cuts with a total of 500 basis points since September but paused the easing cycle in January.

Amid a high loss in national currency value, the central bank has also introduced incentives for a Turkish lira-protected saving scheme to stabilize the currency.

Selva Bahar Baziki, Turkey and Sweden Economist for Bloomberg Economics who told Bloomberg that they did not expect a rate hike, said: "We expect to see the CBRT put a higher reliance on alternative policy instruments, such as reserve requirements and rediscount credits for exporting sectors, as the main policy tool remains unchanged."

Airbus Posts Record Profit, Eyes More Deliveries in 2022

PARIS (Dispatches) - European aircraft giant Airbus posted record profits in 2021 after two years of losses as it cruises past the pandemic-induced crisis in the travel industry, company results showed.

Net profit surged to €4.2 billion with deliveries of aircraft rising eight per cent to €611 planes, Airbus said in an earnings statement.

Signaling its optimistic outlook for the future, the company is targeting 720 commercial aircraft deliveries in 2022.

"2021 was a year of transition, where our attention shifted from navigating the pandemic towards recovery and growth," Airbus chief executive Guillaume Faury said in the earnings statement.

"Thanks to the resilience and efforts of our teams, customers and suppliers, we delivered remarkable full-year results," he said.

The good results were due to the higher number of deliveries, good performance of the company's helicopter, defense and space businesses, and efforts to contain costs, Faury said.

Deliveries are an important gauge of profitability in the aviation industry as clients pay most of their bills when they receive their orders.

In its guidance for 2022, Airbus said it "assumes no further disruptions to the world economy, air traffic, the Company's internal operations, and its ability to deliver products and services," Airbus said.

The air travel industry collapsed in 2020 as the emergence of Covid-19 prompted countries to close borders.

Airbus drastically reduced production and cut 10,000 jobs when Covid spread around the world in 2020.

The group, which employs more than 126,000, plans to recruit 6,000 people this year.

The company has ramped up production again, making 45 single-aisle A320 planes per month late last year after the pace had fallen to 40 in 2020.

It plans to produce 65 A320 planes per month in 2023.

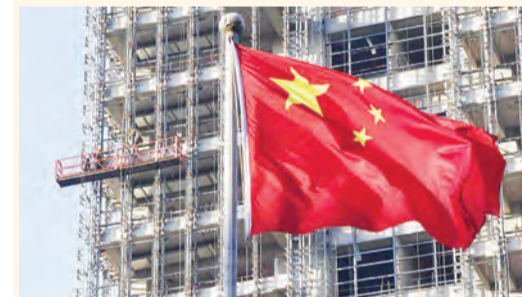
Revenue rose four percent to €52.1 billion last year thanks to the higher number of commercial aircraft deliveries.

Its adjusted operating profit reached €477 million as the company abandoned its A380 jumbo jet program.

The company also fielded 507 net orders, almost double from 2020, including the first orders of its new A350 freighter.

Airbus will return profits to shareholders with plans to offer a dividend payment of €1.50 per share.

China Expanded Statist Economic Policies Over 20 Years in WTO



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - China has not adopted the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO) even after 20 years' membership, the United States said, adding that the world's second-biggest economy had "retained and expanded" its statist approach to the detriment of businesses and workers globally.

"China also has a long history of violating, disregarding and circumventing WTO rules to achieve its industrial policy objectives," said an annual report to Congress by the office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Ambassador Katherine Tai, laying out the Biden administration's assessment of China's WTO membership.

Based in Geneva, Switzerland, the WTO works to enforce rules governing international trade, including promoting fair competition and open trade.

When it joined in December 2001, Beijing said it would embrace those principles, Tai said.

"China has instead retained and expanded its state-led, non-market approach to the economy and trade," she said.

"It is clear that in pursuing that approach, China's policies and practices challenge the premise of the WTO's rules and cause serious harm to workers and businesses around the world, particularly in industries targeted by China's industrial plans."

The United States has long denounced Chinese practices, such as its subsidies for public companies.

Beijing is also accused of stealing intellectual property and forcibly transferring know-how and technology from foreign companies in exchange for market access.

These were among practices cited by former U.S. president Donald Trump when he launched a trade war against China in 2018 with punitive customs duties.

The USTR noted yesterday that the United States had also pushed China to comply with the standards in bilateral discussions.

However, the 72-page report pointed to only "isolated" progress and lamented that China's commitments to fundamentally change its approach had not borne fruit.

2 Flights a Week to Be Carried Out On Baku-Tehran Route

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Two flights will be operated in direction of Baku-Tehran and vice versa a week, under the agreement reached between Azerbaijani and Iranian officials, Spokesman for Iranian Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) Mirakbar Razavi said. According to Razavi, the flights will be operated by airlines of both countries. The spokesman noted that increasing the number of flights between the countries will be on the agenda with the reduction of restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic.



Worker Shortage Jeopardizes Spain's EU-Funded Recovery Plan

MADRID (Dispatches) - When Spain's decade-long housing boom spectacularly bust in 2008, some 1.8 million jobs vanished and a nation littered with cranes and building sites slid into brutal recession.

Now those construction workers are urgently needed back: an unprecedented labor shortage is jeopardizing multi-billion euro building and renovation projects funded by the European Union to help Spain's economy recover from COVID-19.

As elsewhere around the continent, Spain is short of at least half a million building workers, according to unions and companies. Firms are training new staff round the clock, paying better, and leaning on migrants from Africa and Latin America.

"If you have a certificate, companies will hire you," enthused Moustapha Diedhiou during a break in an evening class for scaffolding in Madrid.

The 32-year-old Senegalese arrived on a rickety boat in 2019, picked fruit for a living during the pandemic, but now works as a bricklayer thanks to another previous course.

Though scaffolding is riskier, he can earn more.

Despite such keenness, at least seven out of 10 construction companies had to turn down contracts in 2021 due to lack of staff, according to preliminary data seen by Reuters of a survey from Spain's main building association.

And that before the first 5 billion euros (\$5.65 billion) in housing rehabilitation funds go to tender this spring.

After Italy, Spain is receiving the most EU aid: around 140 billion euros (\$166 billion), half grants and half loans.

The government is pinning hopes of 7% economic growth this year on the funds, but red tape, material shortages and labor gaps are hampering investment.

Spain had almost 3 million real estate workers before the 2008 implosion, after which many took refuge in the equally massive tourism sector. Now they seem reluctant to come back. So employers, unions and the government have clubbed together to run free training courses for would-be builders. They drew 90,000 people in 2021, and the target now is 200,000.

At one Madrid course earlier this month, most signing up were migrants from non-EU countries, optimistic that along with Spain, they too would see a turnaround in their fortunes.

Francisco Dieguez, director of a training institute in Catalonia, said a construction worker's typical annual salary of 24,000 euros surpassed some architects' wages.

Most other manual workers are on about 18,500 euros.

Jose Adel Sosua, who teaches the Senegalese immigrant Diedhiou, is dismayed at how hard it is to attract students, blaming bad memories of the housing crash.

"Many Spaniards don't want to do these courses, in part as they are a bit afraid of going back to work in this sector," said Sousa, whose 15 students only included one Spaniard.

Spain is second only to Greece for unemployment in Europe, with nearly one in three young people out of work. A survey of those aged 15-29 in work last year found that 11% were working on building sites.

"Here in Spain they say that if you don't study you have to be a bricklayer, as if it were a punishment," said Sergio Estela, a leader at Spain's General Workers Union (UGT-FICA).

Crane operators, carpenters, welders and site managers are most scarce, according to a dozen sources from unions and companies, because they require officially accredited training.

Ismael Lazaro, a 24-year-old Spaniard, took a welding course after losing his job as an Amazon delivery driver. He is the only one among his friends trying to enter construction. "My mother told me there was a lot of demand for welders," he said.

The predicament is echoed around Europe.

Though less pummeled by the pandemic, Germany, France, Ireland and the United Kingdom also lack hundreds of thousands of construction workers, employers' associations say.



Combined with supply chain disruptions, that has pressured wages and prices in the sector, contributing to record euro zone inflation.

"It's a complicated balance between finding qualified workers, having to pay more and dealing with investors fighting hard on prices," said Miguel Fernandez, 42, director general in Spain for construction and design firm Tetris.

Germany's industry lobby association ZDB said more employees were retiring than apprentices joining the construction workforce, with about 150,000 workers expected to go in the next decade.

"Jobs remain unfilled for a long time. Even apprenticeships remain vacant, although we train more and more every year," said ZDB spokesperson Ilona Klein.

Germany is relying on migrants too. Building sites are dominated by central and southern Europeans, who accounted for 22% of the workforce in 2021, up from 8% in 2008.

Like Spain, Ireland haemorrhaged workers at the end of its own "Celtic Tiger" housing boom in 2007.

Now, the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council (IFAC) estimates the number of builders must increase by around a third to 180,000 to meet demand amid record foreign investment. Tech giants Facebook and LinkedIn are constructing massive campuses in Dublin.

Back in Madrid, dozens of undocumented migrants gather early each day in the Plaza Eliptica square, hoping to be picked by drive-by employers seeking temporary painters or bricklayers.

Some 400,000 foreign workers left after Spain's 2008 financial crisis, many using EU residency to find work elsewhere in the region. Down to just 13% of construction workers in 2012, they are back to one in five now.

"The square is the salvation for migrants who need work," said Alberto, a 54-year-old welder who arrived six months ago from Colombia.

National Chamber of Construction (CNC) president Pedro Fernández Alén wants more state support for training, including incorporating more women in the male-dominated sector.

Spain's jobless should be prioritized, but "if we don't find workers, we will have to go abroad to bring them in," he said.

"Otherwise, many of the projects we want to start up will be unmanned and we will stop receiving European funds."

World Funds Own Destruction With \$1.8 Trillion Subsidies

LONDON (Dispatches) - The world must slash \$1.8 trillion in annual subsidies that destroy the environment, according to a study Thursday from business groups including one founded by tycoon Richard Branson.

The report, estimating the value of damaging state subsidies, was commissioned by Branson's nonprofit initiative The B Team and global coalition Business for Nature, which comprises academic, corporate and environmental organizations.

The vast subsidies, totaling two percent of global GDP, fund the "global destruction of nature" and governments worldwide must act, the two organizations added in a statement.

The study "finds the fossil fuel, agriculture and water industries receive more than 80 percent of all environmentally harmful subsidies per year", the organizations concluded.

And they called upon governments to "redirect, repurpose or eliminate" those subsidies by 2030 to help "finance a net zero global economy".

Governments across the world pay an estimated \$640 billion in support to the fossil fuel industry, contributing to climate change, air and water pollution and land subsidence, the study found.

Iran Warns Europe Over...

FROM PAGE 1

Gharibabadi said the United States and Europe have committed the most heinous crimes against Iran by supporting terrorist groups, sheltering them and excluding them from the list of terrorist groups as well as imposing or implementing unlawful and oppressive sanctions.

"The European Parliament and European countries must stand accountable for their human rights violations against Iranians. They are in no position to preach others in the field of human rights," the top Iranian rights official stated.

After it was founded more than 50 years ago, the MKO launched a campaign of bombings and assassinations in Iran. Out of the nearly 17,000 Iranians killed in terrorist attacks over the past four decades, about 12,000 have fallen victim to the group's acts of terror. The ill-famed MKO is currently based in Albania, where it enjoys freedom of activity after being delisted by the European Union and the United States in 2009 and 2012, respectively.

Regardless of its disrepute around the world, the MKO has in recent years held numerous big events, attended by senior American, Israeli and Saudi officials, including former US Senator John McCain, former Mayor of New York City Rudy Giuliani, former US National Security Advisor John Bolton, former US Senator Joe Lieberman, and former director of Saudi intelligence agency Turki bin Faisal Al Saud.

Gharibabadi also denounced the recent European Parliament resolution on the death penalty in Iran, saying it is based on political goals and fails to represent the existing realities in the country.

"This resolution encompasses distorted and fabricated issues and is not consistent with the existing realities in Iran, but it has been prepared with completely political purposes." The Iranian official said the execution penalty is being implemented in 55 countries throughout the world and urged the European Parliament and European countries to respect other nations' laws and cultural diversity when it comes to human rights issues.

According to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the death penalty is permissible when it comes to capital crimes, he said, criticizing the Europeans for imposing their own standards on other countries in contradiction to their sovereignty. Europeans must learn to respect national sovereignty of other countries and know that they cannot support their criminal citizens and demand their release through threats, the Iranian official said.

OPEC+ Would Seek...

FROM PAGE 1

OPEC+ is gradually boosting oil output after making record cuts in 2020 when demand collapsed due to the pandemic. But it has failed to hit its target because some producers did not make the investment or do the maintenance needed on oilfields during the pandemic to keep those facilities ready to increase output quickly.

For the United States, it would make sense to lift the sanctions on Iran to help lower prices given the domestic pressure the administration of President Joe Biden is facing due to rising inflation. The United States may also be considering that any output from Iran would ease the impact on global oil markets of any conflict between Russia and the Ukraine, a source familiar with Russian oil thinking said.

"The U.S. will surely lift the sanction from Iran as soon as they decide to put more pressure on Russia given the current tensions over Ukraine," the source said. "Iranian oil will cool oil prices."

OPEC+ sources have also made the point that extra Iranian supply could also help plug the hole in OPEC's output target misses. OPEC+ has not dealt with this issue by, for example,

Theft in...

FROM PAGE 1

Halema Wali, cofounder of Afghans for a Better Tomorrow, a U.S.-based advocacy group, stressed that the money in the Afghan central bank belongs to the people of Afghanistan, who are experiencing a dire humanitarian crisis.

With skyrocketing inflation and the state institutions in shambles, the Afghan economy – which has depended on foreign aid – is all but falling apart. The UN World Food Program has warned that 23 million people are facing "severe hunger" in the country.

Reacting to this decision, the Taliban said Afghanistan will be forced to reconsider its policy towards the United States unless Washington reverses a decision to freeze part of the country's assets as compensation for victims of the 9/11 attacks.

The move drew an angry response from the country's new Taliban leaders, which branded the seizure a "theft" and a sign of U.S. "moral decay."

"The 9/11 attacks had nothing to do with Afghanistan," said Monday's statement, signed by deputy spokesman Inamullah Samangani.

"Any misappropriation of the property of the Afghan people under the pretext of this incident is a clear violation of the agreement reached with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan," the statement added, using the Taliban's name for the country.

"If the United States does not deviate from its position and continues its provocative actions, the Islamic Emirate will also be forced to reconsider its policy towards the country."

This is not the first time that the U.S. confiscates the wealth and money of the nations in its own or nationals' favor under different pretexts.

The U.S. governments once in a while perform new form of their piracy and looting which are sometimes inspired from the Hollywood movies or inspire the Hollywood directors to copy the U.S. officials' innovation in theft or action thrillers in countries.

Iransians very well know this type of sophisticated theft of the Americans as they have experienced it since 1979 when the Islamic Republic was established and billions of dollars of the country were blocked in the U.S. banks and every time some incident happens in the world and against American nationals, the American officials use Iran's frozen money to pay damage to the victims of the incidents while Iran has no role in them.

Afghan people gradually will realize that for years they have been fooled by the U.S. officials and it is time to stand against this arrogant country to get back its money. Although the UN has urged the U.S. to release the whole amount of Afghanistan's money, the U.S. officials have ignored it while Afghans are struggling with poverty and several shortages.

It is time for the world and international bodies to rise against the U.S. theft under different pretexts because the number of countries falling prey to the U.S. is on the rise and nations are the main victims of the U.S. theft and sanctions.

FM Hopes JCPOA Talks...

FROM PAGE 1

Tehran says it will not settle for anything less than the removal of all US sanctions in a verifiable manner. It also wants guarantees that Washington would not abandon the agreement again.

Head of the Russian negotiating team Mikhail Ulyanov also said in a post on his Twitter account that in an interview with ITAR-TASS earlier in the day, he "expressed a slightly more optimistic point of view" about the talks between Iran and the P4+1 group of countries.

"The Vienna Talks on #JCPOA can be successfully completed by the end of this month," Ulyanov, who serves as Russia's Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna, tweeted.

Demand for...

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile the Iranian deputy minister of agriculture said Saturday that a Russian delegation will visit Iran this week, expressing hope that after the visit, the exports of bell peppers to Russia will resume.

Mohammad Mehdi Boroumandi said that the Russian delegation will arrive in Iran on Monday night to visit the bell pepper farms in the country.

"We are hosting a Russian delegation for four days and they are traveling to Iran to visit bell pepper farms, packaging centers and laboratories," the Iranian official added.

Boroumandi continued, "In addition to Tehran, the Russians will visit the provinces of Isfahan, Mazandaran and East Azerbaijan." He went on to express hope that after the visit the export of bell pepper to Russia will resume.

Regarding the resumption of kiwi exports to India, the Iranian deputy agriculture minister said that "we are in talks with India in this regard."

Bonucci Injured Again and Could Miss Crucial Games

TURIN (Dispatches) - Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri said that Leonardo Bonucci missed the clash with Torino through injury, having just returned to action, and it remains uncertain whether the defender will be fit for next week's Champions League.

The Italy center back played his first games of 2022 last week following a spell on the sidelines with a muscle injury, but his manager had further bad news over Bonucci's fitness.

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De Minaur Denies Paying For Fake Vaccine Pass

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Australian tennis player Alex de Minaur has denied wrongdoing after being linked to a Spanish police investigation of people suspected of paying for false COVID-19 vaccination certificates.

Spanish media reported that De Minaur is among 2,200 people that the National Police say are under investigation for having paid a criminal ring for forged certificates.

Norway Set Golden Record at Beijing Games

ZHANGJIAKOU (Dispatches) - Norway's Johannes Thingnes Boe won the men's biathlon 15km mass start to claim their 15th gold medal at the Beijing Games on Friday, a Winter Olympics record achieved due to the country's high level of professionalism across the board. read more

With two cross-country skiing races left, Norway already has victories in the biathlon, ski jumping, Nordic combined, speed skating, cross-country and freestyle skiing, so no-one could accuse them of being one-trick ponies.

"Yeah, that's something to remember, even though we'll probably get one more during this weekend. I was thinking about this on the last lap, it's cool to be the guy that does the 15th gold," a delighted Boe told Reuters.

Such is their depth of talent that Norway could afford to lose athletes of the caliber of Jarl Magnus Riiber (Nordic combined) and Simen Hegstad Krueger (cross-country skiing) to COVID-19 for much of the Games and still beat the record.

At the Beijing Games there are 109 gold medals in total, up from 102 in Pyeongchang four years ago and a far cry from the 16 on offer at the first Winter Olympics at Chamonix in 1924.

Marte Olsbu Roeseland and Boe led the Norwegian medal charge in the 2022 biathlon events, with Therese Johaug and Johannes Klaebo doing the same a short distance away at the cross-country track, while at the ski jumping venue in between Marius Lindvik took gold on the large hill.

At Pyeongchang 2018, Germany and Norway had equalled the record of 14 gold medals won by a country at one Winter Olympics Games, matching the tally Canada had set at Vancouver 2010.

Norway's chef de mission Tore Oevreboe is not surprised by the country's success at the Winter Games.

"There are quite a few reasons why we're a superpower in the winter sports. It has something to do with the format of the competitions," he told Reuters before the record fell.

"We're good at sports with many events that make it possible to take many medals, if you're good at those sports and have quite a few athletes that are at a top level in those sports."

The knowledge of how Norway achieve their victories is minutely analyzed and shared.



"At the top level, we are very, very professional. We have very professional national teams and we are working closely together with the national teams, working across the sports, so they learn from each other."

The Norwegians also had a long-term approach when taking the altitude at the Beijing Games into account.

"Some of the sports have chosen to do much more of their basic physical work at high altitude than others," Oevreboe said.

"From my experience, as a coach and also a former athlete, I think it's very important to spend many, many, many weeks and days, even months, at high altitude the last two or three years before you have a competition at higher altitude."

For Oevreboe Norway's gold medals are a result of many factors and he is well aware things can change quickly in sport.

"Sometimes the competition is tougher than you think, then you will feel more disappointed than when the competition is a little bit lower than maybe expected," he said.

"Then they feel more happy. But we are very proud on the performance side of it, so we try to analyze what is what, and we try to develop even when we are at the top level."



Djokovic Eager for Dubai Comeback

DUBAI (Dispatches) - World number one Novak Djokovic said he has missed playing tennis as he prepares for his comeback in Dubai after the coronavirus vaccine row that kept him from defending his Australian Open title.

The Serb, who was deported from Australia over his vaccination status, toured the Serbian pavilion at Dubai Expo, removing his black mask when requested and writing a long message in the visitors' book.

"I am excited to go back and play on Monday," he said, referring to the Dubai ATP tournament during brief remarks to media. "I miss tennis after all that has happened."

The 20-time Grand Slam-winner has kept a low profile since his deportation last month over his potentially career-changing decision not to take the coronavirus vaccine.

Spanish rival Rafael Nadal won the Australian Open in Melbourne to become the first player to win 21 major titles, one ahead of Djokovic and Roger Federer.

This week, Djokovic told the BBC he was not anti-vaccination but that he was prepared to miss more major tournaments over his refusal to get jabbed.

"Yes, that is the price that I'm willing to pay," he said.

"I was prepared not to go to Australia. I understand not being vaccinated today, I am unable to travel to most of the tournaments at the moment," Djokovic added.

Halep Surges Into Dubai Semis

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Simona Halep continued her excellent start to the year by powering past Ons Jabeur and into the semi-finals of the WTA event in Dubai, while Jelena Ostapenko saved a match point to edge out Petra Kvitova.

Former world number one Halep, now ranked 23rd after a series of injuries, saw off Tunisian eighth seed Jabeur 6-4, 6-3 in the last eight.

Two-time Grand Slam champion Halep has won 11 of her 12 matches this season after winning an Australian Open warm-up event before a run to the last 16 in the first major tournament of 2022.

The Romanian star has lifted 23 WTA Tour titles, but will next have to pass a tricky test against Ostapenko in a rematch of their dramatic 2017 French Open final, won by the Latvian. The world number 21 is starting to get back towards her best after slipping out of the top 50 last year.

Ostapenko reached her second semi-final in as many weeks after also making the last four in Saint Petersburg.

But the 24-year-old needed to survive a thrilling clash with fellow former Grand Slam winner Kvitova, battling to a 5-7, 7-5, 7-6 (11/9) victory.

Ostapenko was a set and a break down before Kvitova failed to serve out the match in the 10th game of the second set.

Ostapenko made it four straight games to force a decider, which finished in a lengthy tie-break.

She saved one match point before finally getting over the line on her fourth attempt.

Mercedes, Red Bull Could Be Playing Catch-Up In New F1 Season

LONDON (Dispatches) - Formula One managing director Ross Brawn believes Mercedes and Red Bull could be off the pace when the new season starts next month after they were caught up in last year's "intense" world championship battle.

Lewis Hamilton was poised to capture a record-breaking eighth world title at the Abu Dhabi finale in December before a controversial safety car restart allowed Dutch driver Max Verstappen to pass his British rival on the last lap.

Shapovalov Knocked out of Qatar Open



DOHA (Dispatches) - Top seed Denis Shapovalov lost in straight sets to Frenchman Arthur Rinderknech in the quarter-finals of the Qatar Open.

World number 61 Rinderknech broke once in each set to advance 6-4, 6-4 to a semi-final against Nikoloz Basilashvili, the third seed and defending champion in Doha.

"It feels great to win and be through to the semi-finals, especially against a great player,"

said Rinderknech. "I am really happy. I worked pretty hard during the off-season, I think my body is in good shape, which helps."

Georgia's Basilashvili, who began the 2022 season with six consecutive defeats, fought back to defeat Marton Fucsovics 1-6, 6-3, 7-5.

Basilashvili, ranked 22 in the world, defeated Roger Federer in last year's tournament.

Spanish second seed Roberto Bautista Agut, who sent Andy Murray crashing to his heaviest loss in over seven years on Wednesday, was just as ruthless with compatriot Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

Bautista Agut, the Qatar champion in 2019, centered to a 6-1, 6-1 win and will face either Marin Cilic or Karen Khachanov for a place in the final.

Hamilton Hungry for F1 Return



LONDON (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton said today he was ready to attack the new Formula One season after getting over a "difficult time" following the traumatic end to his 2021 world championship campaign.

The British driver, 37, was speaking for the first time since he lost the championship in controversial circumstances to Max Verstappen in Abu Dhabi on December 12.

Hamilton was poised to capture a record-breaking eighth world title at the season finale before a controversial safety car restart allowed Dutch driver Verstappen to pass his British rival on the last lap.

The seven-time world champion was disillusioned following his defeat and, at one stage, it was unclear if he would return to the grid.

But Hamilton, speaking at the launch of the Mercedes car for the 2022 season — and a day after Michael Masi was removed as F1 race director — said he was still hungry for more success.

"I never ever said I was going to stop," he insisted. "I love doing what I do, and it is such a privilege working with this large group of people and you feel like you are part of a family. There is nothing quite like it."

Maguire Denies Reports Of Ronaldo Rift At Man Utd



LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United captain Harry Maguire has denied reports of a power struggle with Cristiano Ronaldo as the club battle to end the season in the Premier League's top four.

Maguire has been well below his best this season and it has been reported that the United skipper feels undermined by Ronaldo's influence, with his continued role as captain questioned.

United forward Marcus Rashford dismissed talk of a dressing room divide involving Ronaldo earlier this week and Maguire has denied the latest reports.

"I've seen a lot of reports about this club that aren't true and this is another," he posted on Twitter today ahead of Sunday's Premier League match at Leeds.

"Not going to start posting about everything that is written but I needed to make this one clear. We're united and focused on Sunday. Enjoy your day everyone."

United's 2-0 win against Brighton on Tuesday lifted them back into fourth place in the English top-flight — the top four teams all qualify for next season's Champions League.

But the club, under interim manager Ralf Rangnick, face a tough battle, with a number of other sides also in the mix, most of whom have games in hand.