

**Government Spokesman
Ali Bahadori-Jahromi Said
In Reaction to the Developments
In Ukraine That War Was Not a
Solution to the Ongoing Crisis
In the European Country**

IRAN NEWS

**Hungary Says It Will Spare No Effort
to Facilitate the Exit of Iranian
Nationals Caught Up in Conflict-Torn
Ukraine and Their Safe Return Home
Via Hungarian Soil**

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2 DOMESTIC

**West Urged to
Take Courageous
Decision in Vienna**



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

**Italians Still Keen
To Work With Iran**



> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

**Russian Troops Advance
On Kiev as Ukrainian
Leader Pleads for Help**



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

**Man Utd Escape With a
Draw at Atletico Madrid**



> SEE PAGE 8

No Guarantee Vienna Talks Will Cross Finish Line

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's top negotiator says the talks in Vienna on reviving the 2015 deal are near conclusion, cautioning that there is no guarantee negotiators will be able to cross the "finish line" without "certain decisions" by the West.

"Being near the finish line is no guarantee to crossing that" by sealing an accord aimed at putting the deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on track, Ali Bagheri Kani said in a post on his Twitter account on Thursday.

"It requires extra caution, much perseverance, additional creativity and a balanced approach to take the last step," he said. "To finish the job, there are certain decisions that our Western interlocutors need to take."

Being near the finish line is no guarantee to crossing that. It requires extra caution, much perseverance, additional creativity and balanced approach to take the last step.

He was apparently responding to remarks by his Russian counterpart, Mikhail Ulyanov, who said in a tweet on Tuesday, "Apparently the negotiations on restoration of JCPOA are about to cross the finish line."

See Page 7

NATO Expansion, Serious Threat Against Security of Independent States



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi says the continued expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) threatens stability and security of independent countries.

Raisi made the remarks in a late Thursday phone call with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, during which the two sides discussed major international developments and the ongoing negotiations in the Austrian capital for the revival of the 2015 landmark Iran deal.

In his conversation with the Russian president, Iran's chief executive said, "The eastward expansion of NATO is a source of tension."

"The continued expansion of NATO is a serious threat against the stability and security of independent countries in various regions" of the world," Iran's president said.

He expressed hope that what is going on in Ukraine would finally benefit the nations and the entire region.

The phone call came amid Russia's military operation in the eastern parts of Ukraine, which started after Putin said he had ordered the Russian Federation's military to carry out a "special military operation" in the Donbass region. Putin's order came after the leaders of the self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Lugansk in the Donbass region asked the Kremlin for military assistance in response to what they called "Ukrainian aggression."

In 2014, Ukraine's two regions of Donetsk and Lugansk were turned into self-proclaimed republics by ethnic Russians, leading to a bloody conflict between the government forces and the armed separatists.

On Monday, Putin signed a decree recognizing the breakaway Lugansk and Donetsk regions as independent republics. The recognition followed an address in which he referred to eastern Ukraine as "ancient Russian lands" being "managed by foreign powers."

In another part of his remarks, Raisi reflected on the ongoing Vienna talks for the revival of the Iran deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), saying that during the negotiations, the Islamic Republic of Iran seeks to achieve a sustainable agreement, not a temporary one.

"Offering a credible guarantee [by the U.S. that it will not withdraw from the deal again], putting an end to political claims and verifiable removal of sanctions [imposed on Tehran] are prerequisites for achieving a sustainable agreement," Iran's president said.

The Russian president, for his part, said what is happening in Ukraine is "a legitimate response" to several decades of violation of security agreements by the West and its efforts to undermine his country's security.

Referring to Iran's active role in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Russian president emphasized the need to continue consultations between the two sides with regard to the ongoing Vienna talks.

Iraqi Chief Banker in Tehran to Discuss Debt

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A senior banking delegation from Iraq led by the country's chief banker have held talks with Iranian authorities in Tehran as a report suggest that negotiations between the two neighboring countries have focused on Iraq's plan to settle a multi-billion dollar debt to Iran in the very near future.

A Thursday report by the IRIB News said that a meeting between Iraq's Central Bank Governor Mustafa Ghaleb and his Iranian counterpart Ali Salehabadi earlier in the day had apparently focused on the settlement of arrears Iraq owe to Iran for energy imports in recent years.

That comes as Iraq is waiting for the outcome of ongoing talks between Iran and world powers in Vienna as the two sides seek to revive a major international agreement on Iran's nuclear program, known as the JCPOA.

JCPOA's revival will allow the Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI) to repatriate nearly \$5 billion in Iranian funds that have remained inaccessible in the bank for the past years because of US sanction on Tehran.

See Page 7

Iran Moves More Oil Onto Ships in Preparation for a Nuclear Deal

LONDON (Bloomberg) - Iran is shifting more oil onto ships in a move to speed exports should talks succeed in ending its exclusion from global energy markets.

The amount of oil on tankers has jumped by 30 million barrels since early December to 103 million barrels, according to analysis firm Kpler. The increase comes as diplomats in Vienna work on a deal to limit Iran's nuclear program in return for easing sanctions that have kept it from selling most of its crude.

While the Persian Gulf country will need a few months to ramp up fields that have under-produced for more than three years, it could start selling oil from storage almost immediately once sanctions are relaxed. The increased flows may help to temper crude prices, which have soared more than 20% this year to almost \$100 a barrel.

"Additional barrels will, of course, put some downward pressure on prices," said Carole Nakhle, chief executive officer of consultants Cystal Energy. Still, "the effect of releasing oil from storage is minor compared to the potential increase in production" that will come as Iran brings fields back into service.

Within months of a deal, Iran could restore about 1 million barrels a day of supply to global markets, Vitrol Group CEO Russell Hardy said in a Bloomberg Television interview this week. That would help make up for a shortfall from other OPEC+ producers, many of which are suffering from under-investment and output disruptions.

The original 2015 landmark accord that restrained Iran's nuclear work in exchange for sanctions relief led to a surge in production, which then tumbled after the U.S. pulled out of the deal in 2018.

Once OPEC's No. 2 producer, Iran has slipped to fifth place, pumping about 2.4 million barrels a day on average in the past year, data compiled by Bloomberg show. Almost all of that oil is used domestically, instead of exported.

See Page 7

Iran Oil Exports Increase By 40% Despite Sanctions

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The minister of economic affairs and finance has said that Iran's oil exports have witnessed 40 percent growth during the past five months despite the sanctions against the country.

This growth could be achieved while US anti-Iran sanctions did not decrease and the Vienna talks have not reached a definite result, Ehsan Khandouzi told Iran's Arabic news channel of Al Alam.

American officials have confessed to their defeat in maximum pressure policy on Iran, the minister noted.

During the interview, Khandouzi said the new Iranian government, which took office in August, 2021, has stressed importance of playing a special role in the oil and gas markets.

Referring to new round of U.S. economic sanctions against Iran in the past three years which have led to a decline in Iran's economic indexes, the finance minister said the coronavirus pandemic, rise in the prices, and inflation been effective on the decrease in economic growth.

He hoped that the plans made by the new Iranian government would improve economy in the country.

See Page 7

Iran's Wheat Imports At 6.2m mt in 10 Months to January

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian agriculture ministry officials say wheat imports into the country has reached more than 6.2 million metric tons (mt) in the 10 months to late January.

Chief distribution and sales officer at the Iranian Government Trading Corporation (GTC) said on Wednesday that wheat imports had increased to record levels this year to respond to a growing demand for the grain in Iran.

Hojjat Baratali said the demand for wheat had risen by 6% in the month to January 19 compared to similar period last year, adding that total consumption is expected to increase by nearly 5% in the calendar year to late March to a nearly 11 million mt.

Baratali said that GTC had purchased nearly 4.5 million mt of wheat from domestic farmers as he insisted that supplies would be enough to meet the demand for the grain.

Iran has relied on imports from Russia and other countries to tackle a decline in domestic wheat output in recent years.

See Page 7

Pakistan's ECC Approves Regulations for Barter Trade With Iran

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan's Federal cabinet's Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) on Thursday approved amendments in Export Policy Order 2020 and Import Policy Order 2020 to provide regulatory cover to barter trade arrangements with Afghanistan & Iran.

According to sources, the ministry of commerce presented a summary for grant of regulatory support for establishing barter trade arrangements with Afghanistan and Iran. And, the ECC after discussion allowed regulatory cover to barter trade arrangements by amending relevant provisions of EPO 2020 and IPO 2020.

As per details, ministry of commerce has solicited ECC approval to amend EPO 2020 and IPO 2020 to cover the barter trade arrangements with Afghanistan and Iran as the federal board of revenue (FBR) and State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) have so far supported this proposal while the Prime Minister, being Minister-in-Charge of the commerce division, has authorized submission of a summary in this regard to the ECC.

According to sources of commerce ministry, though the ECC has granted its approval to formally start barter trade with Iran and Afghanistan, however, the modalities for operationalization of the barter trade arrangement(s) would be finalized and notified by ministry of commerce separately for each agreement in consultation with the stakeholders, said sources.

See Page 7

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A Good Deal Is Possible Due to Iran's Initiatives

TEHRAN (IP) - The Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council says the final stage of the Vienna talks will be impossible if the Western part makes no political decision and significant progress has been made due to Iranian initiatives.

Iran's international nuclear agreement or the so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed between the country and P5+1 countries (Russia, China, UK, Germany, France, and the US) in 2015, but the US scrapped it on May 18, 2018, re-imposing more sanctions on Iran.

The eighth round of sanctions talks begun in Vienna on December 27 is ongoing in Vienna, but without the U.S. after a short break.

West Urged to Take Courageous Decision in Vienna

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says good progress has been made in the talks in Vienna with the P4+1 states, but in order to achieve a final agreement, the Western side is required to take a "courageous and realistic" political decision that guarantees Tehran's interests.

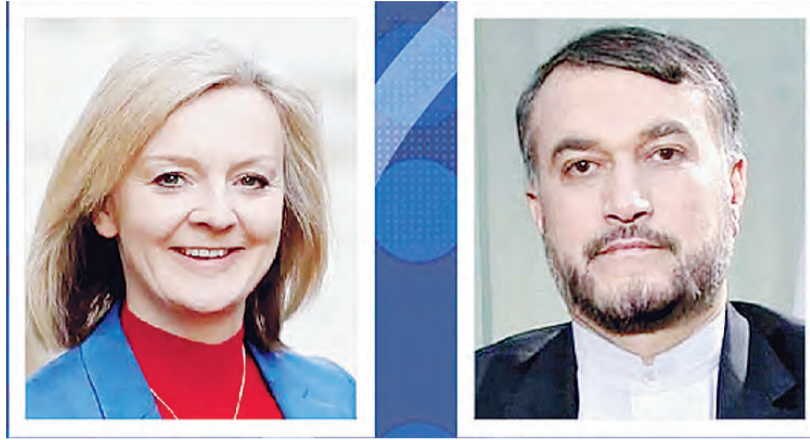
"Accelerating the conclusion of an agreement [in Vienna] requires serious will on the part of the West to make a courageous and realistic political decision to ensure Iran's interests, especially the objective removal of sanctions, in order to reach a durable agreement," Amir-Abdollahian said in a phone call with British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss on Thursday.

He expressed hope that the European parties to the landmark 2015 Iran deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), would pursue a realistic approach and play a constructive and appropriate role to help reach an agreement.

Referring to his meetings with European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and his German counterpart, Annalena Baerbock, on the sidelines of the 58th Munich Security Conference (MSC) last week, the Iranian foreign minister emphasized that the sides managed to make good progress to settle the outstanding issues in the Vienna talks.

In turn, the British foreign secretary, whose country is a party to the Vienna negotiations, said Iran and the P4+1 group of countries have so far made positive achievements, but they should complete the process of negotiations and conclude a deal agreed by all the sides as soon as possible.

The United States left the JCPOA in 2018 and began to implement what it called the "maximum pressure" campaign of sanctions against the Islamic Republic, depriving



the country of the economic benefits of the agreement, including the removal of sanctions, for which Iran had agreed to certain caps on its nuclear activities.

In the meantime, the other parties to the deal, in particular France, Britain and Germany, only paid lip service to safeguarding Iran's economic dividends as promised under the JCPOA, prompting Iran - after an entire year of "strategic patience" - to reduce its nuclear obligations in a legal move under the deal.

During the phone conversation, Amir-Abdollahian and Truss said the repayment of Britain's overdue debts to Iran is among the main issues between Tehran and London, stressing the importance of finding an appropriate way to solve it as soon as possible.

The British foreign secretary expressed hope that the two countries would settle consular issues related to prisoners and the payment of London's debt to Tehran in the near future through continued cooperation.

She said growing relations between the two countries would serve common interests. Britain owes as much as £400m to Iran arising from the non-delivery of Chieftain tanks ordered by Iran's former monarchical regime. An international arbitration in 2008 ruled the UK owed the debt.

Iran Not to Accept Any Useless Agreement With Reverse Results

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's ambassador to Slovenia said in Ljubljana on Wednesday that Iran is ready for an agreement with world powers, but will never yield to a useless one with reverse results.

Kazem Shafei made the comment in a meeting with the Slovenian President Borut Pahor at the end of his mission there.

He voiced Iran's will and enthusiasm for broadening comprehensive ties, especially in the economic and commercial fields and pointed out that the 1st Joint Economic Commission of Iran and Slovenia will be held in near future.

He conveyed President Ebrahim Raisi's warm greetings to his Slovenian counterpart and appreciated his efforts for broadening bilateral ties and proposing the establishment of the Joint Economic Commission, keeping in mind the vast potentials for economic cooperation in both countries.

He expressed delight about the Slovenian president's meeting with the Iranian foreign minister on the sidelines of the Munich security conference and appreciated the Slovenian president's expression that Slovenia can be the threshold for Iran's entry into Europe.

He went on to reflect on Iran's resolute will to reach a good nuclear agreement, despite the disgraceful and intriguing behavior of the Americans during the past four years.

The ambassador also elaborated on the latest status of the Vienna nuclear negotiations aimed at termination of the sanctions, arguing that although Iran is ready to enter a good agreement, but it will never yield to a useless agreement with reverse results.

The Slovenian President, too, referred to the fruitful and constructive talks he had had with the Iranian foreign minister on the sidelines of the Munich security conference, arguing that such talks before the nuclear agreement can be very promising and expressed hope for the broadening of friendly comprehensive bilateral ties.

The president termed as a mistake the US decision to leave the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and expressed hope that the nuclear agreement and broadening of Iran-EU relations will take place in near future.

He also asked Ambassador Shafei to convey his warm regards to President Raisi and described his visit of Iran and especially his meeting with the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as good memories of his visit.

Foreign Ministry Focused on Economic Diplomacy Approach

TEHRAN (MNA) - Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy said that Iranian Foreign Ministry has adopted the economic diplomacy approach in the 13th government under President Raisi.

While explaining the policies of neighborliness diplomacy in 13th government, Mehdi Safari Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy stated, "In line with realizing objectives of 13th government in the field of cooperating with neighboring countries in the past three months, in addition to exporting technical and engineering services, the issue of setting up joint commissions has been considered as one of the important issues." Turning to setting up joint commission between Iran and Kazakhstan, Safari said that Kazakhstan is a very strategic country for Iran especially as it is on the train route which goes from China to Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and from Iran to Turkey.

In this regard, a 60-member delegation of Kazakhstan at the level of the Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan arrived in Iran to attend the Joint Commission meeting, he said, adding that very good cooperation agreements were signed and sealed between the two sides, the most important of which is related to the agreement concluded in the field of investment. Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the recent visit of Iranian President to Qatari capital of Doha and stated, "During the visit, very important agreements were inked between Iranian and Qatari governments to broaden their ties in all fields of cooperation."

Gov't Making Arrangements to Evacuate Nationals From Ukraine

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran is making arrangements for evacuation of nationals from Ukraine despite the fact the country's airspace remains closed because of a conflict with neighboring Russia.

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeid Khatibzadeh said on Thursday that authorities in Tehran had asked for permissions for one or several special flights from Ukraine to evacuate the Iranian nationals from various areas in the country.

However, he said that no country had been able to fly out nationals from Ukraine over the past 10 days. "Of course we will not wait for this as we are making all efforts on the ground and currently there is no problem for evacuation of Iranians from Ukraine," Khatibzadeh was quoted as saying by the official IRNA news agency.

Iranian government estimates suggest more than 5,000 Iranians work or study in Ukraine. The foreign ministry issued a third notice on Thursday warning the Iranian nationals to avoid conflict zones in Ukraine hours after Russia launched attacks on several cities in the country.

Khatibzadeh said Iran was in touch with the two sides of the conflict to ensure the safety of its nationals, adding that the Iranian embassy in Kiev had launched a hotline to respond to calls from Iranians living in the country.

Iran's flag carrier IranAir said on Thursday it was ready to send special flights to Ukraine to evacuate nationals from there.

IranAir's spokesman Hossein Jahani said that the airline has no routine flights between Tehran and Kiev but was ready to send flights as soon as the Ukrainian airspace is reopened.

Iranian embassy in Ukraine also recommended nationals to take "any opportunity possible" to leave the country.

Minister Calls for Development of Border Markets With Pakistan

TEHRAN (IFP) - Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi has said improving conditions in Mirjaveh border market of Sistan and Baluchestan on the border with Pakistan, must be on the agenda of provincial officials.

Vahidi was speaking to reporters during a visit to the Mirjaveh border market and border terminal.

He said the reopening of the Mirjaveh border terminal is a very good event and will be very instrumental in improving livelihoods of border residents.

Vahidi also said during the visit to Mirjaveh border terminal, its problems were examined and now there is

no problem in traffic.

Regarding the opening of new markets, the interior minister said, "We are ready to launch a new market, but this depends on the readiness of the Pakistani side."

He added that Iran is ready to launch six markets, of which three are ready to become operational, and the construction of three more markets has been agreed with Pakistan.

Vahidi noted that border markets are very valuable for the livelihoods of border people.

Efforts Underway for Ardabil Sisterhood With Saratov

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Iranian ambassador to Russia said that efforts are underway to establish a sisterhood relationship between the two cities of Saratov of Russia and Ardabil province of Iran considering their shared capabilities.

Iranian ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali made the remarks on Wednesday in a videoconference meeting with the chairman and members of the Ardabil Chamber of Commerce.

"With the twinning of these two cities, we can easily strengthen trade relations and the presence of economic delegations of the two provinces and increase their interactions at the international level," Jalali said.

The ambassador added that the private sectors of the two cities can play major role in bringing the two closer to each other.

The Iranian ambassador to Russia described the Russian market as diverse and broad, adding that "The recent visit of our President [Raisi] to Russia has laid the ground for increasing the volume of foreign trade and has formed an intelligent strategy in strengthening Iran-Russia relations."

Iran Proposes Joint Investment Programs In Afghanistan

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian special envoy for Afghanistan expressed Tehran's readiness for joint investment programs in various fields in the neighboring country, such as the mining industry, energy and agriculture.

Hassan Kazemi Qomi held separate meetings with acting minister of foreign affairs of the Taliban, Amir Khan Muttaqi, and Minister of Energy Mulla Abdul Latif Mansur in Kabul.

The Iranian envoy and the Taliban ministers talked about various issues, such as the economic situation and political developments in Afghanistan.

Kazemi Qomi also voiced Iran's readiness for joint investment activities in the mining industry, agriculture, energy and railroad construction in Afghanistan.

The energy minister of the Taliban reportedly expounded on the Afghan ruling group's views about Iran's share of water from the common resources and about the issues relating to energy.

In October 2021, delegations from Iran and the Taliban held extensive talks in Kabul and reached agreements on various subjects.

Enemy's Mistake to Receive Iran's Crushing Response

TEHRAN (MNA) - Alireza Sabahifard, the commander of the Iranian army air defense force has warned the enemy against any assault, saying any aggression will receive a devastating response.

Iran's Commander of Army Air Defense Force Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard made the comments on Thursday in a meeting with the air defense commanders.

"The Army Air Defense Force, using advanced, new and indigenous radar and missile systems, has made it very difficult for the enemies to infiltrate our country's airspace," the commander said. Sabahifard added, "Relying on its internal capability and utilizing its capacity of expertise and commitment, the Army Air Defense has made remarkable advances in the field of defense science."

He said that the air defense forces is monitoring the enemy's movements days and night while the combat readiness and strengthening the defense capability is constantly pursued.

Second Announcement

Tender invitation
Invitation to public tender for
TITANIUM DIOXIDE (TiO2) // 191000 kg



Tabriz petrochemical company intends to procure its required quantity of TITANIUM DIOXIDE (TiO2) for ABS production plant from reputable & reliable producer and supplier of said product. Interested suppliers should submit their request to below email in order to get tender documents until March 03.

Deadline for submission of offers for tender is: March 14, 2022

Email: me.rahimi@tpco.ir

Phone No.: +98-41-34282592

Tender	No	Quantity
TITANIUM DIOXIDE (TiO2)	PVS-0041067	191000 kg

Public Relations of Tabriz Petrochemical Company (Public Stock)

First turn published: February 21, 2022

Second turn published: February 26, 2022



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:17
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:14
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:13
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:36

19. They said: "Your evil omens are with yourselves: (deem ye this an evil omen).
If ye are admonished? Nay, but ye are a people transgressing all bounds!"
20. Then there came running, from the farthest part of the City, a man, saying,
"O my people! Obey the apostles:"

Surah 36, Ya-sin (19 - 20)

Italians Still Keen To Work With Iran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

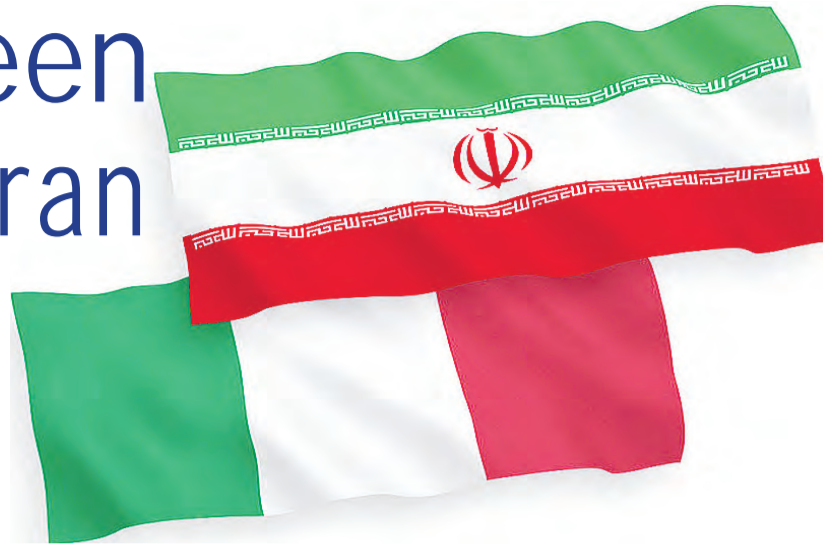
TEHRAN - Chairman of Iran-Italy Joint Chamber of Commerce Ahmad Pourfallah says that Iran should not eliminate Europe from its trade equations because it means losing part of opportunities, adding that Italians are still keen to resume cooperation with Iranians and to buy Iran oil.

Speaking to ILNA, Pourfallah said that Iran should have interactions with the world based on the win-win approach and elimination of Europe from trade equation means losing part of opportunities.

He added that Europa has laid foundation of many industries in Iran and countries like UK, France, Italy and even Spain have created many valuable infrastructures in Iran in industries like home appliances, steel, tile, ceramic, apparel and textile. He added therefore elimination of Europe will cause us to lose many opportunities and many units which need spare parts and renovation will be deprived of them.

Pourfallah went on to say that agreement in Vienna talks will be very good news for the national economy, expressing hope it would happen. He said that economic activists believe the country should have interactions with the world based on the win-win approach and dividing the world into friends and foes will have its negative impacts on the economic sectors.

He noted that Iran missed many opportunities after the 2015 JCPOA deal because the country was not well prepared and many industries faced damages and failed to upgrade their technologies. He said therefore the country fell behind in terms of quality because many production lines are European style and European experts had already installed the production lines and trained Iranian technicians.



He expressed hope this time the country would welcome the JCPOA agreement well prepared, adding that Iran-Italy Joint Chamber of Commerce has invited thousands of enterprises. He said that Italians were the first who arrived in Tehran after the 2015 JCPOA and sent their political officials to Tehran.

Pourfallah went on to say that Italian foreign trade minister visited Tehran in a six-month span after the JCPOA deal but the talks did not end in good results but trade was never halted and only minimized. He reiterated most of European countries could not cooperate with Iran and other countries cannot replace them but there is huge difference in the level of their technologies.

He stated that Europeans can improve the production line of Iranian industries and restoring ties with them will lead to improving the quality of products.

Pourfallah reiterated that Iran should not focus on imports from Europe as the country has the chance for absorbing investment and exports. He stated that many European countries since the past have been interested in investment in Iran and even many projects were signed but reimposition of the sanctions cancelled almost all of them.

He said among Europeans, Italians are still keen to cooperate with Iran, expressing hope that the cooperation between the two states would return to their heyday record. He said Iran used to buy its crude oil from Iran because all of their refineries had been set based on using Iran's oil and turning to other oil suppliers like Algeria and Libya cost them dear.

Chabahar Port Ready for Transit of India's Humanitarian Aid to Afghanistan



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Director General of the Ports and Maritime Organization of Sistan-Baluchestan Province announced readiness of the port for transit of India's humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

Behrouz Aqae referred to successful experience and effective cooperation between Iran, Afghanistan and India in transfer of the donated and required cargos of Afghan people during 2019 to 2021 via Chabahar Port, adding that the low cost and speed of land or marine transportation of cargos required by the people of Afghanistan has been of the main priorities of Iranian officials in transportation and transfer of goods in line with implementing the trilateral agreement of Iran, India and Afghanistan.

Aqae added that good cooperation in implementing port operations between Iran and India has created a good opportunity for using capacities of Chabahar Port for deepening the ties and broadening trilateral cooperation in the field of exports, imports, transportation and transit.

He reiterated that ignoring the capacities of Chabahar Port as well as lack of cooperation of Indian government and private sector of India for increasing the traffic of goods and containers especially transfer of governmental consignments to the destinations in Afghanistan and other countries via Chabahar Port will create trouble in the trend of activities of the Indian operator and investor in Chabahar Port.

Aqae said that it necessarily requires coordination for transport of the 50-ton wheat cargo donated by India to Afghanistan and expressed hope due to diplomatic efforts of countries, transfer of the new donated humanitarian cargos of India to Afghanistan via Chabahar Port would resume.

Gov't Orders Bandwidth Expansion to Boost Internet Speed

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's telecoms minister says he has ordered an increase in the internet bandwidth used in the country amid complaints by users about low internet speed and reports showing that demand for online services has increased with a new wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

Issa Zarepour said on Wednesday that the bandwidth assigned to the Telecommunication Company of Iran (TCI) had expanded by 300 gigabits per second (Gbps).

"I think (users) will witness the results of this increase in capacity with an improvement in the quality of internet in the coming days," Zarepour said.

The TCI controls Iran's first mobile operator the MCI. The company provides services to millions of users across the country through fixed and mobile broadband.

Zarepour's comments come amid reports suggesting that internet has gone slow in Iran with users complaining about poor quality of services when using social media platforms like Instagram.

The minister rejected claims that the government had deliberately lowered the speed of internet in preparation for a parliament bill that could impose restrictions on users' access to foreign-based services.

He blamed technical issues reported in some Iranian

provinces as well as rising demand for online services for lower internet speed in recent days.

"The disruptions have been technical and were not related to the ratification of any bill," Zarepour was quoted by the official IRNA agency.

Figures by the Iranian telecoms regulatory authority shows Iran's international bandwidth capacity had reached 4,309 Gbps in the year to March 2020, up from only 82 Gbps in 2013.

Zarepour said international bandwidth had increased by 20% since the incumbent Iranian administration took office in early August.

Lamerd Special Economic Zone Capacities Introduced at PGPIC Forum 2022

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Due to hosting petrochemical industries and presenting all capacities of Lamerd Special Economic Zone, senior officials of this zone attended the third specialized conference and exhibition on supporting locally made products in

petrochemical industry known as PGPIC Forum 2022 which was held at the permanent fairground of Kish Island on February 21-23.

According to reports of the public relations of Lamerd Special Economic Zone, PGPIC Forum was an opportunity that Lamerd Special Economic Zone with participation in the exhibition could present attractive capacities of this industrial center. During the exhibition, some specialized panels were held on investment opportunities in oil and gas sector with joint fields in priority as well as investment opportunity in the petrochemical industry to attract investors.



The public relations added that due to good reaction of petrochemical industry investors to the properties of the Lamerd Special Economic Zone, 3 investors and companies started investment in the zone this year.

In the forum, Lamerd Special Economic Zone officials had a meeting with management of Persian Gulf Investment Bank which is active only in financing petrochemical projects and both sides reached an agreement to cooperate and soon a deal will be signed for financing petrochemical project in this zone to ease financial condition of investors by the bank.

To complete the chain of petrochemical value in the region, a meeting was held between officials of Lamerd Zone and managers of SHASTA Holdings to increase creation of the value added in line with materializing resilient economy in order to take effective steps in preventing raw material sales as well as job creation in the region.

MAPNA Group, PGPIC Sign MoU on Cooperation

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - MAPNA Group and Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Corporation (PGPIC) signed a MoU to increase ceiling of their cooperation in a ceremony which was held on the sidelines of PGPIC Forum 2022.

According to reports, the CEO of Mavadkaran Engineering Company Mr. Hamid Reza Alizadeh Attar on behalf of MAPNA Group and the CEO of PGPIC Mr. Abdolali Ali Askari signed the MoU.

After signing the agreement, Mr. Alizadeh Attar said that the MoU is focused on three items of cooperation in the field of manufacturing the GE-Frame 9 turbine blade by MAPNA Turbine Blade Engineering and Manufacturing Company (PARTO), manufacture of shrouds being used in the turbines by Mavadkaran Engineering Company, and manufacture of compressor blades by MAPNA Turbine Engineering and Manufacturing Company (TUGA) and Alborz Turbine MAPNA Engineering and Support Company. He added that all the mentioned companies are known as the knowledge-based companies.

Alizadeh noted that the joint MoU is valued at around 100b tomans, adding that it includes fixed and mobile parts of turbine and gas compressors. He added that MAPNA Group can offer full services in creating and equipping the site of the power station, manufacture of main equipment like gas and steam turbines, maintenance and overhaul.

Meanwhile the CEO of PGPIC Mr. Ali Asgari said that signing of 200 MoUs on cooperation between the holdings and subsidiaries of PGPIC and knowledge-based companies is on the agenda to be inked in the PGPIC Forum 2022.



FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

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TENDER NO.:
08-38-9440030

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

Items	Material Description	Quantity
02	COILED TUBING REEL STRING,QT-800, SINGLE TYPE H2S SERVICE, FITTING FIG.1502 WING WITH INTERNAL/EXTERNAL CORROSION INHIBITOR, TEST CERTIFICATE/ANALYZES, WELDING LOCATION AND MATERIAL CERTIFICATE ATTACHED ON EACH REEL SHIPPING SPOOL-STEEL SPECIFIED AS OD SIZE, WALL THICKNESS REF.QUALITY TUBING LONG SIZE:15000 FT	13RL

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 49,737 EURO or 13,118,916,245 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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Syria Humanitarian Needs Reach Record High

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - A record number of people in Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance more than a decade into a devastating civil war, the United Nations said.

At least 14.6 million people in Syria are in need of humanitarian aid, up from 13.4 million last year, the UN's humanitarian agency OCHA said in a report published late Wednesday.

"Suffering in Syria is at its highest level since the crisis began," said the UN deputy regional humanitarian coordinator for the Syria conflict, Mark Cutts,



Belarus Army Not Taking Part in Ukraine Invasion

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Belarus's leader Alexander Lukashenko said that his military is not taking part in the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as Kyiv said Moscow's troops were entering the country from Belarusian territory.

"Our armed forces are not taking part in this operation," said Lukashenko, an ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Moscow has stationed tens of thousands of troops in Belarus.

Ukraine's border guards said today their country was coming under artillery attack along its northern border with Russia and Belarus.



Russian Troops Advance On Kiev as Ukrainian Leader Pleads for Help



KIEV (Dispatches) - Missiles pounded the Ukrainian capital on Friday as Russian forces pressed their advance and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pleaded with the international community to do more, saying sanctions announced so far were not enough.

Air raid sirens wailed over Kiev amid unconfirmed reports that a Russian plane had been shot down and crashed into a building a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin launched an invasion that has shocked the world.

A senior Ukrainian official said Russian forces would enter areas just outside the capital, Kiev, later on Friday and that Ukrainian troops were defending positions on four fronts despite being outnumbered.

An estimated 100,000 people fled as explosions and gunfire rocked major cities. Dozens have been reported killed. Russian troops seized the Chernobyl former nuclear power plant north of Kyiv as they advanced on the city from Belarus.

U.S. and Ukrainian officials say Russia aims to capture Kyiv and topple the government, which Putin regards as a puppet of the United States.

Zelenskyy said he understood Russian troops were coming for him but vowed to stay in Kyiv.

"(The) enemy has marked me down as the number one target," Zelenskyy said in a video message. "My family is the number two target. They want to destroy Ukraine politically by destroying the head of state."

"I will stay in the capital. My family is also in Ukraine."

Russia launched its invasion by land, air and sea on Thursday following a declaration of war by Putin, in the biggest attack on a European state since World War Two.

Putin says Russia is carrying out "a special military operation" to stop the Ukrainian government from committing genocide against its own people - an accusation the West calls baseless. He also says Ukraine is an illegitimate state whose lands historically belong to Russia.

Ukrainian forces downed an enemy aircraft over Kyiv early on Friday, which then crashed into a residential building and set it ablaze, said Anton Herashchenko, an adviser to the interior minister.

It was unclear whether the aircraft was manned or whether it could be a missile. Kyiv municipal authorities said at least eight people were injured when the object crashed into an apartment block.

"Horrible Russian rocket strikes on Kyiv," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba wrote on Twitter. "Last time our capital experienced anything like this was in 1941 when it was attacked by Nazi Germany."

Authorities said intense fighting was under way in the city of Sumy in the northeast.

Sweden, Finland Firm On Staying out of NATO

STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - Sweden and Finland plan to stay out of NATO despite the "shock" of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, leaders of the two countries said.

With the military offensive ordered last night by Russian President Vladimir Putin, "we have entered a new and dark chapter in European history," Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson told a press conference.

She condemned "a clear violation of international law and against the European security order". Despite a debate about NATO membership that has been revived by Ukraine tensions, the Social Democrat leader said Sweden's position on not joining the defense alliance remained in place.

"In a situation like this it is important that Sweden's long-standing security policy stays firm. That we are predictable and clear," Andersson said.

"Sweden has been alliance-free for an extremely long time. It has served Sweden's interests well," she added.

Earlier in neighboring Finland, the government also ruled out immediate moves closer to Nato membership.

"We have a security policy designed to withstand times of crisis. We will use the means at our disposal, including cooperation with NATO partners," Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto told a press conference.

"After a crisis, we will see what further action is needed," the minister said.

Finland's President Sauli Niinisto noted that "despite early warnings, this morning has been a shock to us all".

Unlike Sweden, Finland has adopted a so-called "NATO option" provision, which means that "if Finland's security requires it, Finland has the opportunity to apply for membership", Prime Minister Sanna Marin said.

Full membership is an ongoing debate which has already been reignited in recent weeks in Finland, and Russia's action would likely spur a broader debate, Marin noted.

"However, this is a debate that would require broad parliamentary consensus," Marin said.



World Should Send 60m COVID-19 Vaccines to N.Korea

SEOUL (Dispatches) - The international community should form a strategy to provide North Korea with at least 60 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to head off humanitarian disaster, an independent U.N. human rights investigator said.

The vaccines could be a way to persuade the country to ease lockdowns that have left some of its 26 million people on the verge of starvation, Tomas Ojea Quintana, U.N. special rapporteur on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, told a briefing in Seoul.

"It is imperative that the population of North Korea start to be vaccinated... so that the government will have no excuse to maintain the closing of the borders," he said.

North Korea is not known to have imported any COVID-19 vaccines, and the COVAX global COVID-19 vaccine-sharing program has scaled back the number of doses allocated for the country.

Last year North Korea rejected planned shipments of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine that were being organized under COVAX due to concerns over side effects, a South Korean think-tank said at the time.

Pyongyang also turned down an offer of 3 million COVID-19 vaccine doses of China's Sinovac Biotech, UNICEF said last year.

Authorities in Pyongyang appeared to be suspicious of receiving just a partial amount of vaccines and then to be under pressure to accept more, something that could be resolved by reaching a deal to provide enough doses for the whole country, Ojea Quintana said.

The U.N. investigator said he had raised the prospect of providing 60 million vaccines to North Korea during meetings with international diplomats in Seoul, but that such a proposal had yet

to be formally made to Pyongyang and a number of issues would need to be worked out, including payments and any sanctions hurdles.

Taiwan Warns Chinese Aircraft in Its Air Defense Zone

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwan's air force scrambled again to warn away nine Chinese aircraft that entered its air defence zone, Taiwan's defence ministry said, on the same day that Russia invaded Ukraine, a crisis being watched closely in Taipei.

Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, has complained of regular such missions by the Chinese air force over the last two years, though the aircraft do not get close to Taiwan itself.

The number of aircraft involved was well off the last large-scale incursion, 39 Chinese aircraft on Jan. 23, and since then, such fly-bys have been sporadic with far fewer aircraft.

The ministry said the latest mission involved eight Chinese J-16 fighters and one Y-8 reconnaissance aircraft, which flew over an area to the northeast of the Taiwan-controlled Pratas Islands at the top end of the South China Sea.

Taiwanese fighters were sent up to warn the Chinese aircraft and air defense missiles were deployed to "monitor the activities", the ministry said, using standard wording for how Taiwan describes its response.

Taiwan has been warily watching the Ukraine crisis, nervous that China may try to take

advantage to move on the island.

While Taipei has not reported any unusual movements by Chinese forces, the government has increased its alert level.

China has never renounced the use of force to bring Taiwan under its control, and routinely condemns U.S. arms sales or other shows of support from Washington.

Speaking in Beijing earlier on Thursday when asked about the new U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy, Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman Tan Kefei reiterated that Taiwan was a "core issue" of China's and it would tolerate no foreign interference.

"We urge the U.S. side to recognize the high sensitivity of the Taiwan issue, stop interfering in China's internal affairs and stop playing with fire on the Taiwan issue," Tan said.

In the 12-page Indo-Pacific strategy overview issued earlier this month, the Biden administration vowed to commit more diplomatic and security resources to the region.

On Taiwan, Washington would work with partners inside and outside the region to maintain peace and stability in the strait dividing the island from China, it said.



Erdogan Says Russia Attack on Ukraine Heavy Blow to Regional Peace

ISTANBUL (Dispatches)

- Shortly after Russian forces invaded Ukraine in the early hours of Thursday, the Ukrainian embassy in Ankara was quick to appeal to Turkey.

"The Russian Federation has started a war against Ukraine. Peaceful Ukrainian cities are being bombed. We call on our strategic partner Turkey and the friendly Turkish people to support us in this difficult time," the embassy tweeted.

Ukraine's Ambassador to Turkey Vasyl Bodnar also asked Ankara to prevent Russian ships from passing through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits. The Bosphorus Strait joins the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea and the Dardanelles Strait links the Marmara Sea to the Aegean Sea.

Later on Thursday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan spoke to his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a "heavy blow to regional peace and stability".

"We reject Russia's military operation," he said in a televised speech after convening an emergency security meeting.

On Tuesday also, Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been quick to denounce Russia's move to recognise the independence of two breakaway territories in the eastern Ukrainian region of Donbas.

"The decision of the Russian Federation to recognize the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk republics, in addition to contradicting the Minsk Agreements, constitutes a clear violation of Ukraine's political unity and territorial integrity. The Russian Federation's decision is unacceptable and we reject it," the ministry had said in a statement.

Zelenskyy at the time thanked Erdogan in a tweet for "supporting [the] Ukrainian position on the latest provocative decisions of Russia", using flag emojis in place of the names of the two countries, while the Kremlin said differing views on Ukraine will not be an obstacle to ongoing relations between Turkey and Russia.



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J, balcony
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5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
green yard
Fully Furn

Parsian

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Finland to Re-Evaluate Russian Rosatom Nuclear Reactor Project

HELSINKI (Dispatches) - Finland will reevaluate the security risks for a planned nuclear power reactor to be built by Russian state-owned firm Rosatom following Russia's actions in Ukraine, Prime Minister Sanna Marin said. The decision, proposed by the country's defense ministry, was announced at a press conference addressing the crisis in Ukraine and European sanctions against Russia. "Russia's actions toward Ukraine are completely unacceptable. Finland has condemned them and the EU has condemned them," Marin said. Russia on Monday recognized two separatist regions of Ukraine as "independent."



Turkish Economy Likely Grows 11% in 2021

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's economy is expected to have grown 11% in 2021 after rebounding strongly from the coronavirus pandemic, a poll showed.

Yet, the economy is seen cooling off this year due to soaring inflation and recent volatility in the Turkish lira. Turkey was one of the few countries to expand in 2020, thanks largely to cheap loans following a series of rate cuts by the central bank to stave off the economic impact of the pandemic.

Growth picked up the pace again in 2021 as COVID-19 restrictions were largely lifted. But a currency slide at the end of the year has disrupted growth expectations for this year. The median estimate in a Reuters poll of 25 economists for 2021 gross domestic product (GDP) growth stood at 11%, with forecasts ranging between 6% and 11.8%.

The poll also put growth in the fourth quarter at 9%, according to the median estimate of 13 economists, in a range of 6.3% and 11.9%.

The government has also put forward estimates that the economy would record double-digit growth in 2021, higher than its previous forecast of 9%.

"Even though international institutions say 9%, we think that we will reach double-digit growth numbers at the end of the year," President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said in November.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) said in November the economy would have grown by 9% in 2021, buoyed by a revival in exports and tourism.

The country's exports reached a record \$225.4 billion last year, with a target of \$300 billion set for 2023. Tourism revenues doubled to almost \$25 billion, as the sector continued to recover from the impact of measures to combat the spread of COVID-19 since 2020. Revenues were \$34.5 billion in 2019, prior to the outbreak of the pandemic. The government forecast income this year to match that of 2019.

The economic boom in 2021 was overshadowed by double-digit inflation, which soared after the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT) began cutting its policy rate in September.

The lira has been broadly stable since the start of the year following a 44% decline in 2021. The authorities have been pursuing a new economic policy of low interest rates to boost credit, exports and investments, saying it would help the country weather inflation.

Erdoğan says the policy will also eventually help Turkey solve its chronic current account deficit problem and contribute to stabilizing the lira.

To support the drive, the central bank had brought down the benchmark policy rate by 500 points since September to 14% but paused the easing cycle in January and kept the one-week repo rate unchanged this month again.

The lira had hit a record low of 18.36 against the U.S. dollar in December. The currency has been hovering around 13.5 since then after the government instituted a new financial tool to push savers away from buying foreign currencies and encourage them to convert their foreign currency holdings to liras with a scheme that safeguards deposits against currency fluctuations.

Qatar Says Hard to Quickly Replace Russian Gas Supplies to Europe

DOHA (Dispatches) - Neither Qatar nor any other single country has the capacity to replace Russian gas supplies to Europe with liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the event of disruption due to a conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Qatar's energy minister said.

With most of the Qatari volumes locked into long-term contracts mostly to Asian buyers, the amount of divertible volumes that can be shipped to Europe is only 10%-15%, Energy Minister Saad al-Kaabi added.

Kaabi's comments renewed concerns over Europe's security of gas supplies as tensions escalated between Russia and Ukraine on Tuesday after Moscow ordered troops into two breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine.

"Russia (provides) I think 30%-40% of the supply to Europe. There is no single country that can replace that kind of volume, there isn't the capacity to do that from LNG," Kaabi told reporters at a gas conference in Doha.

"Most of the LNG is tied to long-term contracts and destinations that are very clear. So, to replace that sum of volume that quickly is almost impossible," he said.

The United States and its European allies announced fresh sanctions against Russia after Russian President Vladimir Putin formally recognized the independence of the two regions in eastern Ukraine.

Germany on Tuesday halted the Nord Stream 2 Baltic Sea gas pipeline project, designed to double the flow of Russian gas direct to Germany. The move sent gas prices higher on Tuesday.

Qatar and other countries such as Japan have recently been approached by the United States to reroute gas supplies to Europe in the case that the conflict escalates.



Sources told Reuters that Qatari LNG exports have been lower over the past few days as two of its mega trains have been down, another factor that could limit the spare amount to be sent to Europe.

Japan said earlier this month it will divert some LNG shipments to Europe after requests from the United States and the European Union.

However, the few cargoes that arrived in Europe were shipments already scheduled under a joint venture between Japan's JERA and France's EDF and there was no incremental added supply.

Currently facing a cold spell that has depleted LNG inventories, Japan is experiencing restocking demand and so it needs more LNG supply.

Kazakh President Invites Foreign Investors To Contribute to Economic Transformation and Renewal

NUR-SULTAN (Dispatches) - President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev invited foreign investors to take part in the transformation and renewal of the country's economic sector as it strives towards New Kazakhstan, the proposed government policy encompassing upcoming progressive political and economic reforms, reports the Akorda press service.

"I think you are as much interested in real reform of the country and economic freedom as the local businesses. So I suggest you take the most active part in the transformation and renewal of the economic life of the country. Building together new, fairer, and more effective rules of the game and transparent, stable regulation, we can create a truly attractive investment climate. It is in our mutual interest," Tokayev told the Foreign Investors' Council meeting.

The council, which is chaired by the President, was established in 1998 to promote direct dialogue between the government and foreign investors. It includes some of the most senior officials, including Kazakh Prime Minister Alikhan Samilov, National Bank of Kazakhstan Chair Galymzhan Pirmatov, External Advisor to the President of Kazakhstan Sir Suma Chakrabarti, and top foreign investors, including European Bank for Reconstruction and Development President Odile Renaud-Basso, Glencore CEO Ivan Glasenberg, Royal Dutch Shell CEO Ben van Beurden, Sberbank President Herman Gref and Citigroup CEO for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa David McD Livingstone, among others. The meeting focused on the proposals to improve the investment attractiveness of the country by strengthening the human potential and introducing environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards in the economy and investment policy.

Tokayev assured the investors that the tragic January events did not affect the country's firm commitment to improving the investment climate, even though it caused certain uncertainties among investors.

"As President of the country, I want to assure you that the policy of open doors for foreign investment remains our strategic priority. The state will fully perform its obligations and guarantees to partners and investors," he said noting that the rule of law will form the basis of the nation's new economic course.

What Kazakhstan needs to achieve this goal is a fair and impartial judicial system, fair competition, reduced corruption, effective public administration, and the nurturing of quality human capital.

"The historical dominance of oligopolies in key sectors of the economy restrains the development of markets and industries. We are resolutely changing this situation from both legislative and practical points of view. The law on the development of competition signed this year provides for important initiatives. These are equal access of market participants to limited resources, lowering barriers to entry to markets, and elimination of negative influence of monopolies on neighboring markets," said Tokayev.

India Likely to Become World's 3rd Largest Economy by 2030



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India could become a global green energy superpower with exports of clean energy rising to \$500 billion over the next 20 years, Mukesh Ambani said.

Ambani said India should have a strategy to end dependence on fossil fuels in the next two to three decades.

Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) chairman Ambani said India is likely to become the world's third largest economy by 2030.

The billionaire businessman also exuded confidence that India would take over Japan to become the second largest economy in Asia.

"India is likely to overtake Japan as Asia's second largest economy, and the world's third largest economy by 2030," Ambani said while speaking at the Asia Economic Dialogue (AED) 2022.

India could become a global green energy superpower with exports of clean energy rising to \$500 billion over the next 20 years, Ambani said.

"When India becomes self-sufficient in green and clean energy, it will help us emerge as a global power. This transition will have other benefits, such as a huge number of green jobs. The Energy Transition will also determine the Geopolitical Transition in the 21st century," Ambani said.

"If the last 20 years, we were known for India's emergence as an IT superpower, next 20 years, I believe, along with technology, will mark our emergence as a superpower in energy and life sciences," Ambani, one of Asia's richest persons, said.

Ambani said India should have a strategy to end dependence on fossil fuels in the next two to three decades.

"For the next two to three decades, India's dependence on coal and imported oil will continue. But, we must have a plan to eliminate that in the next two to three decades."

Ambani said India would have to follow "low-carbon and no-carbon strategies" in the near and medium term.

Heathrow Records Lowest Annual Passenger Numbers Since 1972

LONDON (Dispatches) - London's Heathrow airport, Britain's busiest, saw its lowest number of passengers since 1972 last year and suffered wider losses as the coronavirus pandemic slashed demand for business travel and holidays.

Passenger numbers fell to 19.4 million in 2021. Heathrow also recorded a pre-tax loss of £1.79 billion for 2021, taking total losses during the pandemic to £3.8 billion due to the drop in passengers and high fixed costs. Chief Executive John Holland-Kaye said Heathrow expected to meet its target of more than doubling passengers to 45.5 million this year, although demand would be "quite peaky" and focused on British school holidays.

Passenger numbers were currently 23 per cent behind forecast, but he said there were signs of recovery, with the airport seeing some of its busiest days in two years as families went skiing during the school break last week.

"Summer in particular we think will be quite busy," he said in an interview. "After two years of staycations, people want to get some guaranteed sunshine."

He said Heathrow was working with airlines to scale-up its operations and reopen Terminal 4 for the summer peak.

But while outbound tourism had been boosted by the removal of restrictions in Britain, Holland-Kaye said inbound tourism and business travel remained suppressed, including transatlantic routes, because of testing requirements in other countries. He said he did not expect travel to return to pre-pandemic levels until all restrictions had been removed and passengers were confident they would not be reimposed.

Heathrow is awaiting the aviation regulator's final proposals on what it can charge passengers for the 2022-2027 period, after it criticised the airport's plan to raise charges by nearly half. Airlines have also voiced their opposition.

Sri Lanka Imposes Rolling Power Cuts

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Authorities in Sri Lanka are imposing rolling power cuts across the island nation as its deepening financial crisis leads to shortages of fuel and handicaps its power grid.

Sri Lanka's Public Utilities Commission said it will shut off the country's grid for four and a half hours on Wednesday after two hours of power cuts on Monday and Tuesday.

Electricity will be switched off on a rotating basis between regions between 8:30am and 10:30pm, according to officials.

The regulatory body said the state-owned Ceylon Electricity Board had requested permission for the cuts as fuel shortages had caused the loss of about 700 MW to the national grid. Over the last few weeks, Sri Lankans have experienced several sporadic power failures.

Utilities commission chairman Janaka Ratnayake said the "shortage of fuel is causing this issue" while adding that "we are having a fuel crisis not an electricity crisis".

Depleted foreign reserves are driving Sri Lanka's worst economic crisis in decades. A currency crunch has hindered imports of fuel and other essentials from overseas, including milk powder, cooking gas and petrol.

In the past few days, many Sri Lankans have been forced to wait in long queues in the capital of Colombo and its suburbs to obtain fuel for their motorbikes and vehicles. Some fuel stations remained closed as they have not received new supplies.

The pandemic dealt a heavy blow to Sri Lanka's economy that depends heavily on tourism and trade, with the government estimating a loss of \$14bn in the last two years. The economy is estimated to have contracted by 1.5 percent in July-September 2021, according to the central bank. Inflation also surged to 12.1 percent in December.

Sri Lanka has borrowed heavily and faces repayments on \$12.5bn in international sovereign bonds. Officials have said the government is gradually building back reserves to ensure it can honor its debts.

The government settled \$500m due on sovereign bonds in January and the gross official reserves stood at \$2.36bn at the end of January, according to the country's central bank.

Including the latest payment, Sri Lanka has foreign debt obligations exceeding \$7bn in 2022, including the repayment of another bond worth \$1bn in July.

The electricity crisis has been worsened by plunging water levels powering hydroelectric dams in the country.

Noora COVID Vaccine Test Successful

TEHRAN (IP) - The head of the Noora anti-COVID vaccine research project reported the successful clinical test on the volunteers in the third phase.

Jafar Soleimani said on Thursday that the results of the third phase of Noora vaccine clinical testing indicated that the antibody produced in the bodies of the subjects increased 15 to 20 times.

"No serious side effects have been observed in these volunteers in the results of the third phase of the vaccine so far," he said.

Noora vaccine is one of the most efficient vaccines as the booster shot due to the relatively high amount of antibody it secretes.



For Malaysian tourism, decision on borders an anxious wait

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - More than two weeks after Malaysia proposed reopening its borders, the country's tourism sector is anxiously awaiting a decision by the government to draw a line under two years of pandemic uncertainty and pain.

For award-winning travel agency Apple Vacations Sdn Bhd, business has been at a standstill since the borders closed in response to the emergence of the coronavirus in March 2020.

Group managing director Koh Yock Heng, better known as Kohsan, said sales had dropped 99 percent, with domestic tourism offering little respite for the outbound travel company.

"Our vaccination rates have shown improvements but with the sudden Omicron surge, the authorities will have to carefully study because it is important for us to be able to enter a new phase of living where we can start opening up the market with safe management measures in place," Kohsan told Al Jazeera.

Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin told reporters last week that borders were realistically only likely to reopen in the second quarter of the year, with the ministry preparing standard operating procedures (SOP) for lifting restrictions in the coming weeks.

The remarks came after a government advisory council chaired by former Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin on February 8 proposed the resumption of quarantine-free arrival for international tourists as soon as March 1.

Although hoteliers and tour operators welcomed the proposal, it received pushback from some politicians and public health experts concerned about the country's surging Omicron wave.

Before a final decision is made, the SOP will be presented to the COVID-19 pandemic management committee chaired by Prime Minister Ismail Sabri and other relevant ministries, including the foreign ministry.

Ming Luk Tan, head of Malaysia and Singapore business at OYO Hotels and Homes, said the industry had taken note of the fact that customers were prioritizing safety, opting for stays in places with good ventilation and hygiene.

"While every country has to balance the economic need to welcome international travellers, there is nevertheless room to take caution and gradual approach through implementations of air bridges and travel bubbles rather than opening up the entire country all at once," Ming told Al Jazeera, adding that his group's revenues had plunged 60 percent during the pandemic.

Ming said it was questionable whether travel bans had much positive effect on public health at this point in the pandemic.

"While the negative economic effects of the interventions can be measured through financial performance indicators, the societal benefit of restricting international travel however has not been quantified," he said.

However, Lim Chee Han, a public health expert and researcher with the Agora Society Malaysia, said authorities should consider maintaining quarantine measures to help control the virus.

"The government can review and revise this order after the Omicron-led pandemic wave has come down," Lim told Al Jazeera, predicting that the surge would subside by May.

"The latest genome sequencing data reported until 28 January shows that 90.7 percent of Omicron variant cases found in Malaysia were imported," Lim added.



In the last week, authorities have reported an average of about 26,000 cases each day, with infections rising steeply.

Some European countries, including Denmark and the United Kingdom, have lifted practically all COVID-19 restrictions in recent weeks despite record caseloads. Currently, only Malaysians, permanent residents and a selected number of visa holders may enter the country, subject to strict testing and quarantine policies.

Malaysia's Langkawi travel bubble has been an exception, while on February 16, the Malaysia-Singapore Vaccinated Travel Lane resumed with immediate effect. Talks are under way for travel lanes with Thailand and Indonesia.

Tourism is one of the driving forces of the Malaysian economy, with 26.1 million tourist arrivals in 2019 contributing RM86.1 billion (\$20.6bn) in tourism receipts, according to the Department of Statistics. In 2019, tourism employed 3.6 million people, accounting for 23.6 per cent of total employment in the country. In the same year, the sector accounted for 15.9 percent of gross domestic product.

The Southeast Asian country received just 4.3 million tourists in 2020, an 83.4 percent decline from the previous year.

As the sector waits for the return of international visitors, some larger hotels and serviced residences like The Ascott Limited have refocused on the domestic market.

Country general manager Mondi Mecja said the group stayed afloat through its long-stay customer base and saw a significant rebound in business when the Malaysian government lifted its interstate travel bans in October last year.

"I think a lot of people will still be cautious about travelling especially when it comes to jumping on an aeroplane," Mecja told Al Jazeera.

"We are still bound to domestic travel, or 'Cuti-Cuti Malaysia' or 'Holiday in Malaysia,' this year but with the opening of four new premises this year, we can expect a better recovery than originally forecasted."

Cuba's Sugar Industry Headed Toward Worst Season Ever

HAVANA (Dispatches) - The Cuban sugar industry is barreling again toward its worst season ever, according to official media reports and sources, threatening to dent both national pride and economic growth.

The 2022 harvest is set to fall well short of last year's record low, according to official data and two local sugar experts. It is currently running at least 30% shy of the communist-run government's goal of 900,000 tons.

Last year's crop of 800,000 tons was the worst since 1908, just 10% of a high of 8 million tons in 1989.

Sugar was once the pride of Cuba, critical to its rum production and driving foreign exchange and employment in the island's vast countryside.

The government has not been able to finance the sector's needs - including inputs, irrigation and spare parts - due to tough new U.S. sanctions and the coronavirus pandemic.

"The government will have to import and maybe cut the sugar quota on the monthly food ration. The bakeries will have to scramble to make sweets," said one sugar expert consulted by Reuters, who asked to remain anonymous because he was not authorized to speak with foreign journalists.

The government had banked on a small increase in sugar output to meet its goal of 4% growth this year after the economy shrank more than 11% in 2020 and grew 2% last year, reducing resources available to mills and plantations.

In a bid to revive the once iconic sector, Vice President Salvador Valdes Mesa in February crisscrossed the country urging mill workers, farmers and cane cutters to produce more.

The harvest usually begins in November and runs into May, but this year most mills opened in December and early January due to a lack of spare parts and cane.

"They will not recover the lost tonnage and the most likely scenario is they will fall further behind as the problems are structural and long standing," the local sugar expert said.

Several reports in the official Communist Party daily Granma showed key sugar-producing provinces, including Villa Clara, Las Tunas and Cienfuegos, well behind production goals.

Other reports and local sources indicated output at all 35 of Cuba's sugar mills was behind schedule.

Iran Oil Exports...

FROM PAGE 1

As he underlined, President Ebrahim Raisi pays special attention to making use of regional capacities and stresses the need to focus on economic solidarity among the regional countries.

About the situation of economy in Iran, the minister said that Islamic Republic of Iran makes effort to use its oil and gas as supporter for growth in national economic sectors.

He further underlined the importance of using national capabilities and regional cooperation in order to nullify the sanctions.

About the impact of the U.S. sanctions against Iran, Khandouzi said they surely slowed the speed of Iran's economy; but the country could find new opportunities from the heart of the sanctions.

In the end, he spoke about the Vienna Talks between Iran and the 4+1 in the Austrian capital and noted that if the talks end with an outcome, new opportunities will be created for Iranian economy.

Representatives of Iran, European Union, and 4+1 have held talks in Vienna in the past months to settle disagreements.

Pakistan's ECC...

FROM PAGE 1

As per section 3(1) of the imports and exports (Control) Act, 1950, federal government is empowered to prohibit or restrict import into or export from Pakistan of any commodity, and/or (to) "regulate generally all practices (including trade practices) and procedure connected to the import or export of such good".

Sources said that Commerce ministry has proposed that relevant provisions of EPO 2020 and IPO 2020 may be amended to provide regulatory cover to barter trade arrangements by adding following proviso/s thereto: "Provided that export and imports shall be allowed under barter trade arrangements as approved by the ministry of commerce".

Afghanistan and Iran have been important trading partners of Pakistan since independence. Pakistan signed a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Iran in 2006. Pakistan's export to Iran reached \$399 million after operationalization of the PTA in 2008-09, but then declined gradually, due to imposition of regulatory duties and non-tariff measures on Pakistani exports and then US sanctions on Iran. Similarly,

Pakistan's export to Afghanistan declined sharply due to the non-existence of the banking system and freezing of the assets belonging to the Central Bank of Afghanistan after political events of August 2021. To overcome stagnation in bilateral trade, barter trade arrangements have been proposed with Afghanistan and Iran.

The ministry of commerce arranged multiple meetings with stakeholders wherein it was decided that Quetta Chamber of Commerce & Industry (QCCI) from Pakistan side and Zahidan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ZCCI) from Iran side would sign an MoU to establish barter trade mechanism. The MoU was finalized in consultation with stakeholders including FBR, SBP, Pakistan's Mission in Tehran, FPCCI and QCCI and finally the agreement on barter trade between QCCI, Pakistan and ZCCI, Iran was signed on the sidelines of 9th session of Pakistan-Iran Joint Trade Committee at Tehran on 7th November 2021.

The sources said that with an aim to improve bilateral trade and transit, Pakistan and Afghan authorities among other things, have agreed to establish a barter trade mechanism.

Iran Moves More Oil...

FROM PAGE 1

Daily output could reach about 3.4 million barrels within three months after a revived deal, and full capacity of 3.7 million barrels within six months, according to Iman Nasser, Middle East managing director for consultants FGE.

About half the Iranian oil stored on tankers is crude and the rest condensate, a light oil that's pumped from gas fields, Kpler said. The growth in floating storage has come mainly from moving oil out of onshore tanks, mostly at the crude-loading terminal on Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf, the firm said.

Kpler uses methods such as satellite tracking and data analytics to monitor vessels and follow cargoes and loadings.

No Guarantee Vienna...

FROM PAGE 1

The Iranian chief negotiator returned home Wednesday night for a short stay within the framework of ordinary travels to the capital. However, the Iranian experts will continue the negotiations in Vienna.

Senior negotiators from the three European signatories to the JCPOA -- the UK, France and Germany -- also returned to their respective capitals this week for consultations.

Meanwhile, Spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Behrouz Kamalvandi traveled to the Austrian capital on Wednesday to hold technical consultations with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Iraqi Chief...

FROM PAGE 1

TBI chief Salem Chalabi, as well as a senior advisor to the Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, accompanied Ghaleb in his trip to Tehran.

The Iraqi delegation had met Iranian Vice President Mohammad Mokhber on Thursday, said a report by the official IRNA news agency without elaborating on more details.

First Vice President emphasized on the expansion and deepening of relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Iraq, especially in the financial and banking sectors, and stated that Tehran welcomes the comprehensive expansion of relations with Baghdad.

Mokhber further stressed that interaction with neighbors is one of the priorities of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, adding: "Among the neighbors of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the government and the people of the Republic of Iraq have a special place for the Islamic Republic of Iran due to deep religious, cultural and historical ties."

Referring to the serious determination of the two countries in strengthening relations in all fields, especially banking, economic and industrial, the First Vice President stressed the need to accelerate the implementation of understandings between the two countries and said: "The fields of cooperation and deeper activities of the private sector and Iranian and Iraqi companies should be paved, and in this regard, it is necessary for the central banks of the two countries to play a more prominent role in facilitating financial affairs."

He pointed out: "The interactions between the central banks of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Iraq should be developed and deepened."

The First Vice President stated: "Iraq's stability, security and international position are of fundamental importance for the Islamic Republic of Iran, and we believe that solving regional problems is not possible except with the role of countries in the region, and the interventions of countries outside the region and at the top."

Mustafa Ghaleb, Governor of the Central Bank of the Republic of Iraq, referring to the strong religious and historical ties between the two governments and the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Iraq, stressed: "Given the serious determination of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to develop relations with its neighbors, it is necessary that with the cooperation of the central banks of the two countries, understandings between the two countries be implemented as soon as possible."

Referring to the importance of monetary and financial relations in advancing the affairs between the countries, he said: "Obstructing and facilitating the investment and cooperation of Iranian companies in Iraq is one of the main priorities of the Government of the Republic of Iraq."

The Governor of the Central Bank of the Republic of Iraq also appreciated the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in strengthening stability and security in Iraq and stressed: "The religious ties of the people of Iran and Iraq are inseparable."

No Guarantee Vienna...

FROM PAGE 1

The government has increased several-fold its price for guaranteed purchase of wheat from local farmers as it seeks to encourage more domestic output and cut the imports.

Recent reports suggest the price will be 95,000 rials (US\$0.37) per kilogram of wheat purchased from local farmers in the next harvesting season beginning May.

Record imports come more than two decades after Iran celebrated its self-sufficiency in wheat production.

Earlier statements by GTC officials show the state-run company plans to import another 2 million mt of wheat until the end of the calendar year in late March.

Schalke Remove Gazprom as Shirt Sponsor

FRANKFURT (Dispatches) - German football club Schalke 04 said Thursday it would remove Russian gas company Gazprom from its shirts, following the invasion of Ukraine. "In light of the events, developments and escalation of the past days, FC Schalke 04 has decided to remove the logo of the main sponsor, Gazprom, from the shirts," the second division club said in a statement. In place of the sponsor, players would carry the team name across their shirt, the club said, adding that the decision had been taken "after talks" with Gazprom's Germania subsidiary.

Mickelson Apologizes For Reckless Comments

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Phil Mickelson apologized for comments he made about the proposed Saudi-backed Super Golf League that set off a firestorm of controversy and said he planned to take "time away" from the sport. In a November interview that was published on the firepitcollective.com last weekend, Mickelson criticized the government of Saudi Arabia for its "horrible record" on human rights, which he said included the 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi and the execution of gay people.

Man Utd Escape With a Draw at Atletico Madrid

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United were spared a damaging and deserved defeat by Atletico Madrid as Anthony Elanga's late goal rescued them a 1-1 draw in the first leg of the Champions League last 16.

Atletico outplayed a sluggish United for the majority of the match at the Wanda Metropolitano and might have considered Joao Felix's early goal scant reward heading into the second leg at Old Trafford in three weeks' time.

But rather than extend their advantage, Atletico squandered it, Elanga racing onto a Bruno Fernandes through ball and applying a cool finish with 10 minutes left to earn United a draw that felt like a victory.

Atletico's Sime Vrsaljko had already hit the crossbar at the end of the first half and Antoine Griezmann was also denied a late winner by the woodwork after Elanga's equalizer.

But while United will breathe a sigh of relief at the result, this was another performance to prompt serious concerns about their progress and direction under interim coach Ralf Rangnick. In the first half, they failed to register a single touch in the Atletico Madrid box, the first time that has happened to a United side in the Champions League since at least 2005.

Cristiano Ronaldo was up against a familiar foe in Atletico, with 25 goals in 35 games against Diego Simeone's team and 10 in his last 10, including three hat-tricks.

But the Portuguese cut a frustrated and isolated figure up front, his biggest contribution as a target for the enthusiastic whistling and booing from the Atletico supporters.

Both Rangnick and Simeone have a veteran scorer whose needs perhaps come at the expense of the team, but while Rangnick started the 37-year-old Ronaldo, Simeone dropped the 35-year-old Luis Suarez, with Felix and Angel Correa named up front instead.

Ronaldo was whistled before kick-off, along with former Real Madrid defender Raphael Varane, and a fervent atmosphere provided the backdrop for a scintillating Atletico start.

United were nervy as Harry Maguire needlessly headed behind for an Atletico corner before an anxious Fernandes touch allowed Jose Gimenez a shot at goal but Victor Lindelof made an excellent block. United looked uncomfortable playing out



from the back and it was from a skewed David de Gea clearance that Atletico won a corner. United headed away but Renan Lodi swung in a brilliant cross from the left and Felix was there to meet it, his fine diving header flying in off the post.

Sebastian Haller kept up his remarkable scoring record in this season's Champions League, finding the target at the right end shortly after putting through his own net as Ajax drew 2-2 with Benfica in their last 16, first leg.

Haller's 26th-minute own goal cancelled out Dusan Tadic's opener for the Dutch champions at the Estadio da Luz in Lisbon, but the Ivory Coast striker then put Ajax back in front just three minutes later. It was not enough for Erik ten Hag's side to win the game, as Ukraine international Roman Yaremchuk came off the bench in the second half to earn Benfica a deserved draw.

However, Haller has now scored 11 goals in this season's Champions League after ending the group stage in double figures.

"We are a bit frustrated. We could and should have done better and we are a bit disappointed to leave here having drawn 2-2," Haller told French broadcaster Canal Plus. Of his own goal, he added: "It's not the best feeling, especially as it gave them the equaliser and gave them a lift. "It was a blow to our morale but it is our job to remain focused, to not let our heads go down in such a situation."

Having never played in the competition before this season, Haller is the first player to score in each of his first seven Champions League appearances.

Mourinho Handed Two-Game Touchline Ban

ROME (Dispatches) - AS Roma coach Jose Mourinho has been handed a two-game touchline ban after he was sent off during his side's 2-2 draw with Hellas Verona, a Serie A sports judge said.

Mourinho was sent off in the final stages of Saturday's game at the Stadio Olimpico for remonstrating with referee Luca Pairetto, before kicking a ball into the stands.

The Italian Football Federation (FIGC) said Mourinho "made serious allegations" against the referee, and entered the pitch "with a threatening attitude, blatantly disputing the refereeing decision".

Mourinho made a telephone gesture towards Pairetto, which Italian media reported was in reference to his father Pierluigi, who was involved in the Italian match-fixing scandal of 2006.

The Portuguese coach, who left the stadium without stopping for post-match media duties following his side's draw, has also been fined €20,000.

Roma are eighth in Serie A after three straight draws. Mourinho will not be in the dugout for their trip to Spezia and the home match against Atalanta.

Raducanu Retires With Hip Injury

GUADALAJARA (Dispatches) - U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu was forced to retire with a left hip injury in the deciding set of her opening match against Australia's Daria Saville in the WTA 250 tournament in Guadalajara, Mexico.

The 19-year-old from Britain was playing her first match since last month's painful exit in the second round of the Australian Open, when a blistered racket hand contributed to a three-set defeat by Danka Kovinic.

The British player was two points from victory at the Abierto Akron Zapopan against former world number 20 Saville, who has slipped to 610 in the rankings after undergoing surgery on her Achilles tendon last year.

Serving for the match at 7-5 5-3 Raducanu failed to close out the game with the Australian fighting back to level the contest at 1-1 in the tiebreaker.

Both women suffered physically during the deciding set, with Saville battling leg cramps while the 12th-ranked Raducanu went off the court for a medical timeout.

Raducanu returned with her upper left leg heavily taped and after two more games decided to quit with Saville leading 5-7 7-6(4) 4-3 after three hours and 36 minutes - the longest WTA match of the season.

Murray Misses Milestone in Dubai

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Andy Murray described Alexander Zverev's racquet-smashing spree that got the German kicked out of the ATP tournament in Acapulco late yesterday as "dangerous" and "reckless".

Zverev went on a tirade against the umpire over a disputed call during his doubles opener alongside Marcelo Melo, verbally abusing the official and repeatedly hitting the umpire's chair with his racquet at the end of the match.

The ATP tour announced that Zverev had been "withdrawn" from the tournament "due to unsportsmanlike conduct" and the world No.3 will not be able to defend his singles title in Acapulco.

Conte Vows to Assess His Spurs Future



LONDON (Dispatches) - Tottenham manager Antonio Conte will assess his future at the troubled club after admitting he does not deserve his salary following Wednesday's damaging 1-0 defeat against Burnley.

Conte's side saw their hopes of a top four finish in the Premier League severely damaged by Ben Mee's second-half winner at Turf Moor.

Just days after their memorable 3-2 win at champions Manchester City, Tottenham returned to the kind of lacklustre display that has marred their dismal season.

It was a fourth league defeat in five games for eighth-placed Tottenham, who are seven points adrift of the top four in the race to qualify for the Champions League.

Conte cut a forlorn figure after the latest loss in a difficult start to his first season with the north Londoners.

The Italian, who replaced the sacked Nuno Espirito Santo in November, appeared to hint he could walk away from Tottenham if there is not an improvement in their results soon. Suggesting he wanted to talk to the Tottenham board about the team's predicament, Conte said: "When you lose four out of five it means the club have to make an assessment, also to speak together, and to understand which is the best solution."

"In this situation the players are always the same in this club, the club change coaches, but the players are the same, but the result doesn't change."

"This is the reality. No one deserves this type of situation, the club, me, the players, the fans, but this is the reality."

"I came here to try to improve the situation in Tottenham but maybe in this moment I'm not so good. "I'm too honest to close my eyes. It means there will be an assessment about the club, about me."

Hamilton Calls for More Non-Biased Stewards in Formula 1

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton called for more "non-biased" officials in Formula 1 as McLaren's Lando Norris set the fastest time on the opening day of pre-season testing in Barcelona.

Ahead of the new 2022 season, Hamilton said some stewards are too close to certain drivers. He also said there should be more female officials on the circuit.

The seven-time world champion was dramatically pipped to the title by Max Verstappen in December, when Hamilton and Mercedes claimed Red Bull had influenced the decisions in a hugely controversial final race in Abu Dhabi.

Race director Michael Masi has since been removed, with the role now split into two. Asked if the change would result in better decision-making, Hamilton said: "We need to make sure we have non-biased stewards too."

"Race drivers, some are very, very good friends with certain individuals, some travel with some individuals, take a more keen liking to some."

"I think (F1 needs) people who have no biases, and are super central when it comes to making decisions."

F1 races usually have four stewards to help race control look at incidents on the track. Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff backed away from Hamilton's accusations of bias.

"I think we need professionalism in the stewards' room," said Wolff. "I don't think there is a conscious bias to be honest. It's intelligent people."

Red Bull's Christian Horner said: "I would agree with Toto that I don't think there's an intended bias. I'm not aware of any stewards travelling with drivers to races."

Hamilton said there should also be more female stewards to boost diversity in the sport. "It would be awesome to have a male and female as the two race directors," he said.



Zverev Expelled From Acapulco for Assault On Umpire's Chair

ACAPULCO (Dispatches) - Germany's Alexander Zverev was kicked out of the ATP 500 tournament in Acapulco, Mexico, for "unsportsmanlike conduct" after his doubles match, the men's tour said.

Zverev, partnering Brazilian tennis player Marcelo Melo in doubles, came perilously close to hitting umpire Alessandro Germani when he repeatedly assaulted the umpire's chair with his racquet after a 6-2 4-6 (10-6) defeat to the British-Finn pair of Lloyd Glasspool and Harri Heliövaara.

"Due to unsportsmanlike conduct at the conclusion of his doubles match on Tuesday night, Alexander Zverev has been withdrawn from the tournament in Acapulco," the ATP said in a statement.

Zverev's team did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

After shaking hands with the opponents, the 24-year-old Zverev, ranked third in singles, approached the umpire's chair and hit it repeatedly before heading towards his court-side seat, upset over a line call during the match earlier.

He approached the chair a second time and once again hit it while shouting expletives.

The former US Open finalist completed a first-round win over American Jenson Brooksby in the Abierto Mexicano tournament at 4.55am local time yesterday, the latest ever finish for a professional tennis match. Read full story

Last year's winner, Zverev was scheduled to meet fellow German Peter Gojowczyk, who will now get a walkover to advance to the quarter-finals.

Zverev's angry outburst could earn him more sanctions from the men's governing body.

In 2019, after an initial fine of US\$113,000, Australian Nick Kyrgios was handed a suspended ban of 16 weeks and an additional fine of US\$25,000 for "aggravated behavior" by the ATP following an internal investigation.

