

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani Said That Iran Will Remain in Vienna Talks to Reach a "Strong Agreement" Despite All External and Internal Hypes

# IRAN NEWS

President Ebrahim Raisi Referred To the Successful Launching of Nour Satellite and Described It as a Sign of National Pride and Termed The Iranians Achievements as Quite Precious and a Source of Pride

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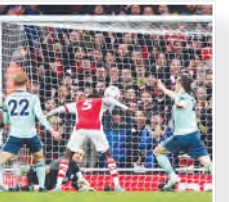


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## SPORTS

Arsenal Move Back Above Manchester United With Win Over Leicester



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## Al Saud Regime Founded Based on Policy of Savagery, Atrocity

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Islamic Development Coordination Council in a statement on Monday condemned the crime committed by Saudi Arabia in the execution of 81 oppressed people of the country.

"The great crimes and brutal attacks committed by the Saudi Arabian government against Muslims abroad including in Yemen as well as the massacre and brutal killing of the oppressed and innocent people of Saudi Arabia under false excuses alarm the collapse of reactionary foundations of the dictatorial and child-killing regime of Al Saud.

It is not surprising that the regime of Al Saud executes 81 innocent people, including more than 40 Shias and a number of Yemeni fighters, in one single day on the false accusation of terrorist acts, because, this regime has been founded based on the policy of savagery and brutality since its establishment.

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## Field, Diplomacy Proportionally Used to Protect National Interests

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top security official says the Islamic Republic makes proportionate use of both "field and diplomacy" as components of its power to safeguard its security and national interests.

"Field and Diplomacy - as two components of Iran's power - are used proportionally and judiciously to protect our security & national interests," Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani said in a Sunday post on his Twitter account.

He added that 40 years of experience has taught the Iranian nation that national rights and security would never be guaranteed by "relying on Western or Eastern powers".

Shamkhani's tweet came a few hours after Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said it has carried out a retaliatory missile strike on the "strategic center of Zionist conspiracy and evil" in the northern Iraqi Kurdistan city of Erbil.

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## Agreement Possible as Soon as U.S. Makes Decision



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said that as soon as the U.S. makes necessary decisions, the nuclear deal would be reached.

Speaking in his weekly press conference on Monday, Saeed Khatibzadeh pointed out some international issues and answered a number of questions raised by the reporters.

Stressing that the pause in Vienna negotiations is at the request of the EU coordinator to the talks, Khatibzadeh said that the negotiations can resume and the agreement would be reached as soon as the US makes the necessary decisions.

Iranian spokesman added that the current U.S. administration has every day shown a different act in the negotiations and thinks it could deprive Iran of its national interests by bringing up issues like the deadlines.

Answering a question about the U.S. deadline for Moscow to reclaim its demands to the talks, Khatibzadeh said that the U.S. is not yet a party to the deal since it has withdrawn from the deal in 2018 and cannot decide such issues.

The date for returning to the talks will be announced by the EU coordinator Enrique Mora and Josep Borrell, Khatibzadeh noted.

Referring to the Tehran-Riyadh talks, the senior Iranian diplomat stressed, "A date was announced by our friends in Iraq for the fifth round of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia. This date is not finalized yet. I will announce the date as soon as it is finalized and the two sides agree on a date."

Khatibzadeh also condemned the massive execution in Saudi Arabia, saying, "This is inhumane and contrary to the axioms of international law, and unfortunately in the days when the whole world is talking about human rights, human rights assemblies are silent and the European Union and the Commissioner for Human Rights are silent."

Commenting on the IRGC's missile attack on Mossad bases in Erbil on Sunday, Khatibzadeh said that Iran by no means accepts that one of its neighbors, who has deep relations and interaction with it, will be the center of threat to Iran.

Citing that the Zionist regime has repeatedly caused insecurity from inside Iraq, and has formed several counter-revolutionary and terrorist groups in the Iraqi Kurdistan region, Khatibzadeh noted that Iran would not let the centers of sabotage and sending terrorist groups to be near its borders.

He also called the Iraqi central government to end such situations and not to allow the Iraqi borders to be abused. Khatibzadeh went on to warn the Israeli regime by saying that Iran has the intelligence aristocracy about all the places they have a presence.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Khatibzadeh announced that the Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian is set to visit Moscow on Tuesday to discuss the Vienna talks and crisis in Ukraine.

## Gov't to Issue Oil Bonds for Investment in Free, Special Zones

TEHRAN (MNA) - The government plans to issue oil bonds in order to fund development projects in the country's special economic and free trade zones, according to the secretary of the Iranian Free Zones High Council.

"Necessary funding for investment and development of free and special zones will be provided through offering oil bonds," IRIB quoted Saeed Mohammad as saying.

Speaking in a ceremony for signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Secretariat of the Free Zones High Council and the National Development Fund of Iran (NDF), Mohammad said that the mentioned MOU has been signed with the aim of mutual cooperation for funding investment and development projects at the country's free and special economic zones.

"This memorandum was signed for cooperation in providing financial resources for investment and development in free and special zones through issuing oil bonds as foreign currency credits," the official said.

According to Mohammad, based on the mentioned MOU the NDF will cooperate in funding the establishment of joint free zones at border areas, creating free zones in neighboring countries, establishing bank branches in free zones abroad, etc.

"Part of the mentioned resources will also be allocated to the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology for supporting knowledge-based projects in free zones," the official added.

Emphasizing the NDF role in creating monetary and financial institutions, Mohammad said: "In this memorandum, it was decided to identify investment opportunities and production units that need financial resources in free zones and to provide the list to the fund; then, the National Development Fund will provide resources to investors based on the rules and regulations that will be introduced through operating banks."

"One of the major areas that have been addressed in this memorandum is the cooperation for funding startups and knowledge-based companies based in the country's free zones," he stressed.

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## ViewPoint Iran Now Among Space Powers

Iranians have always through the history shown this fact that if they want to do something they will definitely achieve it, in other words as the proverb says, if there is a will, there is a way and Iranians have been the great example for this proverb.

Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran, the country has gradually turned into a genuine power in the region and even in the world and its progress has been accelerated in recent decades especially in scientific fields like space, military and Nano, and the number of knowledge-based companies in the country has increased outstandingly.

On last Tuesday once again Iran achieved another success which is a golden leaf in the history of the country when the IRGC announced successful sending a military satellite into the space. The IRGC announced it successfully put Nour-2 (Light-2) into orbit on Tuesday morning. The homegrown satellite was launched with a three-stage satellite carrier, dubbed Qased (Messenger), from a launchpad in Dasht-e Kavir, a large desert in central Iran.

The satellite was launched at the velocity of 7.6 kilometers per second and was placed into an LEO orbit 500 kilometers above the earth's surface some 480 seconds after the blast-off.

Nour-2 satellite is expected to carry out a range of military and civilian missions in Iran, including reconnaissance and natural disaster response operations. This success came almost three months after the country failed to put its three payloads into orbit after the rocket was unable to reach the required speed. Of course after failure enemies of the Islamic Republic either inside or outside of the country start laughing but when the country has a successful launch they start criticizing and accusing the country of creating tension in the region.

This is the second successful launch of the military satellite of the country which is carried out by the IRGC. Back in April 2020, the IRGC put the Islamic Republic's first military satellite into orbit, dramatically unveiling what experts described as a secret space program with a surprise launch Wednesday that came amid wider tensions with the United States.

Using a mobile launcher at a new launch site, the Guard said it put the "Nour," or "Light," satellite into a low orbit circling the Earth. While the U.S., Israel and other countries declined to immediately confirm the satellite reached orbit, their criticism suggested they believed the launch happened.

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## Facility Set Up at Taftan For Transfer of Goods Between Pakistan, Iran

QUETTA (Dispatches) - Pakistan's Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has decided to set up a border terminal at Taftan.

Law and Procedures Secretary Mohammad Rizwan issued a notification for opening the Bazarcha Border terminal at Taftan, allowing the cargo transport to carry goods between Iran and Pakistan.

The terminal includes 30 acres of land required at the terminal for loading and unloading and clearance of goods.

The decision is expected to create employment and business opportunities for people in the border area.

Balochistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Fida Hussain Dashti and other office-bearers welcomed the decision and said it would bring positive change for the business community on both sides of the border. They said it would boost trade between Iran and Pakistan.

They said the chamber had fulfilled its promise and now the exchange of goods would be done in a legal way through proper channels.

The chamber, they said, had requested the Senate chairman, the federal minister for commerce and industry and the FBR chairman to open the Bazarcha border terminal.



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# FM Reportedly to Visit Lebanon

TEHRAN (MNA) - A Lebanese media reported that the Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian is set to pay a visit to Beirut.

The Lebanese Al-Jadeed network reported that Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian will travel to Lebanon today (Tuesday).

This would be a two-day visit and Amir-Abdollahian is scheduled to meet with Lebanese officials during his visit to Beirut, the report added.

## Serving Martyrs' Families an Honor for Gov't



**IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK**

**TEHRAN - Referring to the successful launch of the Noor satellite, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi said that the action of our country's scientists in achieving advanced technology is very valuable and honorable, and said, "Achieving this technology is one of the manifestations of national authority."**

Speaking in a meeting of the cabinet on Sunday evening, Raisi referred to the end of the year and the beginning of Nowruz travels, and emphasized, "The relevant agencies, especially the ministries of Roads and Urban Development and Cultural Heritage and Tourism, must closely monitor the pricing of accommodation and ticket prices for air, rail and road vehicles so that people's rights are not violated".

Referring to the successful launch of Noor satellite, the President said that the action of our country's scientists in achieving advanced technology is very valuable and honorable, and said, "Achieving this technology is one of the manifestations of national authority."

In another part of his speech, Raisi emphasized the importance of paying special attention to the families of martyrs and war veterans, saying, "The culture of martyrs and martyrdom has lasting effects on the cultural excellence of society and should not be neglected, and the spirit of sacrifice and forgiveness should be a role model for managers".

He further emphasized, "Serving the families of martyrs and veterans is an honor for the Popular Administration and should be done in a way that the families of martyrs and veterans do not have problems".

Raisi also emphasized the efforts to have an active presence in the markets of neighboring countries and the region and said, "In recent months, good measures have been taken in this field and it is necessary to have a comprehensive plan for a more active and wider presence".

## Longstanding Tehran-Kotte Ties Chance to Enhance Interactions

TEHRAN (MNA) - Chairman of Iran-Sri Lanka Parliamentary Friendship Group said that 60 years of diplomatic relations between Tehran and Kotte has created a valuable opportunity for the promotion of bilateral interactions in every field.

The Sri Lankan Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran G.M.V. Wishwanath Aponsu met and held talks with Abdolnaser Derakhshan Chairman of Iran-Sri Lanka Parliamentary Friendship Group in Tehran on Sunday to discuss mutual ties and issues of mutual interests.

During the meeting, Derakhshan pointed to the key role of parliaments in promotion of relations between countries and stated that lawmakers at parliaments have a very important role in expansion of relations between countries.

Emphasizing the effectiveness of parliamentary friendship groups in expanding relations, he added that the role of Iran-Sri Lanka parliamentary friendship groups is of paramount importance in development of relations between the two countries.



The two countries of Iran and Sri Lanka has longstanding relations which dates back to 60 years ago, he said, adding that the age-old relations between the two countries has created a golden opportunity in line with promoting bilateral interactions.

Referring to the high potentials and capacities of Iran in various fields, Derakhshan noted that there are areas of cooperation between the two countries in the fields of agriculture, trade, science, technology and industry, so that these capacities should be used optimally.

Sri Lankan envoy, for his part, pointed to the formation of parliamentary friendship groups in Sri Lankan Parliament and stated that parliamentary friendship groups enjoy high capacity and potentials for the development of cooperation between countries.

Wishwanath Aponsu described Iran and Sri Lanka as countries with high cultural richness and said, "It is hoped that bilateral visits between lawmakers of the two countries would strengthen relations between the two countries in various fields, especially in trade and tourism."

## Israel Should Know Iran No Place for Hit-and-Run

TEHRAN (IFP) - A former Iranian foreign minister says Israel should have known that the killing of two Iranian military advisers in Syria last week would not go unanswered.

"We respond to the Zionist regime's declared policies with our declared policies and to its implemented and invasive policies with serious reciprocation that fills the regime with remorse," Manouchehr Mottaki, who was foreign minister under former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, told Fars News Agency.

"The Americans learned about this approach [of Iran] both with what happened to that drone in the Persian Gulf and in the Ein al-Assad base; and therefore, they speak and potentially act in the area of military attacks with much caution, because they know the Islamic Republic stands on ceremony with no one when it comes to its security and that's why it's the safest country in the region," Mottaki added.

Referring to the Iranian missile strikes on Israeli Mossad positions in Iraq's Erbil early

on Sunday, Mottaki said the Israeli regime had better keep repeating to itself the lesson that "Iran is no place for hit-and-runs."

He said Iran had warned the Israelis previously too that any hostile action would be responded to, and noted they should have known that their move to kill two Iranian advisers with the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), who were in Syria on an invitation by the Syrian government, would not go unanswered.

"If Iran's response is not produced in Tel Aviv, it's most likely because they (the Israelis) have been shown mercy," he said.

In a statement later in the day, the IRGC said the missile raid had been in response to an Israeli airstrike on the Syrian capital of Damascus last Monday in which two IRGC officers were killed.

Mottaki said the Iranian people expected that Israel be held responsible for every attack on an Iranian element.

### Velayati

### Condemns Saudi Executions as "Carnage"



TEHRAN (IFP) - Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior advisor to Iran's leader has strongly condemned the recent mass execution of people including teens in Saudi Arabia as a crime and blatant carnage.

Velayati said in a statement the killings show the true colors of the Saudi regime officials more than ever before and will go down in infamy.

The secretary general of the International Association of Islamic Awakening noted that the perpetrators of this crime are disgraced in the eyes of the freedom-seeking people of the world despite their claims of defending human rights.

The statement criticized the international bodies' silence toward the mass execution in Saudi Arabia and other crimes committed against people elsewhere in the region including in Palestine, Yemen and Afghanistan.

It said the silence of rights groups and organizations further emboldens the Saudi regime to think they can commit more atrocities with impunity.

Velayati's statement urged global condemnation of the mass execution in Saudi Arabia, noting that such crimes are orchestrated by arrogant powers with the aim of weakening Muslim countries as this has been admitted on several occasions by leaders of the Western governments and the reactionary Western-backed regimes of the region that were responsible for the creation of terror groups like Daesh.

Saudi Arabia said Saturday it had executed a record 81 people in one day for what it called terrorism-related offences. The figure exceeds the total number of prisoners killed last year

### KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA TEHRAN (Embassy of India School)

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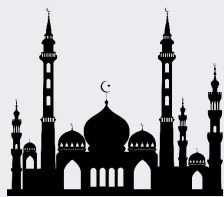
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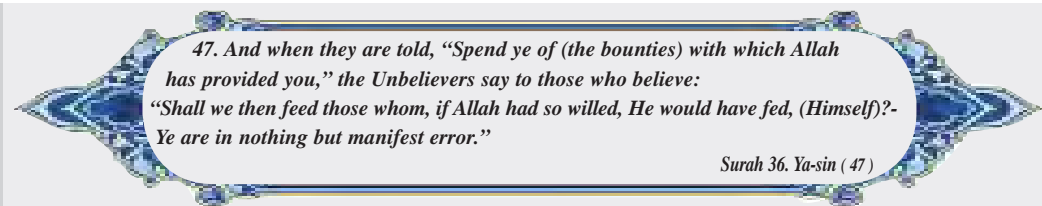
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■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:29
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:50
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:13



## Any Delay May Lead to Losing Afghanistan Market

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

**TEHRAN - Head of Iranian Export Confederation believes if Iran hesitates it will lose Afghanistan trade market because other countries are entering it.**

Speaking to ILNA, Mohammad Lahooti talked about Iran's trade with Afghanistan and said that any political change has its own impacts on economy and foreign trade, and recent developments in Afghanistan have affected the trade between Tehran and Kabul and it was natural because for long time the borders were closed and transfer of goods faced problems. He added that of course he does not think this condition lasts too much and probably Iran will restore its position in Afghanistan market.

He noted that Iran and Afghanistan have historic relation, and support of Afghan refugees, the volume of money transfer with Afghan traders and the volume of trade with Afghanistan bespeak the deep rooted and historic ties between the two countries and as soon as the risk of trade is decreased in Afghanistan, Iran's trade with Afghanistan will increase.

Lahooti went on to say that China is the biggest world economy after the U.S. and Turkey has been moment hunter and these two countries have always been Iran's rivals. He said if the downward trade with Afghanistan continues, these countries can replace Iran but Iran should do its best not to lose this market. He said that historic relation is a good opportunity for Iran to protect the current condition and it should not lose opportunities because rivals will take advantage and we should not take for granted that



Afghanistan market belongs to Iran and nobody can enter it. He reiterated that on the whole trade is hunting of the moments and any country acts faster, it will be the winner.

On the Ukraine war, he said nobody likes war and bloodshed but Iran can take advantage of this condition by boosting trade with Russia which is under sanctions but all depends on how fast Iran takes action.

On the Vienna talks, he said the direct impact of Vienna talks is apparently seen in the forex rate, reiterating whether we like or not, the fate of Iran's economy is tied to this issue and expressed hope the talks bear fruit. He emphasized that if the Vienna talks succeed, Iran will have better foreign trade next year.

He also pointed to the importance of approval of the FATF bill in the country, adding that rejecting it will have negative impact on our foreign trade and in case sanctions are lifted, we need the FATF bill to be approved for easing trade.

## MAPNA Delivers First Batch of MAP24 Locomotives to MSC

**IRAN NEW ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN – In a ceremony held on Sunday, MAPNA Group delivered the first batch of MAP24 locomotives to Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) and the contract for manufacture and supply of 50 MAP24 freight locomotives came into effect.



Addressing the ceremony which was held at MAPNA Locomotive Engineering and Manufacturing Company (MLC)'s plant, Head of MAPNA Group Mr. Abbas Aliabadi said that according to the contents of the signed agreement, 50 freight locomotives will be delivered to Mobarakeh Steel Company by next December.

He went on to say that today products of MAPNA Group are supplied to big companies of the country which is an outstanding move for providing the domestic needs. He noted that in the past, the cooperation between MAPNA and MSC was not organized but today they see cohesion between these two mega industrial complexes.

Aliabadi stated that over 90% of parts of MAP24 locomotives with 3,300 horse power have been designed and produced by the domestic experts and it competes with imported locomotives in terms of quality. He went on to say that all repairs and overhaul of this locomotive are done in the country and the cost of repairs and productions has been reduced to its lowest point.

He pointed to the advantages of MAP24 locomotive and said that since locomotive is considered an expensive machine, its manufacture, repair and maintenance inside the country is considered a big advantage. He reiterated that one of the advantages of this locomotive comparing to the imported locomotives is its open cabin and easy driving.

Aliabadi said that design and manufacture of this product is divided into five major sections of chassis and body of the locomotive, bogies, electric and control system, system of power transfer and braking system. He reiterated that the process of production has now become much easier and the pace of manufacture has increased.

He noted so far 20 MAP24 locomotives have joined the national rail network and five more are getting ready to come on stream.

## Very Bright Perspective Seen in Iran-Uzbekistan Trade Ties



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Referring to significant increase in relations between Iran and Uzbekistan, Iranian Ambassador to Republic of Uzbekistan said that bright future can be seen at all political, economic and cultural levels between two countries.

Hamid Nayyerabadi made the remarks on Sunday and said that the two countries of Iran and Uzbekistan enjoy the high potential to broaden and enhance their bilateral trade.

After meeting between the two presidents of the two countries in the very near future, it is expected that relations between Iran and Uzbekistan will be further developed and expanded, he underlined.

The 14th Joint Commission on Economic, Cultural, Scientific and Technical Cooperation of Iran and Uzbekistan was held in the early Esfand month of the current Iranian calendar year in Tehran with the presence of a high-ranking 60-member Uzbek delegation, he said, adding, "Some important documents in specialized fields will be signed and some other documents will be finalized in the future visits of senior officials of the two countries."

The value trade exchanged between the two countries in 2021 hit \$431 million, expandable to two million euro, the envoy added.

In their meetings on the sidelines of Shanghai Cooperation Organization and ECO summits, Iranian and Uzbek presidents placed special emphasis on the comprehensive expansion of relations between the two countries and gave appropriate instructions to all relevant ministries and agencies in this regard, Nayyerabadi added.

In the end, the Iranian envoy to Tashkent reiterated that there is a very clear vision for the two countries at all political, economic and cultural levels and it is expected that with the meeting of the two presidents in the near future, dozens of documents in various fields would be inked in line with expanding relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Republic of Uzbekistan.

## Exhibit "Domus Design – Tehran 2022" Opens at Italian Envoy's Residence

**IRAN NEWS ART DESK**

TEHRAN – The exhibit "Domus Design – Tehran 2022" was

opened officially on Sunday at the Italian Ambassador's Embassy in Tehran in the presence of some famous Iranian architects and designers and some distinguished guests.

Addressing the ceremony, the first Secretary of Italian Embassy David Balloni briefed the participants in the ceremony of the background and reasons behind the exhibition. He pointed to the historic cooperation between Iranians and Italians especially in art works and architecture. He said that Italians every year and via their embassies worldwide hold exhibitions which reflects Italian way of life.

Then Italian Ambassador to Tehran Giuseppe Perrone expressed his gratitude to those artists and architects whose work are on display in the exhibition. He noted that Tehran is an art and cultural city but it misses the art of interior design and therefore the embassy decided to launch this exhibit focused on interior design in collaboration with famous Italian magazine Domus which is an architecture and design magazine founded in 1928 by architect Gio Ponti.

Perrone went on to say that the exhibit is held in two sections as the first part includes works of Iranian and Italian designers whose works have been introduced by Domus magazine. He added that the second section of the exhibit is focused on the



works of Ponti's works especially his masterpiece in

Tehran and in Villa Namazi which is one of the most beautiful gardens in north Tehran. Some of interior designs of Villa Namazi garden have been put on display in the exhibit, he added. He then expressed hope that different events on interior and industrial designing would be held in upcoming weeks. He thanked architects and designers in the exhibit for this event on interior design.

Then Balloni briefed the participants of the history of the Milan-based Domus Magazine which is one of the most famous design and architecture fields, adding that this magazine has covered many stories on Iranian architecture and even allocated a special issue on Iranian architecture focusing on Villa Namazi Garden which has been designed by famous Italian architect Ponti.

He noted that Editor of Domus Magazine Mr. Walter Mariotti last month was in Tehran to attend the preview of the exhibit.

Later one of the Iranian architect Mr. Kamran Naderi highlighted major developments in the cooperation between the architects and designers of Italy and Iran which has broadened through the years. Naderi has cooperated with Italian Embassy on this exhibit and on making video-series of 10 episodes "Domus Eyes on Iran" that its last episode was on Villa Namazi Garden and Ponti's masterpiece in Tehran.

## PGSOC Wins Customers' Satisfaction Award

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN – Persian Gulf Star Oil Company (PGSC) won award during the 5<sup>th</sup> conference on role of economy managers in advancing resistance economy with an approach on customers' satisfaction.

According to reports, after by the jury and different workgroups of the conference, Persian Gulf Star Oil Company was declared a winner and was awarded the statue of customers' satisfaction.

In the closing ceremony of this conference which was held at Shahid Beheshti University, the CEO of the company Mr. Mohammad Ali Dadvar received the award.

This conference was held in collaboration between Majlis and Tehran University to evaluate services of domestic companies and organizations, to weigh quality of services and sincerity as well as the amount of satisfaction of customers.

In the current complicated oil markets, PGSOC uses smart system of back calculate with Arima algorithm to be full aware of the world oil prices and customers' satisfaction has been one of the principles of the company.



## MST Posts 38% Growth In Production, 102% in Sales



**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN – Deputy Industry, Mine and Trade Minister and Head of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) Mr. Mohsen Salehinia announced 38% growth in production and 102% in sales in Machine Sazi Tabriz Group (MST) comparing to the same period last year.

Referring to this point that industry of manufacture of different types of machine tools is one of the mother and productive industries, Salehinia said that for this reason IDRO in line with the policies of developing national industries and strategies of Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade in a period from mid-March 2021 to January 2022 produced 872 sets of machine (homogenous with 1.5-meter milling machine) at MST.

Salehinia also pointed to the existence of full chain of production at Machine Sazi Tabriz Group in the sanctions era, adding that the amount of products of Machine Sazi Casting Company in a period between mid-March 2021 and January 2022 was 4,285 tons of different casting and forging parts.

He added that the policies of the ministry and IDRO are based on maximizing and deepening indigenization of required machineries for the production units.

Salehinia noted that Casting Company of Machine Sazi Tabriz also produced 5,000 tons in 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year and its production has increased 34% comparing to last year, adding that this growth has happened while the amount of the production waste in the same period has slumped from 7% to 3%.



# Colombians Vote in Presidential Primaries

BOGOTA (Dispatches) - Colombians went to the polls on Sunday to elect members of congress and participate in one of three presidential primaries for candidates from right, left and centrist coalitions.

Seats in the country’s legislature of 108 senators and 187 lower house representatives have in recent elections been won by myriad parties, forcing presidents to build big tent coalitions in order to pass legislation.

Voters who participate in the primary for the right-wing coalition - ahead of a first round of presidential voting in May - will choose between five pre-candidates, including Federico Gutierrez, Alex Char and Enrique Penalosa, former mayors of Medellin, Barranquilla and Bogota, respectively.



# U.S. Working to Help Iraq Get Missile Defense Capabilities

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan today condemned Iran’s ballistic missile attack on Iraq’s northern Kurdish regional capital of Erbil, and said Washington was working to help Iraq get missile defense capabilities to defend itself.

Sullivan told CBS’s Face the Nation program that no US citizens were harmed in the attack, and no US facilities were hit, but the United States would do whatever it takes to defend its people, interests and allies.

“We are in consultation with the Iraqi government and the government in Iraqi Kurdistan, in part to help them get the missile defense capabilities to be able to defend themselves in their cities,” he said.



# Ukraine Readies for Relentless Defense of Kyiv



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine prepared for a “relentless defense” of Kyiv as the capital faced possible encirclement by advancing Russian forces who have also kept up a bombardment of the besieged southern port city of Mariupol.

In a video address posted on social media late Saturday night, President Volodymyr Zelensky said nevertheless the Russians did not have the strength or spirit to conquer Ukraine.

“The Russian invaders cannot conquer us. They do not have such strength. They do not have such spirit. They are holding only on violence. Only on terror. Only on weapons, which they have a lot,” he said.

A convoy of humanitarian aid headed for Mariupol had been blocked at a Russian checkpoint, but it was hoped it could reach the city Sunday, Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said.

The strategic port, in particular, is facing what Ukraine says is a “humanitarian catastrophe”, with more than 1,500 civilians killed. Attempts to evacuate hundreds of thousands of civilians have repeatedly failed.

“Mariupol is still surrounded, that which they cannot have by war, (the Russians) want to have by hunger and despair. Since they cannot bring down the Ukrainian army, they target the population,” a French military source said.

A top Russian officer described the situation in stark language.

“Unfortunately, the humanitarian situation in Ukraine is continuing to deteriorate rapidly, and in some cities, it has reached catastrophic proportions,” said the head of the Russian National Defence Control Centre, Mikhail Mizintsev.

In his video address, Zelensky appealed for more aid.

“I keep reiterating to our allies and friends abroad; they have to keep doing more for our country, for Ukrainians and Ukraine. Because it is not only for Ukraine, but it is for all of Europe,” he said.

The Russians have advanced far enough to raise fears of Kyiv becoming encircled imminently.

Other cities have already fallen or been surrounded since Russia invaded its neighbor on February 24, with civilians targeted in what the United Nations warned could amount to war crimes.

The key southern port of Odessa was preparing for an offensive by Russian troops, who were concentrating about a hundred kilometers (60 miles) to the east in the city of Mykolaiv.

Mykolaiv, which lies on the road to the strategic port city, has been under attack for days, and an AFP reporter said a hospital there came under fire.

Zelensky said “about 1,300” Ukrainian soldiers had been killed since February 24, giving his country’s first official toll.

He claimed Russia had lost about 12,000 troops while Moscow, for its part, has only given a toll of 498 dead, released on March 2.

# Russia Counts on Sanctions Help From China as U.S. Warns Beijing

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia has said it is banking on China’s help to withstand the crippling economic sanctions placed by Western nations over the war in Ukraine as the United States warned Beijing not to provide that lifeline.

Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said sanctions had deprived Moscow of access to \$300bn of its \$640bn in gold and foreign exchange reserves, and added that there was pressure on Beijing to shut off more.

“We have part of our gold and foreign exchange reserves in the Chinese currency, in yuan. And we see what pressure is being exerted by Western countries on China in order to limit mutual trade with China. Of course, there is pressure to limit access to those reserves,” he said on Sunday.

“But I think that our partnership with China will still allow us to maintain the cooperation that we have achieved, and not only maintain, but also increase it in an environment where Western markets are closing.”

Western countries have imposed unprecedented sanctions on Russia’s corporate and financial system since it invaded Ukraine on February 24 in what it calls a special military operation.

Siluanov’s comments in a TV interview marked the clearest statement yet from Moscow that it will seek help from China to cushion the effect.

But U.S. NSA Jake Sullivan said Washington has warned China not to provide it.

“We are communicating directly, privately to Beijing, that there will absolutely be consequences for large-scale sanctions, evasion efforts or support to Russia to backfill them,” Sullivan told CNN.

“We will not allow that to go forward and allow there to be a lifeline to Russia from these economic sanctions from any country, anywhere in the world,” added Sullivan, who is due to meet China’s top diplomat Yang Jiechi.

China has been one of the few countries to avoid criticizing the Russians for their invasion of Ukraine. China’s Xi Jinping hosted Russian President Vladimir Putin for the opening of the Winter Olympics in Beijing just weeks before Russia launched the February 24 invasion.



# Tens of Thousands Join Anti-War Demos in Germany

FRANKFURT (Dispatches) - Tens of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in cities across Germany on Sunday to call for peace and protest against Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, police and organizers said.



A sea of people carrying yellow and blue signs that read “Stop Putin” and “Stop the War” massed at Berlin’s Brandenburg Gate, with police estimating turnout in the capital at between 20,000 and 30,000.

In Frankfurt, around 11,000 people gathered in solidarity with Ukrainians, according to a police spokesman, who said the rallies proceeded “peacefully and without incident”.

Demonstrators there waved Ukrainian and European Union flags and chanted “Stoppt den Krieg” (Stop the war), a reporter at the scene said.

Colourful marches also took place in Stuttgart, Leipzig and Hamburg, drawing in young and old, including families with children.

The demos were organized by an alliance of more than 40 rights organizations, campaign groups, unions and church groups.

The organizers put turnout nationwide at around 125,000 people.

In a written appeal, organizers condemned the “increasingly brutal” attacks against civilians in Ukraine, and praised the courage of Russians protesting against Moscow’s actions.

“Together, we call on Putin to immediately stop the attacks, withdraw from Ukraine and restore the nation’s territorial integrity,” the letter said.

The turnout in Berlin on Sunday was smaller than the 100,000-strong crowd that attended a Ukraine solidarity march in the capital two weeks ago, three days after Russia launched its invasion.

# Tunisian Protest Shows Widening Opposition to President’s One-Man Rule

TUNIS (Dispatches) - Thousands of supporters of a hardline secularist Tunisian party protested on Sunday against President Kais Saied for his march towards one-man rule and failure to avert an economic crisis, showing the increasingly broad opposition to his actions.

The protest is the biggest by the Free Constitutional Party since Saied seized executive power last summer, dismissing parliament and saying he could rule by decree in moves that many of his rivals have called a coup.

However, the party and its fiery leader Abir Moussi are no stalwarts of the democratic system Tunisia introduced after its 2011 revolution, pushing instead a nostalgic vision of the autocratic regime of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali that preceded it.

“Saied you are going the wrong way... your plans are catastrophic for the country,” said Karima Jouini, 44, a teacher attending the march in central Tunis that was led by Moussi.

The most vocal opposition to Saied has come from the moderate Islamist Ennahda party, the largest in the suspended parliament and a key player in successive governments since the revolution.

Moussi and her Free Constitutional party are bitterly opposed to Ennahda, casting it as the cause of Tunisia’s main problems over the past decade and she has not criticised any of Saied’s moves targeting Islamists.

However, while Saied has focused almost entirely on reconstructing the political system and purging his opponents, he has done very little to address Tunisia’s economic problems.

“Rest assured, we will not let them dismantle the state and continue with individual rule,” Moussi said, addressing the protest.

“If we remain silent, we will become a country whose food is sent to it in planes, like the poorest countries in the world,” she added.

The country faces a crisis in public finances for which it has embarked on talks for a rescue package with the International Monetary Fund, but Tunisians already face shortages of staple goods including flour, semolina and sugar.

“Saied kidnapped the country just to impose his own project, but he has led it to famine,” said another protester who gave his name as Imed.

# Czech Ministry to Order Launch of Nuclear Power Plant Tender

PRAGUE (Dispatches) - The Czech Industry Ministry will order next week the launch of a tender for a new unit at the Dukovany nuclear power plant, a spokesman for the ministry said.

The previous government last year sent security questionnaires to three potential bidders - Westinghouse of the United States, France’s EDF and South Korea’s KHNP - after candidates from China and Russia were excluded on security grounds. “Industry Minister Jozef Sikela will issue an order next week for the tender for a new unit at Dukovany nuclear power plant,” spokesman Vojtech Srnka said.

Czech state-controlled electricity producer CEZ operates four units of 510 megawatts each at the Dukovany plant, built from 1985 to 1987. The new unit is meant to replace facilities set to retire in the coming decades.

Czech authorities dropped Russia from the tender, estimated to be worth at least 6 billion euros (\$6.55 billion), in April last year amid a diplomatic row with Moscow over a deadly blast at a Czech arms depot in 2014 that Russia denied involvement in. read more

Prime Minister Petr Fiala said in February that under the tender plans, a supplier for the new Dukovany unit could be picked in 2024 and construction permits obtained by 2029. He has said it was necessary to launch the unit by 2036.

Nuclear power is an important energy source in the Czech Republic, accounting for 40% of its energy mix.

# Greek, Turkish Leaders Seek Common Ground Over Ukraine War

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis held talks in Istanbul on Sunday, seeking a rapprochement between the neighboring NATO members to the backdrop of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

The meeting came as Ankara seeks to shore up its credentials as a regional power player by mediating in the conflict.

On Thursday, the Turkish resort city of Antalya hosted the first talks between Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba since the start of Russia’s invasion.

They failed to broker a ceasefire.

The Turkish and Greek leaders met Sunday mindful that the burgeoning conflict in Ukraine looms larger than the long-standing tensions between Athens and Ankara.

“The meeting focused on the benefits of increased cooperation between the two countries” in view of “the evolution of the European security architecture”, the Turkish presidency said in a statement after the two-hour meeting.

“Despite the disagreements between Turkey and Greece, it was agreed... to keep the channels of communication open and to improve bilateral relations,” the statement added, saying the two leaders discussed the conflict in Ukraine and their differences in the eastern Mediterranean.

“From the standpoint of both countries, having a potentially new crisis between them would certainly be very unwanted at this particular point in time,” Sinan Ulgen, president of the Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies in Istanbul, told AFP.

The Aegean Sea neighbours and NATO allies entered a dangerous stand-off in 2020 over hydrocarbon resources and naval influence in the waters off their coasts.

Mitsotakis then unveiled Greece’s most ambitious arms purchase programme in decades and signed a defense agreement with France, to Turkey’s consternation.







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## Turkey's Current Account Deficit at \$7.1b in January

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's current account balance registered a \$7.1 billion (TL 106.2 billion) deficit in January, widening by \$5.3 billion year-over-year, according to official data released.

This stemmed from a significant rise in the goods trade deficit, which soared by \$6.4 billion to reach \$8.3 billion, the central bank said.

The country's 12-month rolling deficit stood at \$20.2 billion this January.



## Aramco Strikes \$10b Petrochemical Deal With China

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) cemented a \$10 billion deal for a refining and petrochemical complex in China, meeting Chinese President Xi Jinping who urged joint efforts to counter extremism and terrorism.

The Saudi delegation, including top executives from state-owned oil company Saudi Aramco, arrived on Thursday on an Asia tour that has already seen the kingdom pledge an investment of \$20 billion in Pakistan and seek to make additional investments in India's refining industry.

Saudi Arabia signed 35 economic cooperation agreements with China worth a total of \$28 billion at a joint investment forum during the visit, the Saudi state news agency SPA said.

"China is a good friend and partner to Saudi Arabia," Xi told the crown prince in front of reporters.

"The special nature of our bilateral relationship reflects the efforts you have made," added Xi, who has made stepping up China's presence in the Middle East a key foreign policy objective, despite its traditional low-key role there.

The crown prince said Saudi Arabia's relations with China dated back "a very long time in the past."

"In the hundreds, even thousands, of years, the interactions between the sides have been friendly. Over such a long period of exchanges with China, we have never experienced any problems with China," he said.

MBS, who has come under fire in the West following the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the kingdom's Istanbul consulate in October, said Saudi Arabia saw great opportunities with China.

"The Silk Road initiative and China's strategic orientation are very much in line with the kingdom's Vision 2030," he said according to SPA, referring to Saudi Arabia's sweeping economic reform program.

Trade between the countries increased by 32% last year, he said. Saudi Arabia also said it was working to add Chinese to the curriculum in Saudi schools and universities.

"The introduction of Chinese to the curriculum is an important step toward the opening of new horizons for students," the government said in a statement.

China has had to step carefully in relations with Riyadh, since Beijing also has close ties with Saudi Arabia's regional rival, Iran.

China is also wary of criticism from Muslim countries about its camps in the heavily Muslim far-western region of Xinjiang, which the government says are for de-radicalization purposes and rights groups call internment camps.

Xi told the crown prince the two countries must strengthen international cooperation on de-radicalization to "prevent the infiltration and spread of extremist thinking," Chinese state television said.

Saudi Arabia respected and supported China's right to protect its own security and take counterterrorism and de-radicalization steps, the crown prince told Xi, according to the same report, and was willing to increase cooperation.

## Asia Passes Grim Milestone With More Than 1m COVID-19 Deaths

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Asia passed the grim milestone of 1 million coronavirus-linked deaths on Friday, a Reuters tally showed, as a spike in omicron variant infections spreads across the region after starting in nations such as Japan and South Korea.

The death toll in Asia, home to more than half the world's population, reached 1,000,045, contributing 16% of global deaths related to COVID-19, the tally showed.

New cases remain at record or near-record levels in Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam, but have fallen sharply from their peaks in India, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Even mainland China, which has adopted a "dynamic zero" strategy of strict measures to curb infections, has been severely tested by fast-spreading omicron.

Deaths have soared to records in the East Asian countries of Japan and South Korea and the financial hub of Hong Kong. COVID-19 deaths in Hong Kong have risen to an average of more than 200 a day in the last week, up from one or two earlier, as the outbreak tears through hundreds of nursing homes, hitting many of the city's unvaccinated elderly.

South Korea's daily average is 186 deaths, three times the level of its 2021 surge.

Bucking the trend, the world's second-most populous nation of India, which accounts for almost 52% of Asia's total COVID-19 deaths, reported a sharp fall in both infections and deaths over the past month.

India reported fewer than 5,000 cases and 200 deaths a day during the last four days versus its peak this year in January of more than 300,000 cases and 1,000 deaths each day, official figures show.



## Russia Seeks Indian Investment in Its Oil and Gas Sector

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Russia urged India to deepen its investments in the sanction-hit country's oil and gas sector, and is keen on expanding the sales networks of Russian companies in Asia's third-largest economy.

Russia's economy faces its deepest crisis since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, as the West imposes severe sanctions over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Some western allies have encouraged India to condemn Russia's actions in Ukraine, after New Delhi abstained from voting against Moscow, a long-standing arms supplier, at the United Nations.

"Russia's oil and petroleum product exports to India have approached \$1 billion, and there are clear opportunities to increase this figure," said Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, according to a statement shared by Russia's embassy in India late on Friday.

"We are interested in further attracting Indian investment to the Russian oil and gas sector and expanding Russian companies' sales networks in India," Novak told Indian Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri.

The United States this week banned Russian oil imports and Britain said it will phase them out by year end, decisions expected to further disrupt the global energy market, where Russia is the second-largest exporter of crude.

Indian state-run companies hold stakes in Russian oil and gas fields, while Russian entities including Rosneft own a majority stake in Indian refiner Nayara Energy. Some Indian companies also buy Russian oil.

Russia expects both countries to continue cooperation on civilian nuclear power, including building new units at a nuclear power plant in the south Indian town of Kudankulam, Novak said.

## Economic Recovery Tops Filipinos' Concerns Ahead of Presidential Election

MANILA (Dispatches) - For 48-year-old passenger jeepney driver Arthur Arsenio, the most urgent task of the next Philippine president is to ensure a stable income for daily workers like him and lower the prices of food and other commodities.

Arsenio's income as a driver has been erratic since the government imposed various levels of lockdowns due to the COVID-19 threat in March 2020. The restrictions halted public transport, forcing many jeepney drivers out of work.

The elongated, flatbed passenger jeepneys are the most popular means of public transport in the Philippines. These iconic vehicles have been plying in the streets after the Second World War. Arsenio was lucky to survive in Metro Manila, capital region, as his partner Tina, who works as a domestic helper, earns money to pay for the house rent and food.

This year, Arsenio has started plying his jeepney again after two years of uncertainty, but charged his passengers 13 pesos (about 0.25 U.S. dollar), 2 pesos (about 0.038 dollar) higher than the minimum fare, explaining that the soaring fuel prices in the Philippines forced him to raise the rate.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, year-on-year headline inflation in the Philippines remained at 3 percent in February, while electricity, gas, and other fuels for household inflation accelerated to 12.8 percent, and private transport inflation increased to 29.8 percent.

Arsenio's concerns are shared by other Filipinos. A recent national survey shows that controlling inflation, increasing the workers' salary, reducing poverty, curbing corruption, and creating more jobs are "the most urgent concerns" of Filipinos that their next president should address.

On May 9, Filipinos will elect a new president to succeed President Rodrigo Duterte, whose six-year term ends in June.

Government data shows that around 3.27 million Filipinos were out of work in last December. The country's unemployment slightly rose in December at 6.6 percent despite the easing of Covid-19 mobility restrictions. The country's poverty rate also increased to 23.7 percent in the first half of 2021, or 26.14 million Filipinos.

"We are now in a very deep dark pit," Baguio City Mayor Benjamin Magalong said in a recent speech, warning of challenges that the new administration will face head-on to steer this Southeast Asian country of 110 million to recover from the pandemic.

## Sri Lanka to Start Talks With IMF

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka will begin talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) next month on a plan to help the crisis-hit country, where a foreign exchange shortage has squeezed essential imports amid looming debt payments, three sources said yesterday.

Sri Lanka is facing its worst financial crisis in years. With foreign exchange reserves standing at a paltry \$2.31 billion, the country is struggling to pay for critical imports including fuel, food and medicines.

The move to approach the IMF for help comes after months of resistance from Sri Lanka's government and central bank, despite calls from opposition leaders and experts to seek a bailout package.

Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa will travel to Washington in mid-April to present Sri Lanka's proposal to senior IMF officials, two sources with knowledge of the ongoing discussions told Reuters.

"We are taking our proposal and a plan," one of the sources said, declining to be named since the discussions are confidential. "The government is serious about fixing things."

In a tweet late yesterday, Central Bank Governor Ajith Nivard Cabraal said the aim of the upcoming talks with the IMF was not restructuring Sri Lanka's debt.

"Meetings of Sri Lankan authorities with @IMFNews officials over the next few weeks are NOT for the purpose of #debt restructuring," he said.

Through repeated cycles of borrowing since 2007, Sri Lanka had piled up \$12.55 billion worth of debt through international sovereign bonds (ISB), which make up the largest part of its external debt.

The island nation has to repay about US\$4 billion in foreign debt this year, including a US\$1 billion ISB maturing in July.

"We will discuss options based on our plans," the source said.

Sri Lanka's finance ministry and the IMF did not immediately respond to questions from Reuters.

A combination of historically weak government finances, badly timed tax cuts and the Covid-19 pandemic, which hit the country's lucrative tourism industry and foreign remittances, have wreaked havoc on Sri Lanka's economy.

In a periodic review last week, the IMF called on the government to implement a "credible and coherent" strategy to repay debt and restore macroeconomic stability.

"The country faces mounting challenges, including public debt that has risen to unsustainable levels, low international reserves, and persistently large financing needs in the coming years," the IMF said.

To find a way out of the crisis, the government will seek assistance with debt restructuring, the foreign exchange crisis, bolstering revenue generation and reforming state-owned enterprises, the source said.

## Palm Oil Prices Set for New Record Highs in Coming Months



KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Palm oil prices could hit a record 8,100 ringgit (\$1,938) a ton in coming months following a plunge in global edible oil stocks and a decline in export surpluses, including the impact of war in Ukraine, analyst James Fry said on Wednesday.

He expected locally delivered crude palm oil prices in Malaysia to range between 6,600-8,100 ringgit a ton until July, easing to 6,200-7,000 ringgit in the third and fourth quarters when supply builds up and demand reduces.

"The cupboard is bare; therefore there is no alternative to letting high prices do the job of rationing demand to balance the market," Fry, chairman of agribusiness consultancy LMC International, told an industry conference in Kuala Lumpur.

The benchmark palm oil contract for May delivery on the Bursa Malaysia Derivatives Exchange was trading around 6,622 ringgit (\$1,583) a ton on Wednesday.

All major edible and mineral oil prices have soared to multi-year or all-time highs in 2022 on supply worries, brisk global demand

Prices have risen 38% so far this year. Fry said as much as 60% of Black Sea sunflower oil exports, or 8 million tons, would be delayed following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"A month ago we expected Black Sea sun oil exports to grow well over 2 million tons to 13.5 million in 2021/22. Now the question is how much will be lost due to the invasion," he said.



# Iran Nuclear Deal Close to Finalized

NEW YORK (Dispatches) – U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman says an agreement over Iran nuclear program is ‘close’ to being finalized.

“I think it’s close, and we would like all of the parties – including Russia, which has indicated it’s got some concerns – to bring this to a close,” Sherman told Fox News on Sunday.

“We are very concerned about what Iran is doing, but imagine these Iranians with a nuclear weapon. We need to get that off the table so we can address their malign behavior in the Middle East, and we will do all of the above, but first we’ve got to get this deal. And it is not yet closed,” she added.



# NATO Trains to Help Its Own, as Ukraine War Rumbles

OSLO (Dispatches) - Any resemblance to reality is purely coincidental. As war rages in Ukraine, NATO and its partners will launch exercises in Norway on Monday aimed at coming to the rescue of one of its own.

Some 30,000 troops, 200 aircraft and 50 vessels from 27 nations will take part in the Cold Response 2022 exercise, the largest exercise involving NATO troops this year.

Kicking off on March 14, the manoeuvres will enable Western nations to hone their combat skills in Norway’s cold climate, including in the Arctic, on the ground, at sea and in the skies.

The exercise will be held just a few hundred kilometres from the Russian border, and while it was planned long before Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine, it now has added significance because of the war.

“This exercise is extremely important for the security of Norway and its allies. We will practice an allied reinforcement of Norway”, Norwegian Defence Minister Odd Roger Enoksen told AFP.

“It is not being held because of the Russian authorities’ attack on Ukraine, but given the backdrop there is a heightened significance”, he said.

The guardian of NATO’s northern border in Europe, Norway is keen to test how it would manage Allied reinforcements on its soil, in line with Article 5 of NATO’s charter, which requires member states to come to the aid of another member state under attack.

Neighbouring Sweden and Finland, which are officially military non-aligned but increasingly close partners of NATO, will also participate in Cold Response, which will conclude on April 1.

“I find it totally normal, perhaps now more than ever, to train together to demonstrate our capacity and our willingness to defend our values and our way of life”, stressed General Yngve Odlo, head of Norway’s Joint Headquarters and in charge of Cold Response.

On the Russian side of the 196-kilometre (121-mile) Arctic border that separates it from Norway is the Kola Peninsula, home to the Northern Fleet and a large number of nuclear weapons and military installations.

“There is no explicit military threat against NATO or Norwegian territory”, Enoksen said, but “the situation in Europe is more unpredictable than it has been in a long time.”

To avoid any misunderstandings, Norway has informed Russia of the Cold Response exercise -- defined as “purely defensive” -- and will keep a respectful distance from Russia.



General Odlo spoke to Vice Admiral Alexander Moiseyev, commander of Russia’s Northern Fleet, at length about the exercise in order to provide reassurances.

Russia declined however an invitation to send observers to the exercise.

“Any build-up of NATO military capabilities near Russia’s borders does not help to strengthen security in the region”, the Russian embassy in Norway told AFP.

In similar circumstances in the past, Moscow has expressed its discontent by jamming GPS signals or announcing missile tests, thereby blocking access to some international maritime and air space.

Russia’s offensive against Ukraine surprised experts, leaving some to wonder whether Russian President Vladimir Putin would try to go after other former Soviet states, such as the Baltics, in his quest to restore the old USSR.

Cold Response “allows us to hone our training, demonstrate our unity, our willingness to work together in rugged conditions which may be conditions that are more familiar in the east”, French General Yvan Gouriou of France’s rapid reaction corps said.

“So the exercise is very relevant in the current situation”, he added.

More than 40,000 troops were initially expected to participate in Cold Response, but the number has shrunk due to the Covid pandemic and geopolitical crises elsewhere.

The US aircraft carrier Harry Truman and its escort ships have been kept back in the Aegean Sea, where they are helping monitor the skies near Ukraine.

## Russia-Ukraine Tensions, Lose-Lose Policy For Energy Market



TEHRAN (Shana) - The Director General of OPEC Affairs and Relations with the Energy Communities Department of the Iranian Ministry of Petroleum called the continuation of tensions between Russia and Ukraine a loss-loss policy for the energy market and stressed the importance of global energy security.

Afshin Javan said that the reason for the increase in oil prices in world markets is a combination of fundamental and non-fundamental factors, and added: “Oil prices are currently affected by the tension between Russia and Ukraine and as you can see, Russia and Ukraine have brought oil prices to their highest levels since 2008 (\$128). It can be said that the shock of supply and demand is currently determining the price of oil.”

He stated that the most important concern in the oil market is insufficient investment in this industry, and added: “I believe that in the medium and long term, the important issue in the oil market is investment. If not enough investment is made in the oil industry, there will be a big gap between supply and demand.”

The Director General of OPEC Affairs and Relations with the Energy Communities Department stressed the need to support the flow of investment in the oil supply sector, and said: “This is the biggest concern in the oil market in the next two years due to the eye-catching return of demand and any delay in this sector will jeopardize the future energy of the world.”

“Investment in the oil industry has risen from an average of \$650 billion in 2014 to 2015 to \$350 billion in 2020 and 2021, which is a very low figure,” he said. “Oil and gas demand is now at its highest level since coronavirus outbreak and will continue to increase for the next few years, especially in the developing countries.”

Emphasizing that the world’s energy flow should not be destroyed in the shadow of politics and should be continuous, Javan added: “The smoke of energy insecurity in the world hurts the consumers. Failure to implement projects such as the Nord Stream-2 gas pipeline will damage European industries and put them under pressure.

## Iran Retaliation Is Wake-Up Call for Iraqis About Israeli Danger

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iraq’s popular anti-terror groups have urged eviction of foreign forces from the country, saying the regional Kurdistan government’s hosting of Mossad elements makes them a valid target for any side.

Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba weighed in on Sunday after missiles fired by Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) in retaliation razed Mossad centers in Kurdistan’s Erbil.

Akram al-Kaabi, the secretary general of the movement, said the fact that the Kurdistan region “provides Mossad agents with refuge” makes it allowable for any party to target the “Zionist spies.”

The Erbil operation targeted the “lair of the Zionists, who have taken refuge with a famous family to carry out their mercenary operations,” he said, referring to the Barzani family, which has dominated Iraqi Kurdistan’s politics for some time.

The family provides refuge to Iraq’s “enemies with the aim of weakening and disintegrating the country” and separating Kurdistan from Iraq, al-Kaabi said.

“We congratulate those who stand with us against Daesh and Mossad,” he said in an apparent reference to Iran which was key to helping Iraq drive out the Takfiri terrorists from its cities.

Kaabi said he had received verified reports that several Mossad agents had been killed in Iran’s retaliatory attack.

He said he was surprised by Kurdish leaders claiming that they were unaware of the presence of Mossad elements in the Iraqi Kurdistan region, which he said, “is quite obvious”.

Kaabi also welcomed calls for the formation of a committee to investigate the existence of Mossad centers in the Iraqi Kurdistan region.

“This committee should lead to the consolidation of Iraqi sovereignty over the rule in Erbil and prevent further defiance,” Kaabi said.

Another Iraqi resistance movement said the decisive counterattack by Iran on Mossad training centers in Erbil portends “a different stage of conflict on the Iraqi soil.”

“We reiterate the need to expel foreign military bases and intelligence bases from our country, in order to avoid the further burden of international and regional conflicts on our soil,” Kata’ib Hezbollah said in a statement.

The group also upbraided certain groups and individuals who have talked disparagingly about Iran’s retaliation.

“Where were these voices, when the American and Zionist occupiers were bombing Iraqi forces and military warehouses?” it said.

Senior Iraqi cleric Jawad al-Khasi said Mossad uses the Kurdistan region to “export terrorism” to Iraq and its neighbors.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) said the Iranian counterattack proved that “the resistance today enjoys the upper hand in the region.”

“The Islamic Republic proved that it can deliver a painful blow on Israel at the right time, and turn the tables on it,” the group said.

It congratulated the IRGC on the operation, describing it in line with reinforcing the axis of resistance.

## Gov’t to Hold Tender for Building Renewable Power Plants

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – The government is going to award the projects for constructing renewable power plants with the capacity of 4,000 megawatts (MW) to capable companies through a tender which will be held early next Iranian calendar year (begins on March 21), IRIB reported.

According to Head of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA) Mahmoud Kamani, the mentioned tender is going to be held in line with the government’s planning for the construction of renewable power plants with the capacity of 10,000 MW across the country.

Kamani said the necessary provisions for the funding of the mentioned projects have been made in the next year’s national budget bill and the tender will be held early next year after the bill is approved by the Guardian Council.

The official mentioned the Energy Ministry’s recent public call for the contribution of private companies in a project for developing renewable power plants in the country, and said: “After the public call for the construction of renewable power plants, we received requests from private companies for establishing power plants with the capacity of more than 95,000 MW, and we have signed memorandums of understanding with many of those companies.”

According to Kamani, the primary studies have also been conducted for the construction of wind farms with a capacity of 3,000 MW, using the above-mentioned model.

The official noted that renewable power plants with the capacity of 2,000 MW will also be constructed by major industrial and mining companies, their generated electricity which will be provided to the Energy Ministry and the ministry will supply the mentioned companies with an equal amount of electricity from the national grid.

Production units based in industrial parks are also going to fund the construction of such power plants with the capacity of 1,000 MW, in order to use the generated electricity in peak consumption hours.

The SATBA head said the plan is to construct renewable power plants with the capacity of 10,000 MW over the next four years, of which 500 MW will come on stream by the next Iranian calendar year’s summer peak consumption period (summer begins on June 22).

## Iran Now Among...

FROM PAGE 1

And now the second Nour Satellite is put into the orbit to show how Iran has progressed in the aerospace science and now the country can compete with major countries in this field.



After major achievements in the military sector and especially in the missile and drone programs, now Iran can show its power in the aerospace science to the enemies and the world, and the world should know this fact that this is still a beginning for major achievements and nobody can stop the train of success of the Islamic Revolution.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has proved that whatever it wants it can achieve provided that the country is focused on its goals. Senior officials and policy-makers of the country have set special plans to propel the country towards achieving more success and they will materialize step by step and the nation just needs to be patient.

Definitely after any success in the country, enemies and especially the West try to undermine the success or demonize it and it depends on the time and dimension of success. But the country is determined to continue its progress in all fields because it knows well that if you want to be an example and power in the world you need to progress in all dimensions to compete with big rivals or even fight with them.

Nuclear knowhow is another progress of the country which has cornered big powers but they know it well that Iran is now capable of making A-bomb but it will not do it because Super Leader has forbidden it and called it haram and it wants nuclear program for peaceful purposes but the Westerners do not tolerate it because they want a weak Iran.

So Iranians are determined to continue progress in all-fields which can help the country to defend itself against invasion or help it towards economic progress and the train is moving ahead with full speed and this is what the West does not like it.

## Al Saud...

FROM PAGE 1

While strongly condemning this heinous crime, Islamic Development Coordination Council believes that such crimes can only be committed at the behest of the US government and Zionist regime and calls on all freedom-seeking people and international organizations, especially human rights organizations, to condemn the heinous act of Saudi Arabian government and voice their support for innocent people of this country especially oppressed Shiite people” the statement read.

Saudi Arabia on Saturday executed 81 people convicted of a variety of crimes, including killings and belonging to militant groups, in the largest mass execution conducted by the kingdom in recent memory.

## Field, Diplomacy...

FROM PAGE 1

“Following the recent crimes of the fake Zionist regime and the previous announcement that the crimes and evils of this infamous regime will not go unanswered, the strategic center for conspiracy and evil of the Zionists was targeted by powerful and pinpoint missiles of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps,” it said.

In a statement issued earlier on Sunday, the IRGC indicated that the operation was in response to an Israeli airstrike on the Syrian capital of Damascus last Monday, in which two IRGC officers were killed. The IRGC identified the two slain officers as colonels Ehsan Karbalaipour and Morteza Saeidnejad, warning that Israel would “pay for this crime.”

On Thursday, Iran’s permanent mission to the United Nations wrote to the UN secretary general and the Security Council, saying Tehran “reserves its inherent right to self-defense, under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, to respond to such criminal act whenever it deems appropriate.”

Shamkhani’s tweet also referred to Iran’s use of diplomacy in eight rounds of talks with the P4+1 group of countries on a possible revival of the landmark 2015 deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was abandoned by the US three years after its conclusion.

## Gov’t to Issue Oil...

FROM PAGE 1

Over the past two decades, free and special economic zones have played a significant role in Iran’s economy, and the Iranian government has been seriously pursuing a program for the development of the existing zones and establishing new ones.

According to Morteza Bank, the former secretary of Iranian Free Zones High Council, over 40 percent of Iran’s exports are done through the country’s free trade zones and special economic zones and \$169 billion worth of commodities have been exported from these areas in the past seven years.



## Arsenal to Decide on Lacazette's Future After the Season

LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal striker Alexandre Lacazette's future at the club will be assessed once the season is over, manager Mikel Arteta said, with the Frenchman having only four months left on his contract. Arsenal's options up front are limited after Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's move to Barcelona in January, leaving Lacazette as their only senior player in that position. "We have discussed that (Lacazette's contract) and we've been open that at the end of the season, once we know where we are, we are going to make a decision together," Arteta told reporters.

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## Larrazabal Claims Sixth DP World Tour Win

HAARTBEESPOORT (Dispatches) - Spain's Pablo Larrazabal claimed victory over Jordan Smith on the second playoff hole at the DP World Tour's MyGolfLife Open at the Pecanwood Country Club in Haartbeespoort, South Africa. The pair had been locked on 22 under-par with another Spaniard, Adri Arnaus, after 72 holes, but the latter dropped out of the playoff after the first hole. Briton Jordan, who carded a 65 on Sunday, found the rough on the second and two-putted to allow Larrazabal to claim his sixth tour win and first since 2019.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

TUESDAY MARCH 15, 2022

# Arsenal Move Back Above Manchester United With Win Over Leicester

LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal returned to the Premier League top four after goals from Thomas Partey and Alexandre Lacazette earned them a 2-0 win at home to Leicester City. The win moves the Gunners a point ahead of Manchester United but crucially Mikel Arteta's side have three games in hand on their rivals for the final Champions League slot. Arsenal have now won their last five games and a run of nine wins from their last 11 encounters in the Premier League has transformed their season after a poor start to the campaign. A return to Europe's elite competition, after a five-year absence, is now within their grasp if they can maintain solid form over their final 12 games. "We have to be there, we should be there. Our history obliges us to be there but we are not there yet and there are still a lot of games to play," said Arteta, whose side host Liverpool on Wednesday. "We have an excellent group of people at the club who believe in what we do and then you have to put performance into results. The last few months we have been more consistent." Partey put Arsenal ahead in the 11th minute with a simple, glancing near-post header from a Gabriel Martinelli corner which was poorly defended by the Foxes. The home side looked confident and creative with Martin Odegaard impressive in the centre of the midfield but Leicester posed the occasional question on the break. Arsenal keeper Aaron Ramsdale produced a superb one-handed save to keep out a header from Harvey Barnes but without the threat of the injured Jamie Vardy, Leicester lacked penetration. Arsenal's second goal came after Kasper Schmeichel parried out an Odegaard free kick



and Partey's goalbound header was cleared off the line by Luke Thomas. The video replay showed that Leicester defender Caglar Soyuncu had reached out a hand towards Partey's header and after reviewing the monitor referee Anthony Taylor pointed to the spot and Lacazette drilled the spot-kick into the roof of the net. Leicester manager Brendan Rodgers felt the decision had been unfair. "I am disappointed in the penalty. That there was disappointing, I don't know what else he could do. He was moving but it touched his hand and it was accidental," he said. Rodgers said his team would now be focusing firmly on their Europa League campaign which sees them face French side Rennes in the round of 16 on Thursday. "We are not choosy over trophies as we only have the one we can play for. It is a real focus for us but not to take anything away from the Premier League as we want to finish as high as we can," he said. Arsenal have 51 points from 26 games while United have 50 from 29 and West Ham 48 points from 29 matches. Leicester are 12th on 33 points.

## Kristoffersen Completes Giant Double



KRANJSKA GORA (Dispatches) - Henrik Kristoffersen won a second giant slalom in two days in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia while Marco Odermatt closed in on the overall World Cup title. Norwegian Kristoffersen, third after the first run, beat Austrian Stefan Brennsteiner by 0.23sec and Swiss star Odermatt, the first-run leader, by 0.27. Kristoffersen also won on the same course the day before when Odermatt finished joint second. It was Kristoffersen's fourth victory in five races since the end of February. Saturday's result secured Odermatt the small globe for giant slalom season champion. Sunday's third place meant the 24-year-old Olympic giant slalom champion is almost certain to win the overall World Cup for the first time. He has a 329-point lead over Norway's Aleksander Aamodt Kilde heading into the four-race finals in Courchevel and Meribel next week. A victory is worth 100 points, but Kilde is not expected to compete in either the slalom or the giant slalom.

## No Guarantees Chelsea Can Complete Season

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea's technical and performance advisor Petr Cech said the club are having to live "day-by-day" in the wake of sweeping economic sanctions placed on owner Roman Abramovich by the UK government. Abramovich was one of seven more oligarchs sanctioned this week by the UK following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Chelsea have been given a special license to continue operating, but there are fears they will quickly run out of money unless the terms of that agreement are eased. As it stands the Blues are unable to sign players, renew contracts, sell tickets to matches or merchandise, with limits also on the amount of money they are allowed to spend on travel to away games. Cech was one of the stars of the Abramovich era on the field as a goalkeeper for 11 years at Stamford Bridge between 2004 and 2015 before returning to the club in 2019. He is the most senior Chelsea official to speak publicly since the sanctions were announced this week and could offer no guarantees the club could survive until the end of the season. "We have to admit that we go day-by-day because we don't have this in our hands," Cech told Sky Sports. Chelsea said in a club statement this week that they would seek more negotiations with the government over amending the license "to allow the club to operate as normal as possible." Cech added: "The conversations are going on so that we can actually operate in the way that we can finish the season. "I believe that for us to be able to, to carry on to finish the season would obviously help everybody involved in the Premier League." Chelsea sit third in the Premier League table and are also still involved in the knockout stages of the Champions League and FA Cup.



## Nadal Stages Spectacular Comeback at Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS (Dispatches) - Rafa Nadal roared back from 5-2 down in the third set to defeat American Sebastian Korda 6-2 1-6 7-6(3) in the second round at Indian Wells on Saturday and remain unbeaten in 2022. After cruising through the first set in 35 minutes, the Spaniard struggled to cope with a more aggressive approach from the 21-year-old who stormed through the second. Nadal's normally solid serve let him down in the third and he committed his seventh double fault to fall two breaks down in front of a stunned crowd before fighting back to force a tiebreak. The veteran was then much more composed and sealed the win when Korda's backhand landed wide. "Everyone knows this is my favorite place to play and it is amazing to play in front of all you guys," Nadal told the supportive crowd under blue skies in the Southern California desert. "I feel very lucky today to be through. Sebastian was playing some fantastic tennis. He had his chances, but that's tennis." The loss will sting for Korda, who grew up idolising the 21-time Grand Slam champion and even named his cat after him.

"He started playing a lot different," Korda said of Nadal's play after he fell behind 5-2 in the decider. "He moved closer to the baseline. I could see that he was a little worried, changing up his tactics. I just didn't play good games, and he took advantage of it." With the win, the three-time Indian Wells champion is now undefeated in 16 matches this year. Before his match, Nadal announced that he would not compete at the Miami Open, which starts later this month. Earlier, newly-crowned world number one Daniil Medvedev dispatched Tomas Machac 6-3 6-2 to cruise into the third round. Medvedev's powerful serve and almost impenetrable defense proved too much for the Czech qualifier to handle. The Russian received a warm welcome from the crowd on Stadium One when he was introduced as the world's top men's player after the match. "This is the first time I have heard this and people clapped so thanks a lot for the nice welcome," Medvedev said. The 26-year-old U.S. Open champion is seeking his first win at the Masters 1000 tournament. In their second round action, fifth-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas edged Jack Sock 7-6(5) 3-6 7-6(5), wild card Nick Kyrgios stormed past Federico Delbonis 6-2 6-2 and rising stars Jensen Brooksby, Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz all advanced in straight sets.

## Ronaldo Lays Claim To All-Time Leading Scorer Record

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Manchester United forward Cristiano Ronaldo etched his name in the record books as professional football's all-time leading scorer with 807 goals after a brilliant hat-trick against Premier League rivals Tottenham Hotspur. The all-time top goalscorer title in football is much contested and Fifa does not keep an official record, but the world governing body estimates that Austro-Czech Josef Bican netted 805 goals during a career that lasted from 1931 to '55. Ronaldo's 12th-minute opener at Old Trafford was a superb strike from distance that helped him equal the record. The Portugal international then went past Bican with a tap in from Jadon Sancho's neat pass to put United 2-1 in front before powerfully heading home his third to spark wild celebrations in the stands as United won 3-2. It was the 59th treble of Ronaldo's career and his first for the Old Trafford side since 2008 following his return. "Tremendously happy with my first hat-trick since I came back to Old Trafford!" Ronaldo wrote on Instagram. "Nothing beats the feeling of being back on the pitch and helping the team with goals and effort."



## Messi Jeered In PSG Win Over Bordeaux

PARIS (dispatches) - Kylian Mbappe and Neymar scored as Paris Saint-Germain beat Ligue 1 strugglers Bordeaux 3-0 amid whistles from their home fans for their stars including Lionel Messi, days after their European meltdown. Amid a gloomy atmosphere in the French capital four days after their Champions League exit, the club's stars Messi and Neymar were jeered with Mbappe the only player spared. Seven-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi was booed like never before in his career, even in the rare bad times with Argentina, by his own supporters, whistled at each touch of the ball. The Parisians hold a 15-point lead on second-placed Nice and are on track to equal Saint-Etienne's record of 10 French titles, but the frustration of their home fans spilled over. They have not forgiven Messi, their star summer signing, for having sunk the rest of the ship against Real Madrid on Wednesday. Mbappe scored the goals that put PSG two up with less than 30 minutes to play in Madrid. Then the French club collapsed again, letting in three goals in 17 minutes. Only Mbappe escaped the wrath of the supporters, cheering him on every ball and scoring the opener after 24 minutes. Ligue 1 remains Mauricio Pochettino's team's only objective for the rest of season.

