

Health Ministry Announced on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **140,315** With **38** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Iran Will Launch a Plan to Develop The Arash Natural Gas field Shared With Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in the Near Future, After The Pair Agreed to Begin Its Development Without Tehran

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Iraq Warned Against Neglecting U.S.-Israel Hegemonic Goals

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi said "Any country in the region that neglects the hegemonic goals of the United States and the Zionist Regime will both disregard the interests of its nation and will spur Muslim nations' anger".

Raisi made the remarks in a phone call with his Iraqi counterpart Barham Salih.

He congratulated the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan and wished divine blessings to the Iraqi people and all Muslims around the world, emphasizing that the Islamic Republic of Iran supports the unity, independence, security and the promotion of regional and international position of Iraq.

"We consider the slightest insecurity in Iraq to be to the detriment of the whole region, so we welcome the realization of the interests of the Iraqi people and the establishment of a strong government in this country," he added.

Emphasizing that Tehran and Baghdad are not only neighbors, but also the two nations have a brotherly and kinship relationship, Raisi said, "Good steps have been taken to develop and deepen relations between the two countries and we are determined to promote the level of relations and cooperation between the two countries in all fields to the full capacity and the development of bilateral and regional relations between Tehran and Baghdad, and lead to closer relations at the international level".

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Taliban Agree to Supply Iran's Water Share

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The Taliban delegation attending a meeting in China has pledged that Kabul will allow Iran to have its share of water from the joint resources under a bilateral treaty, Iran's special representative for Afghanistan Hassan Kazemi Qomi said.

Commenting on the issues discussed with the Taliban delegation on the sidelines of a recent meeting of neighbors of Afghanistan, held in China's Tunxi, Kazemi Qomi said the subject of Iran's share of water from the Hirmand River has been mooted in the gathering.

He said the Taliban representatives have promised that they will put the subject of Iran's share of water on the agenda of the ruling group upon their return to Kabul.

The Taliban have emphasized that the issues relating to the joint water resources must be settled according to the previously-signed treaty, the Iranian envoy added.

Iran and Afghanistan have a disagreement over allocation of water from the Hirmand River, as both sides suffer from droughts and climate change.

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Iran Oil, Gas Reserves Estimated at 1.2 Trillion Barrels



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran has the equivalent of over 1.2 trillion barrels of oil and gas as a senior Oil Ministry official says the country will be able to tap those reserves for at least a century from now.

CEO of the state run National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Mohsen Khojasteh Mehr said late on Friday that Iran is now the largest holder of hydrocarbon reserves in the world considering its new discoveries.

"With regards to in-place oil and gas and also in-place liquids and condensates we have the equivalent of more than 1,200 billion barrels of crude under the ground," Khojasteh Mehr told the state TV.

Giving a breakdown of the figure, the deputy oil minister said that Iran's extractable crude reserves are estimated at 157 billion barrels considering the enhanced recovery rate.

He added that natural gas reserves are estimated at 33 trillion cubic meters (116.5 trillion cubic feet).

Khojasteh Mehr said the massive reserves enables Iran to continue to produce oil and gas for at least the next 100 years.

The figures come days after Iranian government officials said crude oil production in the country had reached levels seen before the United States imposed sanctions on Iran in 2018 following its decision to withdraw from an international deal on Tehran's nuclear program.

Media reports and government statements suggest crude exports from Iran have been at around 1.5 million barrels per day (bpd) since late last year. That comes despite US sanctions which have sought to pile economic pressure on Iran by choking off its oil export revenues.

Khojasteh Mehr insisted that Iran's crude production had already reached a pre-sanctions capacity of over 3.8 million bpd.

He added that the country managed to increase its oil exports by 40 percent at the height of restrictive measures imposed by the United States to choke off Iran's energy sales.

Khojasteh Mehr announced that Iran's crude oil production capacity has reached the pre-sanctions level of 3.838 million barrels per day (bpd), despite all the sanctions and economic pressure.

Over the past months, Iranian experts carried out more than 1,800 operational works and over 250 overhauls in oil wells, he said, adding that they also put about 13 new oil wells into the production phase.

Asked whether the surge in oil production capacity was due to the easing of U.S. sanctions, Khojasteh Mehr replied that the figures had been achieved "at the height of the excessive restrictions."

"The Iranian nation has always achieved the greatest success in the most difficult conditions," he said.

"We increased exports by 40 percent and exceeded our commitments regarding the value of exports in the annual budget at a time when not only the sanctions were not eased but we even faced a host of [new] restrictions that created disruptions for oil buyers, intermediaries, and maritime navigation systems," he asserted.

The NIOC chief also said the company has identified new markets and is using modern methods in its contracts as well as a new logistics and transportation system.

He further noted that the country's entire financial, monetary and banking network has been at work to ensure the reimbursement of payments.

Annual Growth of 12.5% in Industry, 10% in Mining, Trade Targeted

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's industry, mining and trade minister said, "According to the plan, we are looking to achieve 12.5 percent growth in the industry sector and 10 percent growth in mining and trade sectors in the current Iranian calendar year 1401 (began on March 21)."

All directors of Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry in any part of the country are responsible for their field of work in matters related to business and must actively and consistently seek to remove barriers to production and trade, Reza Fatemi-Amin further reiterated.

In providing infrastructure related to industry, mining and trade, all possible capacities must be activated and it is necessary to continuously monitor the status of industrial units, he added. In late March, the minister had announced that the regional planning for the industry and trade sectors of the country is prepared by his ministry in accordance with the capacities of each province and to prevent the concentration of industrial units in one region.

Since the concentration of different industries in some provinces of the country has become problematic, so the regional planning for industry and trade has been developed by this ministry to create and launch industrial units in accordance with the needs of each region and province, he reiterated.

According to this planning, the industrial and commercial capacities of each province are identified and in accordance with those capacities, industrial units are created in that region, so that in addition to job creation, the concentration of industrial and commercial units not related to the mentioned region is prevented, the minister added.

By identifying the capacities of each province in the industry and trade sector, investors appropriate to that industry are encouraged to invest in that region and province, Fatemi-Amin noted.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Islamic Revolution, Revival of Hopes Among Freedom-Seeking Nations

When on April 1, 1979, Iranian nations turned out in a referendum to decide their future political establishment of the country, overwhelming majority, over 98 percent, voted for the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran and they now reap the fruits of that wise decision as the country has turned into a biggest regional power and one of the major international actors in the political decisions.

Since then, Iranians mark the Islamic Republic Day on the twelfth day of the first Persian month of Farvardin (April 1).

In February 1979, Islamic Republic's founder, the late Imam Khomeini returned to Iran after 15 years in exile and led the campaign to overthrow the Shah of Iran. Two months later, the new government held a referendum on establishing the Islamic Republic based on a new constitution, replacing the Persian monarchy for 2,500 years. On Farvardin 12, the result of the referendum was announced, with 98.2% of the Iranian people voting in favor of an Islamic Republic.

Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, introduced the morning of April 1 as the first day of God's rule and said: "April 1, which is the first day of God's rule, is one of the greatest religious and national holidays and the Iranian nation should celebrate this day. The day when the palace of 2,500 years of tyrannical rule collapsed and the evil domination disappeared forever, and the government of the oppressed replaced it."

Now almost 43 years after that historic moment, the Islamic Revolution moves strongly ahead by achieving successes one after the other in different fields and it is turning to be the last hope of the freedom and independence-seeking nations for justice and fighting the world arrogance.

If we have a short glance at the achievements of the Islamic Revolution since 1979, we can write volumes of books and this is what has made the world arrogant try to topple this establishment or make it a puppet regime and unfortunately they have failed to achieve their goal because of prudent leadership of Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei and brave Iranian nation who have thwarted any plot.

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Iran Ready to Cover India's Oil Needs

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran says it is willing to meet the energy security needs of India, the world's third biggest oil importer and consumer.

"Rupee-rial trade mechanism can help companies from both the countries to deal with each other directly and avoid third party intermediation costs," said Ali Chegeni, Iran's ambassador to India.

India, which depends on imports to cover over 80% of its crude oil needs, was the second largest importer of oil from Iran after China until May 2019 when it stopped purchases under pressure from the administration of former U.S. President Donald Trump.

"If both countries launch rupee-rial trade mechanisms, the bilateral trade could grow to \$30 billion," Chegeni was quoted as saying by Indian facilitation body MVRDC World Trade Center on Friday.

India and Iran had agreed to ditch dollar in bilateral trade to bypass sanctions imposed on Tehran by the U.S.

Under that mechanism, Indian refiners were paying for Iranian oil in rupees to a local bank and the funds were used by Tehran to pay for imports from India.



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President Felicitates Muslim Leaders On Holy Month of Ramadan

TEHRAN (IFP) - President Ebrahim Raisi has extended his congratulations to leaders of Muslim countries on the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, expressing hope that effective measures would be taken to forge unity and integrity among Muslim nations.

In separate messages to leaders of Muslim countries on Saturday, Raisi said he hopes that effective steps would be taken to strengthen unity and integrity among the Islamic Ummah, particularly against divisive movements and Takfiri terrorism.

He added that such a goal could be achieved with the blessings of Ramadan which is marked by mercy and forgiveness and through joint efforts of Islamic leaders and intellectuals while emphasizing growing cohesion and solidarity among Muslim nations.

Ball in U.S. Court In Vienna Talks

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DFESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian in a phone call with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that Tehran has submitted its proposals to the US through EU top negotiator and now the ball is in the US court.

Amirabdollahian and Guterres had a phone conversation on Sunday to discuss the ceasefire in Yemen and Vienna talks to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The top Iranian diplomat thanked the UN chief for his role in brokering the ceasefire in Yemen and added that it was now the time for taking fundamental steps to establish peace and stability.

Amirabdollahian reaffirmed Iran's continued support for settling the crisis and ending the war in Yemen and expressed hope that the full blockade against Yemeni people will be removed.

He also welcomed the UN Security Council resolution backing the truce, while describing the second resolution that condemned the National Salvation Government in Yemen without pointing to Saudi attacks as "unconstructive".

The Iranian foreign minister also touched upon the talks in Vienna to remove sanctions against Iran, and said that a deal was close and Iran has delivered its proposals to the US via the EU top negotiator.

The ball is in the U.S.' court, Amirabdollahian noted.

Guterres expressed hope that the talks in Vienna would reach an agreement as soon as possible.

Guterres, in his phone call with Amirabdollahian, said the establishment of ceasefire in Yemen is a common success and victory achieved through the efforts of all sides.



During the talks, the UN secretary general congratulated the establishment of truce in Yemen.

The Iranian foreign minister also welcomed the establishment of truce in Yemen and thanked the secretary general for the role he played in this regard, stressing that the time has come for taking key steps toward establishment of peace and stability in Yemen, especially toward full removal of humanitarian sanctions on the country.

Amirabdollahian also announced the continued support of the Islamic Republic of Iran for a settlement to the Yemeni crisis and ending the war in the country, noting "we hope, in time with establishment of truce, the full blockade on people of Yemen is also halted, so that this important opportunity is not wasted."

The Iranian foreign minister also underlined the need for dispatching humanitarian aid to people of Yemen.

Amirabdollahian also welcomed a visit by the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy Hans Grundberg to the region.

He also talked about the agenda of the Security Council to issue two different statements on Yemen.

"We welcome the issuance of a statement by the Security Council in support of the ceasefire, but if there is another statement that unilaterally, and without taking the Saudi attacks on Yemen into consideration, condemns the National Salvation Government, this will be unconstructive," he said.

"Damavand" Destroyer To Join Navy Soon

TEHRAN (MNA) – Chief Commander of Iran's Army Navy Rear Admiral Shahram Irani said that the 'Damavand' destroyer is under final testing and will join the navy soon.

"In 1401 [current Iranian year started on March 20], the process of building marine equipment will accelerate," said the commander.

Stating that the domestically-made 'Damavand' destroyer is under final testing, he added that the destroyer will join the navy soon.

Earlier in February, the commander of the Iranian navy announced that the navy made great achievements in the field of the naval fleet, navigation, vessels and submarine as well as in the fields of equipment and weapons.

Commander Warns of Iran's Response to Any Stupidity

Commander Warns of Iran's Response to Any Stupidity
TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The commander of the Iranian Army Ground Force described the Islamic Republic as the safest country in the region, cautioning the aggressors that any stupid move will be dealt with seriously.

In remarks on Sunday, Brigadier General Kiomars Heidari said Iran is the safest country across the region and keeps efforts to maintain regional security.

Pointing to the deployment of Army Ground Force units to Iranian border areas, the commander said such presence does not mean that the country is facing a threat, but it is meant to boost military preparedness and enhance intelligence control at the boundaries.

"Today, the Islamic Republic of Iran enjoys unparalleled security, and any aggressor intending to attack the country will get comeuppance for its stupidity," he warned.

In comments in December 2021, President of Iran Ebrahim Raisi cautioned the enemies that any bellicose move will draw such a decisive response from the Iranian military forces that it will bring about a significant change in strategic equations.

Earlier in April, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri said all Iranian military forces are ready to give a decisive and crushing response to any threat at any level in such a way that the enemies of Iran would regret taking hostile action against the Islamic establishment.

Tehran Protests Denmark's Use of Physical Force Against Kurdish National

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's embassy in Copenhagen has strongly protested the use of violent force by Denmark's police against a Kurdish woman, who holds Iranian citizenship, urging the European country to issue an apology.

Denmark forcibly deported the Kurdish woman, Qadamkheir Haqanizadeh, 37, and her two children on Tuesday after their application for asylum was rejected by the Danish government.

Haqanizadeh, a refugee from Kermanshah Province in western Iran, was hit by four plainclothes police and injected drugs. She was dragged out of one of Denmark's refugee camps in the Hvalso town of the city of Lejre, where she lived for the last seven years.

The woman was violently separated from her husband and her one-year-old child and was taken to Copenhagen Airport with her two 10-year-old children. They were first flown to Istanbul for deportation to Iran, but were returned to Denmark a few hours later due to her resistance and severe bleeding.

In a video which was shared on social media, four people can be seen pinning the woman to the ground, with her head held against the paving stones. She is visibly shaking in the footage. A man in civilian cloth then brings restraints which are used to tie her.

In a Friday meeting with officials of Denmark's Ministry of Immigration and Integration as well as Foreign Ministry, Iranian Ambassador to Copenhagen Afsaneh Nadipour conveyed Tehran's strong protest and called on the Danish authorities to apologize for this inhumane behavior and deal with the perpetrators while making sure that similar incidents would not happen.

According to reports, Denmark's Immigration Minister Mattias Tesfaye was summoned to a parliamentary committee on Thursday to respond to the incident.

Police in Denmark are responsible for carrying out deportations based on the decisions made by immigration authorities.

Iran in Talks With Turkey to Repatriate Prisoners

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian Judiciary's deputy chief for international affairs says negotiations are underway with Turkish officials for the repatriation of Iranian prisoners in the country.

"There is no problem concerning the exchange and memoranda of understanding for the transfer of Iranian prisoners from Turkey," Kazem Gharibabadi said.

"But the requirements for the transfer of convicts should be fulfilled. Among these are negotiations, consent of the host country and consent of the prisoners."

Gharibabadi, who is also the secretary of the Judiciary's Human Rights Bureau in Iran, added that transfer and extradition of Iranian nationals held in other countries are now "more seriously pursued".

The official had earlier said that 2,000 out of the almost 3,800 Iranian inmates in other countries are in Turkish jails.

Schools Officially Reopen After Two Years

TEHRAN (MNA) - All educational centers and universities started operation in person on Sunday, after 25 months of online education due to the coronavirus pandemic, IRIB reported.

Following the decision of the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control and President Ebrahim Raisi, all universities affiliated with the ministries of science and health, and schools affiliated with the ministry of education, must operate in person on April 3 as the new cases of the disease have notably reduced.

Science Minister Mohammad-Ali Zolfigol stated that the health of students and academics while attending the universities in person is our priority.

Zolfigol attended the university and school reopening ceremony at the University of Tehran on Sunday.

"If for any reason it is not possible for students to attend courses, they can apply for online education," he said.

"One of the effective ways to create jobs, especially for university graduates, is knowledge-based companies, so we are determined to use the great potential of the university community along with science and technology parks and centers," Zolfigol noted.

All educational centers in Iran have been closed since February 2020.

In order for students to keep in touch with their studies, the Ministry of Education launched a homegrown mobile application on April 9, called SHAD, providing students with distance learning programs. More than 60 percent of students and 94 percent of teachers attended 64 percent of classes through the SHAD app, whose acronym in Persian translates as the Students Education Network.

FM Spokesman Holds Extensive Talks in Tour of West Africa

TEHRAN (Tasnim) –

Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh visited Senegal, Ghana and Sierra Leone, holding talks on the promotion of Tehran's political, cultural and economic relations with the West African nations.

Khatibzadeh first paid a visit to Senegal, where he held talks with the African country's high-ranking officials.

In a meeting with Senegal's Minister of Culture and Communications, Abdullah Diyop, the two officials referred to the cultural and religious commonalities of Iran and Senegal and underlined the importance of the development of cultural ties and cooperation.

Khatibzadeh also referred to the 50th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic ties between Iran and Senegal. He proposed that the two sides mark a cultural week, which was welcomed by the Senegalese side.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman and Senegal's minister of culture and communications also discussed the exchange of cultural, artistic and media delegations and ways to implement such cooperation, and reached an agreement over the matter.

In another meeting with Angom, Senegal's Minister of State for Diplomatic Affairs, Khatibzadeh extended the congratulatory message of President Ebrahim Raisi to his Senegalese counterpart Macky Sall on his appointment as the rotating president of the African Union.

In the meeting, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman described Senegal's place in the Muslim world as important and referred to the country's effective role in the African Union and in the West African region, the Foreign Ministry's website reported.

The Senegalese minister, for his part, expressed the country's readiness to host the 5th session of the Iran-Senegal joint commission. The two sides also agreed on holding the meeting in late May.

On the second leg of his regional tour, Khatibzadeh visited Accra, the capital of Ghana, and held talks with the country's officials.

In a meeting between the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman and Ghana's Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture, Ibrahim Mohammed Awal, the two sides underlined the importance of expanding and deepening cultural relations and cooperation and the significance of increasing popular relations between the two countries.

Khatibzadeh outlined Iran's medical capabilities and proposed that Iran and Ghana cooperate in the fields of health and tourism, which was welcomed by the Ghanaian side.



Meanwhile, given that the FIFA World Cup in Qatar is approaching and proper infrastructure and facilities have been envisioned on Iran's Kish and Qeshm islands and also the similarity between the climate of the islands and that of Qatar,

Khatibzadeh proposed that Ghana's national football team and their fans reside in the Iranian territory. The two sides agreed to be in touch with each other over the matter.

In a meeting between Khatibzadeh and Ghana's deputy foreign minister, the latest developments in bilateral ties and cooperation between the two nations were discussed and necessary planning was made for the seventh meeting of the Iran-Ghana joint cooperation commission in Tehran.

On the last leg of his West African tour, Khatibzadeh met with Sierra Leone's Foreign Minister David Francis in Freetown.

In the meeting, the top diplomat of Sierra Leone described exchanging diplomatic delegations between the two countries as important and effective. David Francis also thanked his Iranian counterpart for inviting him to visit Tehran and expressed hope that the trip would result in further expanding and deepening bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

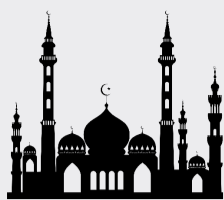
Khatibzadeh also referred to 60 years of diplomatic relations between Iran and Sierra Leone and underlined the need to maintain the expansion of cooperation and exchange of experiences in the political, cultural and educational fields.

He further stressed the need to increase bilateral trade and proposed the formation of a joint commission for bilateral cooperation, which was welcomed by the Sierra Leonean side.

In another meeting with Mohammad Rahman Savareh, Sierra Leone's Minister of Information and Communications, cultural and media cooperation between the two countries was discussed.

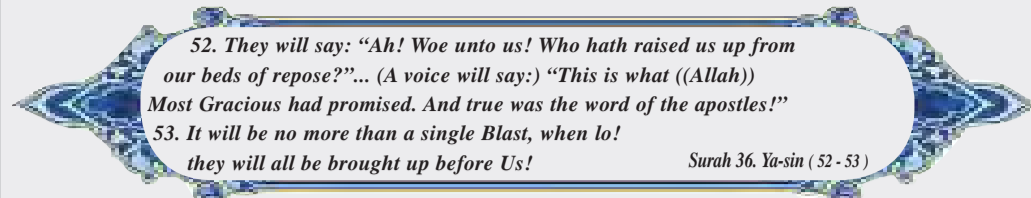
The Sierra Leonean official referred to the role of Iranian institutions in his country's cultural and educational development programs and called for exchange of experience between the two countries and also for Sierra Leone's access to Iranian media and art products.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman also underscored Iran's readiness to develop and deepen cultural and media cooperation with Sierra Leone. Khatibzadeh proposed that the two countries hold cultural weeks in Tehran and Freetown, which was welcomed by the Sierra Leonean official.



PRAYER TIME

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| ■ Noon (Zohr) | 13:07 |
| ■ Evening (Maghreb) | 19:46 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr) | 05:19 |
| ■ Tomorrow's Sunrise | 06:45 |



Economic Cooperation Of Iran-Turkey "a Must"

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iranian and Turkish business activists reiterated that economic cooperation between Iran and Turkey is necessary and called for resolving the problems in way of trade between the two states.

In a webinar on "reviewing the trade relations between Iran and Turkey and opportunities for cooperation and existing challenges" over 250 Iranian and Turkish economic activists were present to review the opportunities for cooperation between the two states and participants emphasized expansion of cooperation.

In the opening of the webinar, Secretary General of Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (ITO) Mr. Nihat Alayoglu pointed to the commonalities between the two countries in political, economic and cultural fields and said the two countries with deep relations dating back to over 400 years as well as having 500 kilometers of joint borders have signed several trade agreements especially the preferential tariff agreement which was signed in 2015 and it is important for both states.

He went on to say that the trade volume of Iran and Turkey jumped from \$1.2b in 2001 to \$5.6b in 2021, adding that Iran's share of export to Turkey was \$2.8b and Turkey's was \$2.7b. He noted that machineries and equipment top the list of Turkey's exports to Iran and copper and plastic are the min exports of Iran to Turkey.

Alayoglu then reiterated that Turkey accounts for 7% of Iran's \$39b of imports, adding that the chamber is determined to increase Turkey's exports to Iran to \$10b and it is clear that chambers of both countries have tasks in boosting trade cooperation.

He then said ITO has over 715,000 members and it is among the big chambers in the world and it is ready to support joint trade activities, expressing hope that cooperation between the chambers of Istanbul and Tehran for expansion of trade between the two countries.

Then Secretary General of Tehran Chamber of Commerce Mr. Bahman Eshqi, addressing the webinar, talked about the capacities of Tehran Chamber and then highlighted significance of economic cooperation between Iran and Turkey.

He then said that Turkey is one of Iran's gateway for trade with Europe and it is also one of the roads for reaching the Silk Road and the CIS countries. He stated by the way Iran can be a great gateway for Turkey to have access to India and Indian subcontinent.



Eshqi went on to say that cooperation between the two countries is necessary, noting that interaction between Iran and Turkey has always been developing. He expressed hope both countries would take advantage of commonalities to expand their close ties in any sphere. He then said that chambers of commerce of Tehran and Istanbul should ease the pave for boosting trade relations and called for starting a joint work for removal of hurdles.

Then Head of Investment Services Center of Tehran Chamber Ms. Ferial Mostofi, for her part, said that the trade between Iran and Turkey has declined considerably in the past ten years despite the two countries' good relation, adding that the biggest trade volume of the two countries was registered in 2012 as the trade volume reached \$22b. She admitted that the U.S. exit of the JCPOA has affected the trade between Iran and Turkey after the sanctions were increased. She noted that of course the main reason behind the slump in trade volume was the slump in oil exports to Turkey.

She added that there are great potentials and opportunities for cooperation between Iran and Turkey and it is necessary for both countries to take advantage of it and the investment services center of the chamber supports expansion of trade relations between the two states.

Then Turkey's Turkish commercial attache at Turkey's consulate in Tabriz Tahir Dingil, for his part, said that implementation of the preferential tariff agreement was progressing well in the early years since its signing but after the U.S. exit from the JCPOA, it was weakened from 2018.

He went on to say that Turkey has invested over \$1.4b in Iran and over 53 construction projects have been carried out by Turkish companies in Iran since 2005.

Iran Ends Holiday Season With Daily Gasoline Use at Above 120m

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's daily gasoline consumption continued to rise on last days of the Persian New Year holiday season ending April 2 despite warnings by government authorities that the growing use may cause the country to resume imports of the fuel nearly a decade after domestic production reached a point of self-sufficiency.

Head of the Iranian Oil Ministry's fuel department (NIORDC) said on Saturday that daily gasoline consumption had reached 121 million liters on March 31.

Karamat Veis Karami said that average use of gasoline during more than two weeks of holidays in Iran was around 112 million liters per day, an increase of 22% compared to March 16-April 2, 2021.

That comes as daily gasoline consumption had hit an all-time high of 131 million liters on March 19 just as the New Year celebrations were going to start.

The figures come despite repeated warning issued by Iranian government authorities suggesting that the country may need to resume imports of gasoline years after it ramped up domestic output to offset the impacts of foreign sanctions on fuel supply in Iran.

They also come as road travel in Iran has returned to pre coronavirus levels.

Iran became a net exporter of gasoline in 2018 just before the United States pulled out of an international deal on Tehran's nuclear program and imposed sanctions on the country.

Exports saw a boost in late 2019 when domestic use of gasoline declined to record lows of around 70 million liters per day following fuel price hikes announced by the government.

However, Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji said in late March that the NIORDC will resume exports of gasoline and diesel fuel right after the end of the New Year holidays.

NITC Plays Considerable Role in Boosting Iran Oil Export

TEHRAN (MNA) - Managing Director of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has praised the significant role of the National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC) in boosting the country's oil exports during the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

Praising the performance of the NITC fleet for increasing the country's exports of oil and oil products, Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr said: "This success (increased sales of oil and gas condensate) came at a time when the sanction conditions have become even stricter."

"Oil export is the result of a long chain of activities in various sectors including exploration, development, production, and transportation and our dear colleagues at the National Iranian Oil Company have contributed

greatly to realizing this goal," Khojasteh-Mehr said.

The performance of the National Iranian Tanker Company and the round-the-clock efforts of the sailors of the company's fleet in transporting oil and oil products have been at the center of attention of the country's authorities over the past few months, as it has also been appreciated by the Oil Minister Javad Oji and other members of the cabinet.

Back in March, Oji praised the performance of National Iranian Tanker Company Head Hossein Shiva in a cabinet meeting.

The minister admired the actions and performance of the NITC in supporting and helping to continue the export of oil and oil products.

Iran Sees Highest Production Growth Among Steel Giants

TEHRAN (IRNA) - According to the World Steel Association report, Iran has experienced a 11.8% growth in crude steel production in the first two months of 2022 meaning that the country is standing top among 10 steel giants.

The Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) reported that Iran's crude steel production hit 5.3 million tons in January- February 2022.

This is while the total production for 64 members of the World Steel Association reached 299.4 million tons which experienced 5.5% less than the same period last year.

India with 6.6% growth ranked second and Germany (1.1%), Russia (1%) and the US (0.6%) stood on the next positions respectively.

China's crude steel production as the world's largest steel producer reached 158 million tons in the first two months of 2022.

EORC to Maximize Its Profiteering This Year



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN - Esfahan Oil Refining Company is determined to maximize its profiteering by the end of the current Iranian calendar year which has started on March 21.

Speaking to reporters, the CEO of Esfahan Oil Refining Company Dr. Mohsen Qadiri felicitated the New Year and wished a prosperous year for everybody, and said in this year and following the slogan of the year (Production, Knowledge-Based and Job Creation), the company is determined to identify all risks, weak and strong points, opportunities and threats and to find solutions for them by the help of tens of teams and groups which are being formed.

Qadiri went on to say that by the way on the course of pursuing the efforts, the company is determined to maximize profiteering of the giant Esfahan Oil Refinery. He said the company is trying its best to prevent raw sales and it wants to complete the chain of value of its products.

He then stated that the company finished the past year successfully due to efforts of its staff and officials. He noted that the company has thwarted 42-year sanctions of the world arrogance which have been aimed at preventing the country from attaining self-sufficiency and independence by all-out efforts of the staff and by resorting to the Shiite thought of the late Imam Khomeini and Supreme Leader as well as due to the self-esteem. He reiterated that they have shown the world that Iran's oil industry has attained industrial self-sufficiency without using any foreign expert.

Qadiri reiterated that now over 90 percent of the required parts in the refinery are produced domestically like turbine, pump and compressors and event catalysts.

Weekly Commodities Traded on IME Exceeds 1,557,000 Tons



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 1,557,170 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$381m on its physical market.

According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange traded on its metals and minerals trading floor 1,244,000 tons of commodities valued at more than \$161m.

On this floor, the IME's customers purchased 985,404 tons of cement, 168,943 tons of steel, 58,000 tons of sponge iron, 30,000 tons of iron ore, 25 tons of zinc and 2,675 tons of aluminum.

Furthermore, the IME saw trade 310,004 tons of commodities on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor valued at more than \$216m.

The exchange's customers purchased on this floor 85,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 70,775 tons of bitumen, 68,217 tons of polymeric products, 56,000 tons of lube cut, 26,363 tons of chemicals, 2,564 tons of base oil, 80 tons of sulfur and 50 tons of argon.

Last but not least was the IME's side market with 2,263 tons of commodities traded on it.

Loading, Unloading of Goods in Ports Up



TEHRAN (MNA) - Loading and unloading of goods in the ports of Iran rose 17 percent during the previous Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), as compared to the preceding year.

Based on the data released by the Iranian Transport and Urban Development Ministry, loading and unloading of goods in the country's ports reached 152.91 million tons in the previous Iranian calendar year, while the figure stood at 130.69 million tons in the preceding year.

During the said year, loading and unloading operations in the container sector reached 2.1 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) with a weight of 24.57 million tons, which was 13.5 percent more than the 1.85 million TEUs in the Iranian calendar year 1399, the report said.

The loading and unloading of goods during the previous year also grew by 12.8 percent in the dry bulk sector, while in the liquid bulk sector the figure increased by 12.6 percent, in the general cargo sector rose by 13.1 percent, and in the petroleum sector grew by 22.5 percent.

While Iran is combating the U.S. unilateral sanctions on its economy, the country's ports as the major gates of exports and imports play a significant role in this battle. This role makes all-out support to ports and more development of them serious and vital.

Such necessity has led the government to define projects for more development of the ports and also take some measures to encourage investment making in ports, in addition, to facilitate loading and unloading of goods, especially basic commodities, there.

It is worth mentioning that Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) has defined a high number of projects to develop and improve the country's ports, as the country aims to double the capacity of its ports in a course of five years.

Israelis Kill Three Palestinian Militants

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Israeli security forces killed three Islamic Jihad militants when they came under fire Saturday during a raid in the West Bank, police said, the latest deaths in a surge of violence.

The bloodshed comes amid heightened tensions ahead of the start of the holy Muslim month of Ramadan, that has seen violence spiral in Israel and the occupied West Bank.

Last year during Ramadan, clashes that flared between Israeli forces and Palestinians visiting Al-Aqsa mosque in annexed east Jerusalem led to 11 days of devastating conflict between Israel and the Gaza Strip's Islamist rulers Hamas.



Spain's Popular Party Picks New Leader

MADRID (Dispatches) - Spain's conservative People's Party elected Alberto Nuñez Feijoo as its new leader on Saturday in the hope of winning back voters from a growing far right and firming up its increasingly shaky position as the country's main opposition force.

Feijoo, who won 98.35% of the vote, was the only candidate to lead the PP after an internal scandal brought down previous leader Pablo Casado and tipped the party, which for decades traded power with the incumbent Socialists, into crisis.

The PP has been losing ground to new parties that sprang up in the wake of Spain's financial crash, key among them the far-right Vox, which splintered off from the PP in 2014 and is now the third-largest force in parliament.



Pakistani PMs Reject Khan's No-Confidence Motion



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - For the first time in the history of Pakistan's parliament, the country's parliamentarians chanted "Death to America" as the legislature rejected a no-confidence vote, which sought to oust Prime Minister Imran Khan, saying "foreign powers" are interfering in the country's democratic process.

Qasim Khan Suri, National Assembly deputy speaker, dismissed the no-trust move against the prime minister on Sunday, terming it as "contradictory" to Article 5 of Pakistan's Constitution. Suri said that the motion was presented on March 8 and should be according to the law and the Constitution, stressing, "No foreign power shall be allowed to topple an elected government through a conspiracy."

The president later dissolved the National Assembly on Khan's advice.

"The President of Pakistan, Dr Arif Alvi, has approved the advice of the Prime Minister," a statement from his office said, meaning fresh elections must be held within 90 days.

The opposition vowed to challenge the move in the country's Supreme Court.

Khan's fate is now in a state of limbo which would lead to fresh political instability in the country.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, head of the opposition Pakistan People's Party (PPP), promised a sit-in at the parliament. "We are also moving to the Supreme Court today," he told reporters.

The opposition needs a simple majority of 50 percent plus one to topple the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government.

Khan needs 172 votes in the 342-seat house to foil the bid. Some defections in the PTI and cracks in his coalition partners have dented his chances to accumulate the 172 votes, needed to hold on to power.

Media reports said there was a heavy police and paramilitary presence on the streets of the capital Islamabad on Sunday, with shipping containers used to block off roads. Police were seen detaining three supporters of Khan's ruling PTI party outside parliament.

Khan on Saturday accused the United States of being behind a parliament debate on the no-confidence motion, saying the move is an attempt at regime change backed by Washington.

The Pakistani premier had earlier accused an unnamed "foreign power" - in a clear reference to the United States - of funding a "conspiracy" to topple his democratically-elected government.

If Khan had lost on Sunday, he would have been the first prime minister to be removed through a vote of no confidence.

The cricketer-turned-politician has been accused by the opposition of mishandling the economy and foreign policy since coming to power in 2018.

His embattled government has been banking on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to release a 6 billion-dollar rescue package, but the move has been obstructed by the US.

U.S. Cancels ICBM Test Due To Russia Nuclear Tensions

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. military has canceled a test of its Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile that it had initially aimed only to delay in a bid to lower nuclear tensions with Russia during the war in Ukraine, the Air Force told Reuters.

The Pentagon first announced a delay of the test on March 2 after Russia said it was putting its nuclear forces on high alert. Washington said at the time it was important both the United States and Russia "bear in mind the risk of miscalculation and take steps to reduce those risks."

But it had publicly stated its intent only to delay the test "a little bit," and not cancel it.

Air Force spokesperson Ann Stefanek said the decision to cancel the test of the LGM-30G Minuteman III missile was due to the same reasons as when it had been first delayed. The next Minuteman III test is scheduled to take place later this year. "The Air Force is confident in the readiness of the strategic forces of the United States," Stefanek said.

Altering the test schedule for America's ICBM force can be controversial. U.S. Senator Jim Inhofe, the top Republican on the

Senate Armed Services Committee, expressed disappointment in March at the delay of a test he said was critical to ensure America's nuclear deterrent remains effective.

Jeffrey Lewis, a missile researcher at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS), played down the impact of the cancellation.

"There's a value to doing the tests but I don't think missing one test in the grand scheme of things is a really big deal," said Lewis, adding the Minuteman III was extremely reliable.

The nuclear-capable Minuteman III is key part of the U.S. military's strategic arsenal and has a range of 6,000-plus miles (9,660-plus km) and can travel at a speed of approximately 15,000 miles per hour (24,000 kph).

Missiles are dispersed in hardened underground silos operated by launch crews.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said in February that his nation's nuclear forces should be put on high alert, raising fears that Russia's invasion of Ukraine could lead to nuclear war. But U.S. officials have said they have seen no reason so far to change Washington's nuclear alert levels.



Crisis-Hit Sri Lanka Deploys Troops to Quell Protests

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Troops armed with sweeping powers were deployed in Sri Lanka with the near-bankrupt country on edge after the president declared a state of emergency to quell escalating protests against him.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa invoked special powers on Friday night, a day after hundreds tried to storm his house in anger over unprecedented shortages of food, fuel and medicine.

The state of emergency was for the "protection of public order and the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the life of the community", Rajapaksa said in a proclamation.

Soldiers armed with automatic assault rifles had already been deployed for crowd control at fuel stations and elsewhere when the emergency was declared. More were seen on Saturday.

In normal times, Sri Lanka's military can only play a supporting role to police, but the state of emergency gives them authority to act alone, including to detain civilians.

The South Asian nation of 22 million people is battling severe shortages of essentials, sharp price rises and crippling power cuts in its most painful downturn since independence from Britain in 1948.

The coronavirus pandemic has torpedoed tourism and remittances, both vital to the economy, and authorities have imposed a broad import ban in an attempt to save foreign currency.

Many economists also say the crisis has been exacerbated by government mismanagement, years of accumulated borrowing, and ill-advised tax cuts.

The emergency laws came ahead of planned anti-government protests on Sunday, when activists on social media have urged people to demonstrate outside their homes.

"Do not be deterred by tear gas, very soon they will run out of dollars to re-stock," said one post encouraging people to demonstrate even if police attempt to break up gatherings.

U.S. ambassador Julie Chung warned: "Sri Lankans have a right to protest peacefully -- essential for democratic expression."

Yemenis Welcome Ramadan Ceasefire Deal

SANAA (Dispatches) - Yemen's warring parties are set to lay down their weapons for the first nationwide truce since 2016 on Saturday with all eyes on whether the UN-brokered ceasefire will hold.

The Huthi rebels and Saudi-led coalition have both agreed to observe the two-month truce, which is to take effect at 1600 GMT on the first day of Ramadan.

Yemen's intractable war has killed hundreds of thousands directly or indirectly and displaced millions, triggering the world's worst humanitarian crisis, according to the United Nations.

Previous ceasefires have been ineffective. A national truce ahead of peace talks in April 2016 was violated almost immediately, as were other ceasefires that year.

A 2018 agreement to cease hostilities around rebel-held Hodeida port, a lifeline for the Arab world's poorest country, was also largely ignored.

Both the Huthis and Saudi Arabia have welcomed the latest initiative, which follows a surge in attacks but also increasing diplomacy including ongoing talks -- snubbed by the rebels -- in Riyadh.

"This time I am optimistic. This truce is unlike all the previous ones," Asmaa Zayed, a college student who also works as a cashier in Hodeida, told AFP.

"The fact it comes with Ramadan gives us a lot of hope. This war started when I was 15 years old and turned all my dreams into nightmares."

Under the agreement, all ground, air and sea military operations in Yemen and across its borders would stop, UN special envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg said in his announcement.

Fuel ships would be allowed into Hodeida port and commercial flights could resume to certain regional destinations from the airport in the Huthi-held capital Sanaa -- both key demands of the insurgents before they consider peace talks.

The two sides have also agreed to meet to open roads in Tazeh and other governorates, Grundberg said, adding the truce could be renewed with their consent.

"All Yemeni women, men and children that have suffered immensely through over seven years of war expect nothing less than an end to this war," said the Swedish diplomat.

With fighting in Yemen at a stalemate, the Huthis launched a series of drone-and-missile attacks on Saudi Arabia and coalition partner the United Arab Emirates this year, often targeting oil facilities.

The coalition has responded with air strikes.

Last week, on the war's seventh anniversary and a day after an attack on an oil plant within sight of the Formula One Grand Prix in the Saudi city of Jeddah, the Huthis announced a three-day unilateral ceasefire.

The coalition then announced its own truce from Wednesday, ahead of discussions with international partners in Riyadh. The rebels declined to attend the talks in an "enemy" country.



Red Cross Trying Again To Escort Evacuation Convoy out of Mariupol

ZAPORIZHZHIA

(Dispatches) - The Red Cross was renewing efforts to evacuate civilians in a

convoy from the besieged port of Mariupol as Russian forces looked to be regrouping for fresh attacks in southeast Ukraine.

Encircled since the early days of Russia's five-week old invasion, Mariupol has been Moscow's main target in Ukraine's southeastern region of Donbas. Tens of thousands of civilians are trapped there with scant access to food and water.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) sent a team on Friday to lead a convoy of about 54 Ukrainian buses and other private vehicles out of the city, but they turned back, saying they were unable to proceed.

"They will try again on Saturday to facilitate the safe passage of civilians," the ICRC said in a statement on Friday. A previous Red Cross evacuation attempt in early March failed.

Russia and Ukraine have agreed to establish various humanitarian corridors during the war to allow the evacuation of civilians from cities, and have traded blame when evacuations failed.

People who have managed to get out of Mariupol and through Russian lines to reach the city of Zaporizhzhia described their journey as an ordeal during which Russian soldiers repeatedly stopped them to check for the presence of Ukrainian fighters.

"They stripped the men naked, looked for tattoos," said Dmytro Kartavov, a 32-year-old builder, adding that the troops paid particular attention to the men's knees. "I work, I do repairs, naturally my knees - these are working knees. They say - (you) climbed trenches, dug, and the like."

Another group said they were stopped around 17 times at Russian checkpoints as they made their way out of Mariupol.

The war has killed thousands, uprooted a quarter of Ukraine's population and devastated several cities. More than 4.1 million people have fled Ukraine, the United Nations says.

After failing to take a major Ukrainian city since launching the invasion on Feb. 24, Russia says it has now shifted its focus to the southeast, where it has backed separatist forces since 2014.





Velenjak Apt (\$2700)
250sq.m, 4bdrs
S/pool, Sauna
J, balcony
marble fl
Fully Furn

Shanon (adviser)

Pasdaran Villa (\$4000)
1000sq.m
5bdrs, S/p
S, J, balcony
marble floor
Fully Furn

Parsian

(\$2500)
Farmanieh
220sq.m, 3bdrs
S/pool, S, J
Large balcony
Nicely Furn

Gheitarieh (\$1600) 2bdrs, & F.F
Darrous (\$2000) 3bdrs, & F.F

Shahrak-e-Gharb (\$1800)
160sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F

(\$6000)
Elahieh bldg
4storey, 12bdrs
enough pkgs
renovated
Semi Furn

Jordan Apt (\$2000)
140sq.m, 2bdrs, & F.F

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Japan Not to Abandon Sakhalin-2 LNG Stake

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan will not abandon its stake in the Sakhalin-2 liquefied natural gas (LNG) project in Russia as it is essential to energy security, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said, his clearest comments yet on Tokyo's plans for the development.

Kishida also said in parliament that he expects the Bank of Japan to maintain efforts to achieve its 2 per cent inflation target.

The Ukraine crisis has put Japan's involvement in the Sakhalin-2 project and similar ones in Russia in sharp focus, particularly after Western oil majors have said they would pull out in protest against Russia's actions.



War to Plunge Russia, Ukraine Into Sharp Economic Contraction

LONDON (Dispatches) - The economies of Russia and Ukraine could plunge into the sharpest contraction in over 25 years due to Moscow's war on its neighbor, the European development bank warned.

The Feb. 24 invasion has savaged Ukraine and seen Moscow slapped with sweeping sanctions, severing Russia from the global financial fabric and pushing commodity and energy prices sharply higher.

As the conflict causes "the greatest supply shock" in 50 years, the two countries' economies will contract by 10% and 20%, respectively, this year, the London-based European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) said.

For both countries, the contraction would be the steepest since 1994, when economic turmoil in the wake of the fall of the Soviet Union ripped through the region.

The territory in which military activities are taking place accounts for 60% of Ukraine's pre-COVID-19 gross domestic product (GDP), according to EBRD's chief economist Beata Javorcik.

"Ukraine, which was a poor country to begin with, will become poorer," Javorcik told Reuters. "We understand that between one-third and a half of the firms stopped operations, and electricity consumption is at 60% of the pre-war level."

Before Russia invaded its pro-Western neighbor, the EBRD had been penciling in the growth of 3.5% for Ukraine and 3% for Russia.

The development bank, issuing emergency forecasts, said it was the first international financial institution to update its guidance since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine last month.

The latest prognoses "assume that a cease-fire is brokered within a couple of months, followed soon after by the start of a major reconstruction effort in Ukraine," it said.

Under such a scenario, Ukraine's gross domestic product (GDP) should rebound by 23% next year.

But the heavy economic sanctions imposed on Russia by the West would mean that it would register zero growth.

"Sanctions on Russia are expected to remain for the foreseeable future, condemning the Russian economy to stagnation in 2023, with negative spillovers for a number of neighboring countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia," the EBRD said.

"With so much uncertainty, the bank intends to produce a further forecast in the next couple of months, taking into account further developments."

The report calculates that Russia lost around \$30 billion of export revenues due to recent oil and gas sanctions, equivalent to around 2% of its GDP.

"Even if sanctions are removed, Russia's reputation as an investment destination is going to be damaged," Javorcik said. "The talks of nationalization of assets of multinationals will be remembered for a while."

Belarus - which borders both Ukraine and Russia, and also faces Western sanctions over its role in the conflict - was forecast to shrink by 3% this year and then stagnate in 2023.

Founded in 1991 to help former Soviet bloc countries switch to free-market economies, the EBRD has since extended its reach, including to countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

The bank predicted that its investment zone, excluding Belarus and Russia, would grow by 1.7% this year, less than half of the previous growth forecast of 4.2% in November.

China's Coal Output Set for Moderate Growth in 2022

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China is expected to see its coal output to grow further in 2022 after hitting a record last year, an industry body forecast today, as the country will need to consume more of the dirty fossil fuel to power its economic growth.

The world's second-largest economy and its biggest coal consumer churned out a historically high 4.07 billion tons in 2021 after Beijing sought to tame the runaway coal prices and to ease a nationwide power crunch in the second half of the year.

"China's coal output will maintain a moderate increase in 2022," said China National Coal Association (CNCA), an industry body mainly representing Chinese coal miners, in a report.

Top Chinese officials have said that China will make full use of coal as a vital part of its energy strategy despite pledges of bringing the country's carbon emissions to a peak by 2030.

The national coal association did not give a forecast of coal output level in 2022. It expected some big and modern coal mines in northern and north-western China to add production capacity this year and production efficiency at coal mines to improve.

China's state planner in early March said it will keep coal output at a record level of more than 12 million tons a day. The industry body also forecast that Chinese coal demand will rise, albeit at a slower pace, in 2022, as Beijing has vowed to "strictly and rationally control the increase of coal consumption" to balance energy security and climate targets.

MIDF Research Maintains Malaysia's 2022 GDP Growth Forecast at 6%

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - MIDF Research is maintaining its forecast of Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP) growth at 6.0 per cent for 2022 as the country begins its transition to the Covid-19 endemic phase.

In its Malaysia Equity Research note, titled "Reopening, Reflation and Readjustment", the research house said the reopening of Malaysia's international borders is one of the significant growth catalysts for the second quarter and beyond.

"The reopening of international borders and the lifting of remaining requirements or restrictions would accelerate economic recovery and this will eventually be reflected in the better performance of the equity market," it said.

Meanwhile, the research firm foresees the ringgit to appreciate towards RM4.09 by end-2022, supported by sustained current account surplus and the expected inflows of funds into the country.

On commodities, MIDF Research anticipates the prices to remain elevated in the second quarter of 2022 (Q2 2022) as the share price performance of commodities-linked companies has begun to match the rise.

As for the upcoming 15th general election, the research firm believes that market investors are now more concerned about stability post-election, and less about pre-election goodies and promises. It noted that Covid-19 remains a risk to Malaysia's growth outlook as new variants could drive infections higher and increase pressure on the healthcare system, while high inflation could limit spending as prices of goods have been increasing, driven by both supply constraints and growing demand.

"The rise in commodity prices will further push inflation higher and limit the ability to spend on non-energy and non-food products and services."

"Another risk to the growth outlook could come from slower improvement in the supply situation," it said.

MIDF Research noted that the recent war in Ukraine had caused global commodity prices to increase due to concerns over disruption in the global supply.

"While the rise in prices will be positive for the outlook of the commodity-production nations, we opine that the rise in commodity prices will push the inflation outlook higher for many countries, particularly because of higher energy and food prices."

"Based on our in-house view, prices of Brent crude oil and crude palm oil will average higher this year at \$110 per barrel and RM4,300 per ton, respectively," it said.

Overall, MIDF Research has maintained its 'positive' call on the automotive, banking, consumer, healthcare, oil and gas, plantations, technology and media sectors, and retained its 'neutral' call on the gloves, power, property, telecommunication and transportation (aviation, ports and logistics) sectors.

Lagarde Sees Living Costs Spiral With Ukraine War

NICOSIA (Dispatches) - European Central Bank president Christine Lagarde warned that a prolonged Ukraine conflict will keep energy prices and the cost of living spiralling, blighting a post-Covid recovery.

The Russia-Ukraine war has introduced "considerable uncertainty" into the outlook for the EU economy, she said during a visit to Cyprus.

The ECB chief said the war has stunted a quicker-than-expected rebound from the Covid-19 pandemic due to a job-rich recovery. "The economic impact of the war is best captured by what economists call a 'supply shock', which is a shock that simultaneously pushes up inflation and reduces growth," Lagarde told a news conference.

She said energy prices are expected to stay higher for longer, with gas prices already up by 52 per cent since the start of the year and oil prices up 64 per cent.

Pressure on food inflation is also likely to increase.

Russia and Ukraine account for nearly 30 per cent of global wheat exports, while Belarus and Russia produce around a third of the world's potash, a key ingredient in producing fertilizer, thereby exacerbating supply shortages.

"Global manufacturing bottlenecks are likely to persist in certain sectors," she said.

Russia is the world's top exporter of palladium, which is key for producing catalytic converters, while Ukraine supplies around 70 per cent of the world's neon gas, critical for semiconductor manufacturing.

"As the euro area is a net importer of energy, rising energy prices mean a loss in purchasing power for consumers," said Lagarde.

She said households are becoming more pessimistic and could cut back further on spending.

"Consumer confidence this month has fallen to its lowest level since May 2020 and stands well below its long-term average," Lagarde said inflation levels and slowing growth would depend on how the conflict and Russian sanctions evolve.

"Clearly, the longer the war lasts, the higher the economic costs will be and the greater the likelihood we end up in more adverse scenarios."

The ECB boss said the Ukraine war had underlined the "deep strategic vulnerabilities in our security and trade relationships, which we can only address by being more united".

India Central Bank Focused on Growth, Seen Lagging on Inflation Fight



MUMBAI (Dispatches) - Inflation is picking up in India, but the country's central bank is likely to maintain its loose policy even as its global peers raise rates, potentially forcing it to play catch-up aggressively later, economists and analysts say.

This view represents a shift in expectations, as market participants say the Reserve Bank of India is concerned that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is damaging the global economy and India's recovery prospects, not just boosting prices.

A Reuters poll in early February found just over half of forecasters expecting the RBI to raise rates at its April meeting, but the war launched three weeks later has upended those predictions.

RBI watchers now expect the bank to stand pat on April 8, even though inflation has broken above the 6% upper end of the bank's target band for two months.

Saugata Bhattacharya, chief economist at Axis Bank, who had earlier expected the RBI to raise its reverse-repurchase rate next week, now says global uncertainties mean that "it makes sense to remain at a status quo."

Supporting such expectations, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das recently warned against a "premature demand compression through monetary policy".

Deputy Governor Michael Patra said India's growth was as weak as in 2013, when a U.S. policy shift sent capital gushing out of emerging markets. "The recent reverberations of war have in fact, tilted the balance of risks downwards" for the economy, he said.

But economists warn inflation could spin out of control, hurting investors and savers alike - and most market participants say the RBI is already behind the curve on tackling inflation.

Economists expect the RBI to raise its retail-inflation projection for the fiscal year starting on Friday by 50 to 80 basis points from the current 4.5%.

Turkey's Foreign Trade Gap Jumps Over 135% on Surge in Energy Costs

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's foreign trade deficit widened 135.5% year-over-year in February, official data showed, driven by a surge in energy prices.

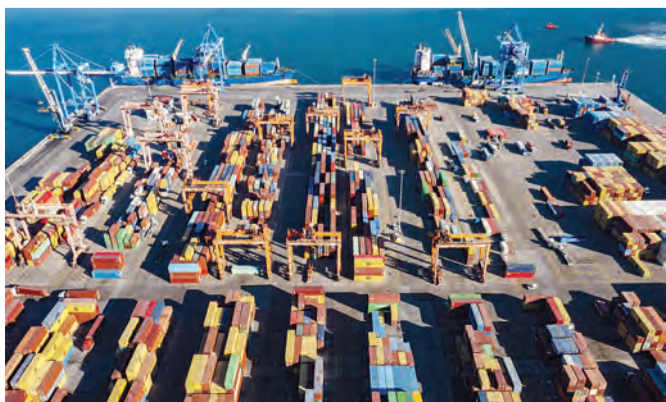
The gap jumped to \$7.9 billion, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) said, mainly due to swelling energy imports that constitute nearly one-third of the country's overall purchases from abroad.

Energy import bill increased by 181.8% year-over-year to \$7.76 billion in the month, the data showed.

Exports surged 25.4% year-over-year to just over \$20 billion in February, while imports soared 44.5% to reach \$27.9 billion. The export-to-import coverage ratio rose to 82.7% last month, versus 71.7% a year ago, the data showed.

Turkey imported 2.34 million tons of crude oil last month, up from 1.56 million tons in February of last year.

Crude oil imports registered a 49.6% increase compared to the same month of 2021, the data showed.



Germany was Turkey's main trading partner in the month, receiving \$1.8 billion worth of Turkish exports.

It was followed by the U.S. with \$1.3 billion, the U.K. with \$1.1 billion and Italy with \$1.09 billion, TurkStat said.

On the other side of the ledger, the top country for Turkey's imports last month was Russia with \$3.9 billion, followed by China with \$3.2 billion, Germany with \$1.9 billion and the U.S. with \$1.1 billion.

In January-February, Turkey's foreign trade deficit shot up by 183.1% on an annual basis to \$18.2 billion.

The two-month exports stood at \$37.6 billion, up by 21.4%, while imports totaled \$55.7 billion, rising 49.2% year-over-year.

Islamic Jihad Adheres to Promise for Liberation of Quds

PALESTINE (Dispatches) - The Secretary-General of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Movement emphasized in a speech on Saturday night that the organization was devoted to its commitment to the liberation of Quds. Referring to the martyrdom of three young Palestinians in the north of the West Bank by the Israeli regime’s

forces, Ziyad al-Nakhalah noted that the Palestinian resistance fighters are recording the best patterns of sacrifice and heroism in the West Bank.” He added: “It is our Mujahideen (resistance fighters) who are drawing the future away from the meetings on normalization of relations with the Israeli regime.”



Venezuela’s PDVSA Seeks Oil Tankers In Anticipation of U.S. Sanctions Easing

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuela’s state-run energy firm PDVSA is in talks to buy and lease several oil tankers amid a possible expansion in exports, according to three sources and a document seen by Reuters, a sign the country expects U.S. sanctions on its petroleum sector to be eased.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has set off a global hunt for new oil supplies, especially the heavy oil produced by Venezuela. A high-level meeting between U.S. and Venezuelan officials in Caracas this month opened the door for talks over sanctions imposed on PDVSA in 2019, which were later reinforced by former U.S. President Donald Trump as part of his “maximum pressure” campaign to oust Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro.

The Trump administration’s sanctions in 2020 led to a total cut of export authorizations covering most foreign energy firms in joint production with PDVSA. The suspension left companies including Chevron Corp (CVX.N), Eni SpA (ENI.MI) and Repsol SA (REP.MC) with billions of dollars in unpaid dividends and debts that had been settled through Venezuelan oil cargoes.

Executives from PDVSA’s maritime arm, PDV Marina, and the company’s Trade and Supply division recently met with several firms offering tankers. All were willing to take Venezuelan crude or refined products as payment for the vessels, according to the document and sources who spoke on condition of anonymity.

“PDVSA’s tanker fleet is too short for any increases in oil production for domestic refining or exports,” one of the sources said.

PDVSA did not reply to a request for comment.

PDVSA’s aging fleet, composed of about 30 owned tankers, has been forced to mostly remain in Venezuelan waters after underinvestment and lack of repairs for more than a decade, according to Refinitiv Eikon data and sources.

The country’s crude oil and petroleum exports have tumbled under U.S. sanctions, to about 650,000 barrels per day (bpd) last year, from more than 1.5 million bpd in 2018.

U.S. sanctions stopping PDVSA from renewing its vessels’ insurance and classification, which certifies they are seaworthy, have in recent years curtailed the firm’s ability to use the ships for exports, leading it to rely largely on a group of third-party tankers that often lift crude at Venezuelan ports, sources and documents from the state company showed.

In one of the proposals seen by Reuters, a company whose name was redacted from the document, offered five Aframax tankers, each with the capacity to transport up to 700,000 barrels of oil, under a lease contract with an option to buy them.

It required PDVSA to pay between \$22,500 to \$35,000 per day for up to 12 months to



lease each vessel under a time-charter contract. Those ships would progressively be replaced by new ones after the first year with payment for the new tankers through four million barrels of Venezuelan fuel oil valued at \$300 million, according to the proposal.

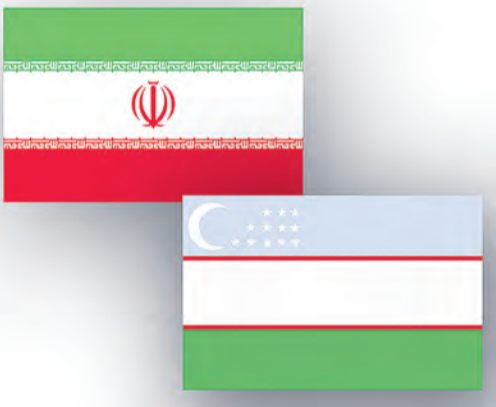
That company also proposed to blur PDVSA’s ownership of the new tankers through a chain of intermediaries, which would reduce the risk of retentions or seizures by the United States if sanctions remained in effect.

PDVSA in 2020 offered to ship its own oil, figuring in the costs in crude supply deals to help customers that struggled to hire vessels due to U.S. sanctions, but the contracts were short-lived due to lack of enough Venezuelan vessels.

The company that year also lost three of four very large crude carriers it bought from China over payment disputes. Earlier this year, PDVSA had to send a crew to rescue the remaining one, which was in distress for weeks in Asia.

Washington between 2019 and 2020 blacklisted vessel owners and operators that carried Venezuelan oil, but in the last year has not enforced similar maritime sanctions. Still, many shipping firms continue to avoid Venezuelan waters because of the U.S. measures, forcing large price discounts on the South American country’s oil.

Iran Attaches Great Importance to Relations With Uzbekistan



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian met and held talks with the Uzbek deputy prime minister on the sidelines of the 3rd Afghanistan meeting which is currently being held in China.

Calling for further expanding Tehran-Tashkent bilateral cooperation, especially in the fields of economy and transportation, Amir-Abdollahian stressed in the meeting the need to utilize the existing capacities in Iranian Chabahar port and Khaf-Herat railway.

He also announced Iran’s readiness for expanding cooperation with the Uzbek side in the field of technology and knowledge-based companies.

Cooperation between the two countries on the issue of Afghanistan was another issue discussed during the meeting.

Turning to the Vienna talks, Amirabdollahian criticized the U.S. approach to the recent sanctions on some Iranian officials and said that now it is up to the U.S. decision to be realistic or be might be held to account for the failure of the negotiations.

Expressing satisfaction with the growing relations between the two countries, Amirabdollahian said that the Islamic Republic of Iran attaches special importance to relations with Uzbekistan.

He also congratulated Nowruz to the Uzbek deputy prime minister.

The Iranian top diplomat went on to say that he hopes the continuation of holding the Joint Economic Commission of Iran and Uzbekistan results in further expanding Tehran-Tashkent relations.

Stressing that the policy of the new Iranian government focuses on Asian countries and Iranian neighbors, Amirabdollahian added that Uzbekistan has a special status in Iran’s foreign policy.

Sardor Umurzakov, for his part, stressed the importance of mutual relations with Iran in various fields and noted that his country is interested in implementing the agreements made between the two countries.

Turkey, EU in Contact to Reduce Global Travel of Waste

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The European Union and Turkey are in contact to tackle the problem of waste traffic around the world, Ambassador Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut, the head of the European Union Delegation to Turkey, said.

“This is an issue that needs to be urgently solved. The European Union is currently developing a strategy on this issue and is working on steps to decrease this waste traffic,” he said while speaking at a climate summit at the Congressium Ankara ATO International Convention and Exhibition Center.

“In order to achieve this, we have to work together with the countries concerned.”

Turkey last year banned the import of polymer waste such as plastic bags and styrofoam cups following a public outcry over images of trash illegally dumped and burnt along roadsides.

The vast nation of 84 million people has turned into a prime destination of European waste.

A report published by Greenpeace last year said Turkey has turned into the main recipient of British waste after China banned the import of many types of plastic in 2017.

“EU member states exported 20 times more plastic waste to Turkey in 2020 than they did in 2016, with the volume increasing from 22,000 tons to 447,000 tons,” the Greenpeace report said.

Eurostat data shows Turkey received nearly a quarter of the plastic waste exported by EU nations in 2019.

“We have to change this pattern of waste being shipped around the world,” Meyer-Landrut added.

The ambassador elaborated that one of the areas the EU is working on is reducing the amount of waste by focusing on material that can be reused or ensuring that equipment is made in a way that lasts longer. Reducing packaging material is one of these steps, he added.

“If we want to reduce waste, we have to start by reducing products that do not go in the garbage immediately.”

“Another strategy is to reduce the amount of waste being sold to other countries – within this scope we are in talks with all countries, including Turkey. The EU is also in contact with its member states,” Meyer-Landrut said, adding that the goal is that each country is able to manage its own waste.

The world’s first Economy and Climate Change Summit (Eko Iklim) kicked off in the Turkish capital Ankara where climate change and green transformation issues top the agenda.

In accordance with the European Union Green Agreement and the Paris Agreement, Turkey is faced



with a 60 billion euro (\$66.63 billion) “carbon tax” burden until 2053.

The summit, which was held as carbon neutral, was attended by heads of states, representatives of public institutions, more than 20 international institutions and organizations, academics from more than 30 universities, municipalities, organized industrial zones, technopolises and sector representatives.

Clean energy financing, the transformation of the industries in line with the global green policies and global strategies were among the topics to be discussed during the event. The event also elaborated on the carbon emission reduction policies, their economic effects on climate change efforts and policies of the governments.

Visitors had the chance to observe Turkey’s first domestic, fully electric car, several companies, including companies in the defense sector, efforts and works on climate, zero waste and green transformation, fashion created from sustainable, recyclable material as well as the 100% electric buses of the Ankara metropolitan municipality. The event featured exhibition stands, fashion shows and concerts.

Meyer-Landrut further spoke on Turkey ratifying the Paris climate deal, saying that it was a welcome step and that there are several areas in which Ankara and Brussels can work on.

He reiterated that greenhouse gas emissions have risen in Turkey instead of falling and that much needs to be done if Turkey and the world, in general, want to achieve their climate goals.

Greenhouse gas emissions in Turkey reached the equivalent of 523.9 million tons of carbon dioxide in 2020, a 3.1% increase compared to 2019, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) revealed Wednesday.

Turkey, which became the last country in the G-20 group of major economies to ratify the Paris climate agreement, seeks to cut emissions. It currently ranks 14th among the countries with high greenhouse gas emissions, according to Global Carbon Atlas. The climate deal it ratified requires countries to halve emissions by 2030 and achieve a “net-zero” emission goal by 2053.

“The U.N. conference on climate change had one good and one bad message,” Meyer-Landrut said, indicating that the bad message was that with the current measures, the international community would not be able to achieve the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit). “The good message is that we can still manage if we make additional efforts.”

Islamic Revolution...

FROM PAGE 1

One can enumerate successes of the Islamic Revolution in any field from military to scientific realms. Regardless of Iran’s amazing achievements in the military sector which has made the country strong enough to repel any bully from enemies, the country has achieved many progresses in the Nano and scientific fields and now the country has turned into a health tourism hub in the region and many people from other countries come for medical treatment to Iran.



Of course like any revolution in the history, the Islamic Republic of Iran has faced ups and downs and it has survived all of the plots and hardships and it has marched ahead with strong determination to materialize its main goal which is promotion of Islam and justice in the country, region and the world.

As usual, the world arrogant countries try to spread disappointment among Iranians and unfortunately some officials in the country either intentionally or unintentionally help them. Fortunately with the current revolutionary government people expect better future and they hope to mark the next Islamic Revolution Day in better economic condition that the current government has promised it.

The Islamic Revolution of Iran is now the source of hope for the oppressed and freedom-seeking people in the world and this is what the founder of the Islamic Revolution the late Imam Khomeini wanted and his dream is gradually coming true and the countdown has begun. The good economic condition in the country will also strengthen the unity of the nation against any mischief of the enemies who are trying to bring down the establishment via this channel and spreading disappointment and dissatisfaction.

Iraq Warned Against...

FROM PAGE 1

He emphasized the efforts to establish security and peace in the region without the interference of outsiders and stated, “The passage of time has proved the legitimacy of the Supreme Leader’s statement that the United States is not sympathetic to the Muslim nations in the region, especially Iraq, and today, it has become clear to everyone that outsiders are only pursuing their own interests and domination”.

President Raisi pointed out, “Any country in the region that neglects the hegemonic goals of the United States and the Zionist Regime will both disregard the interests of its nation and will spur Muslim nations’ anger.”

In this telephone call, congratulating the arrival of Ramadan, Iraqi President Barham Salih stressed the need for cooperation between the two countries to overcome regional challenges and said, “Establishing stability and security in the region is very important and in this regard, we hope for the active role of the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

The President of Iraq noted, “Tehran and Baghdad have many common goals and objectives at the regional and international levels, and by strengthening the level of cooperation and coordination, we can take useful and effective steps to ensure the interests of our nations and the nations of the region.”

“The solution to the crises in the region is merely with the will of the countries themselves, and intra-regional solutions without the interference of outsiders,” Salih added.

Emphasizing the importance of developing trade and economic relations between the two countries, the Iraqi President said, “The economic capacities of the two countries can serve the interests of the two nations.”

Taliban...

FROM PAGE 1

In a move in violation of a 1973 treaty with Iran, Afghanistan has refused to supply its neighbor with share of water from Hirmand, which rises in Afghanistan and flows through eastern parts of Iran, according to Iran’s Energy Ministry.

According to the treaty, Afghanistan is committed to share waters of the Hirmand River with Iran and supply it with 26 cubic meters of Hirmand water per second or 850 million cubic meters per annum.

The annual 850 million cubic meters of water for Iran has been initially allocated for drinking and irrigation of farmlands, which falls far short of the minimum flow required to feed Hamoon wetlands, which straddle Iran-Afghan common border and are fed by the Hirmand River.

Tiger stirs Masters Talk

Augusta (Dispatches) - Injured Tiger Woods thrilled golf fans with a mere practice round at Augusta National, but other elite golfers who have competed since November 2020 definitely will try to win the 86th Masters. The first men's major tournament of the year tees off Thursday at Augusta National with a host of in-form contenders, but attention was riveted upon 46-year-old Woods after he played 18 holes at the iconic Georgia course on Tuesday.

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Brazil Favorites to Win Qatar World Cup

Doha (Dispatches) - Brazil are favorites to win the 2022 World Cup according to bookmakers after the five times champions were yesterday drawn with Serbia, Switzerland and Cameroon in the group stage of the showpiece event in Qatar.

William Hill installed Brazil, who rose to the top of the world rankings this week, as 5-1 favorites to win the tournament ahead of France (11-2), England (6-1), Spain (15-2) and Argentina (11-1).

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

MONDAY APRIL 4, 2022

Depleted Grizzlies Stun Suns, Lakers Fall

Los Angeles (Dispatches) - The short-handed Memphis Grizzlies shocked the Phoenix Suns 122-114 to push their winning streak to seven games in a clash of the top two teams in the NBA.

Dillon Brooks scored 30 points to lead a Grizzlies team playing without injured top scorer Ja Morant, Desmond Bane, Steven Adams, Jaren Jackson and Tyus Jones.

Despite the absences, the Grizzlies took a one-point lead into the final quarter and pushed their lead to 14 midway through the final period.

The Suns cut the deficit to five on Devin Booker's three-pointer with 56 seconds remaining, but Brooks drove to the basket for a layup, was fouled and made the free throw as the Grizzlies -- who had seven players score in double figures -- sealed a statement win in what could be a preview of the Western Conference finals.

Booker finished with 41 points and Mikal Bridges added 18 for the Suns, who are locked into the top seed in the Western Conference ahead of Memphis.

But the Grizzlies' hustle was clear with a 30-2 advantage in second-chance points and a 24-7 edge in points off turnovers.

Ziaire Williams scored 19 points for Memphis and De'Anthony Melton added 17 -- making six straight free throws in the last 19.1 seconds.

Los Angeles stars LeBron James and Anthony Davis returned from injury but the Lakers' post-season hopes took another hit with a 114-111 loss to the New Orleans Pelicans.

The defeat leaves the Lakers in 11th place in the West, a game behind the San Antonio Spurs for the final spot in the play-in tournament for the seventh- through 10th-placed teams for the final two berths in the playoffs proper.

James, who missed two games with a sprained ankle, scored 21 of his 38 points in the third quarter as the Lakers took an 87-86 lead.

But he added just two points in the fourth period as the Pelicans -- led by 32 points from CJ McCollum and 29 from Brandon Ingram -- eked out the victory, with James missing a potential game-tying three-pointer as time expired.

Rangnick Hits Back at Van Gaal's Commercial Club Comment

Manchester (Dispatches) - Manchester United interim manager Ralf Rangnick hit back at Louis van Gaal for his comments that United are a "commercial club", saying that the Netherlands head coach had signed a contract to be their manager despite holding that opinion.

Van Gaal warned Ajax Amsterdam's Erik ten Hag against taking up the manager's role at United, urging him to choose a football club over a "commercial" one.

Ten Hag is among a handful of names linked to the top job at United, with Rangnick's tenure set to end after the current season.

"Louis himself as an experienced coach signed a contract here some years ago and he could have known that in advance if he had that opinion," Rangnick told British media on Friday.

Van Gaal managed United between 2014 and 2016, leading them to FA Cup success in his final season before being sacked and replaced by Jose Mourinho. "I think football worldwide and even more so in the English Premier League when any rich person or company can buy a club, as long as they pass the fit and proper person test, is a commercialised business that's for sure," Rangnick added.

"What I can only tell you from the last four months is that this is a club with a big tradition with a close relationship with the supporters and to the whole city, region and area.

"... If the club draws the right conclusions on what's happened in the last couple of years, yes the last couple of years have not been as good as expected, but if they draw the right conclusions I still see a very bright future for this club."

Japan Says Nothing to Fear From Tough World Cup Draw

Tokyo (Dispatches) - Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu says his team have nothing to fear and are aiming for at least the quarter-finals after being drawn in a tough World Cup group containing former champions Spain and Germany.

Friday's draw for the World Cup in Qatar later this year threw Japan into Group E along with heavyweights Spain and Germany, plus the winner of a play-off between Costa Rica and New Zealand.



Davis, sidelined since February 16 with a foot injury, scored 23 points and pulled down 12 rebounds, but his return wasn't enough for a disjointed Lakers side.

The Pelicans tightened their grip on ninth place in the West, two games ahead of the Spurs who beat Portland 130-111.

All-Star point guard Dejounte Murray missed the game with a non-Covid respiratory illness, but Devin Vassell scored 22 points and Keldon Johnson added 21 to lead eight Spurs players to score in double figures in the crucial win.

The Spurs led by as many as 28 in the first half, and by 31 in the third quarter.

Elsewhere, Robert Covington scored a career-high 43 points to lead the Los Angeles Clippers to a 153-119 rout of the NBA champion Bucks in Milwaukee.

Covington made 11 three-pointers and Amir Coffey also had a career-high with 32 points for the Clippers on a night in which both teams rested their stars.

Milwaukee gave two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Giannis Antetokounmpo, Khris Middleton and Jrue Holiday the night off while the Clippers were without Paul George, Reggie Jackson and Marcus Morris.

The Boston Celtics, with 32 points from Jaylen Brown and 31 from Jayson Tatum, beat the Indiana Pacers 128-123 to move a half-game ahead of the Philadelphia 76ers for third place in the Eastern Conference.

In Denver, Karl-Anthony Towns scored 32 points to lead the Minnesota Timberwolves to a 136-130 victory over the Nuggets.

D'Angelo Russell scored 24 points and Anthony Edwards scored 18 for the Timberwolves, who are seventh in the West and appear headed for the play-in tournament.

Minnesota withstood a 38-point, 19-rebound performance from Nikola Jokic, who also handed out eight assists for Denver, who are sixth in the West.

Alcaraz To Face Ruud in Miami Open Final

Miami (Dispatches) - Spanish teenager Carlos Alcaraz continued his sensational play to beat defending champion Hubert Hurkacz 7-6(5) 7-6(2) and set up a Miami Open final against Casper Ruud, who ended the dream run of Francisco Cerundolo with a 6-4 6-1 win earlier.

For the second night Alcaraz electrified the fans at Hard Rock Stadium with his feisty and fearless play and the 18-year-old will now look to become the tournament's youngest ever champion against world number eight Ruud.

"I will try to play like it's the first round to mask the nerves," said Alcaraz, who beat Ruud in straight sets in their only previous meeting in Marbella, Spain, last year. "I think I'm going to enjoy it and it will be a great final."

In the first set, Alcaraz erased a break point while trailing 3-4 with one of his trademark drop shots and later blasted an exquisite backhand passing shot to send the first set to a tiebreak.

In the breaker, Alcaraz rallied from a 5-3 deficit and won it when Hurkacz's volley found the net, leading the hard-hitting Pole to the throw his racket to the court in frustration.

Alcaraz saved two break points at 5-5 in the second set with help from a flurry of unforced errors by Hurkacz and in the second breaker, delivered yet another perfectly executed drop shot to set up match point.



Fernandes Signs New Man United Deal

London (Dispatches) - Manchester United midfielder Bruno Fernandes has signed a new contract until June 2026 with an option to extend for a further year, the English side announced.

The Portugal international joined United from Sporting in January 2020 and has become a key player at the club.

The 27-year-old playmaker has scored 49 goals and made 39 assists in 117 appearances in all competitions for United, though his

form has dipped this season.

"Even after two years, it still feels amazing to step out at Old Trafford, to hear the fans sing my song and to score in front of the Stretford End," Fernandes said.

"There is so much more that I want to achieve here, and I know that is the same for the rest of the squad and staff. More than anything, we want to give the fans the success that they deserve.

"We have shared some great moments over the last years, but the best is yet to come from myself and this team."

Fernandes also helped Portugal seal a spot in this year's World Cup after scoring a brace in their victory against North Macedonia in the European qualifiers this week. Read full story

Asian Games Venues Have Been Completed

Beijing (Dispatches) - Venues for the Asian Games have been completed six months before the eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou hosts athletes from across the region, organizers said.

The competition, the 19th edition of the fiercely contested regional sporting event, is still on despite China battling with its worst Covid-19 outbreak since the pandemic began.

Organizers say a virus control plan that "learns from the successful experience" of the Beijing Winter Olympics held in February, will be published in the coming weeks.

All 56 competition venues for the Asian Games and Asian Para Games have been completed, organizers added in a statement.

"Functional checks for the events have been finished," the statement said, adding several Games villages and over 30 training venues have also been built.

"We're now just making a few final adjustments and improvements to the facilities," Lu Chunjiang, an official in charge of operations at Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre, told state broadcaster CCTV.

"Most of our energy is going towards preparatory work for venue operations."

Hangzhou, the capital of eastern China's Zhejiang province, will host the 19th Asian Games from 10-25 September.

The city of 12 million will become the third in China to host the continental athletics competition after Beijing in 1990 and Guangzhou in 2010.

Some events will be held in other provincial cities including Ningbo, Wenzhou, Huzhou, Shaoxing and Jinhua.



Curry Not to Return Before NBA Playoffs

San Francisco (Dispatches) - Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry, sidelined by a sprained ligament in his left foot, won't return to action before the playoffs, the NBA team said.

In a statement posted on the team Twitter feed, the Warriors said Curry was making "good progress" in his recovery but wouldn't play again in the regular season, which concludes on April 10.

"Stephen will gradually begin individual on-court activities next week, and his eventual return to practice will be based on his continued progress," the Warriors said. "Our next update on his status will be provided on April 11."

Warriors coach Steve Kerr told reporters the news was not a surprise.

"We were hoping maybe he'd play one or two games at the end of the regular season," Kerr said. "But that was always a long shot."

Curry hasn't played since he was hurt in a March 16 game against the Boston Celtics, when he was rolled on by Boston's Marcus Smart as they chased a loose ball.

Curry, the NBA's all-time leader in three-point shots, was averaging 25.5 points per game and the Warriors are 1-6 since he's been sidelined.

Although players including Jordan Poole have stepped up their offensive output, no one has filled the void left by Curry.

The Warriors are currently fourth in the Western Conference and have yet to officially clinch their playoff berth, although they could find themselves in on Friday if the Minnesota Timberwolves lose to the Denver Nuggets.

Kerr said Curry remains a key contributor to the playoff push.

