Health Ministry Announced on Wednesday That the Number of **Deaths From the Coronavirus** Pandemic in Iran Increased to 144,559 With Four More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours



President Ebrahim Raisi in Meeting With Belarusian Foreign Minister **Stressed to the Visiting Belarusian** FM to Speed Up the Implementation Of the Agreements Reached **Between the Two Countries**

Zelensky Asks Donors

For \$38b as

Russia Shells Bakhmut

Juventus Crash out of

Champions League;

Chelsea, PSG Through

> SEE PAGE 4

VOL. XXVIII, No. 7620 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

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INTERNATIONAL



Iran-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement To Be Implemented Soon





Tehran Iran Decries UNSC Silence on Israeli Airstrikes on Syria

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations, Amir Saeed Iravani, has denounced the UN Security Council for its silence in the face of the repeated Israeli acts of military aggression against war-torn Syria.

Speaking at the UN Security Council briefing on the situation in Syria, Iravani slammed Israeli attacks against civilian population and basic infrastructure in Syria as a flagrant violation of international law and humanitarian rights, and argued that the Security Council's inaction has emboldened the Tel Aviv regime to broaden the scope of its aggression. See Page 7

Iran Sanctions Several EU Institutions, Individuals



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran has announced tit-for-tat sanctions against institutions and individuals in the European Union (EU) due to their deliberate actions in support

of terrorism and terrorist groups.

In a statement released on Wednesday, Iran's Foreign Ministry once again strongly rejected and condemned the EU's October 17 sanctions targeting Iranian individuals and entities over baseless accusations that constitute a clear example of interference in Iran's domestic affairs.

In response, it added, the ministry hereby announces sanctions against a number of individuals and entities within the EU due to their "deliberate actions in support of terrorism and terrorist groups, encouraging and inciting terrorism, violence, and hatred, which has caused riots, violence, terrorist acts, and human rights violations against the people of Iran.'

The sanctioned entities include the so-called Friends of Free Iran, the International Committee in Search of Justice (ISJ), Stop the Bomb, Deutsche Welle Persian, RFI Persian, International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism, Karl Kolb Co., and Rhein Bayern Fahrzeugbau Co.

The blacklisted individuals are president of the International Committee in Search of Justice Aljo Vidal Quadras, co-chairs of the Friends of Free Iran Javier Zarzalejos and Milan Azver, members of the European Parliament Charlier Weimers, Jan Zahradil, Helmot Geuking and Hermann Tertsch, member of the National Assembly of France Meyer Habib, mayor of France's Villepinte Matine Valleton, mayor of Paris first district Jean-Francois Legaret, current and former editors-in-chief of Germany's Bild newspaper Johannes Boieand and Alexandra Wurzbach.

The blacklisted individuals are banned from receiving a visa or entering Iran, and the ownership of their properties and assets in Iran will be transferred to the Iranian government.

Earlier, Iran had imposed retaliatory sanctions against a number of British individuals and entities for supporting terrorism, inciting violence, and violating human rights.

In a statement last week, Iran's Foreign Ministry announced that the embargoes on the British individuals and entities were a "tit for tat" move against the sanctions that had been placed by some European

The statement named three entities and nine individuals that had been blacklisted under the Islamic Republic of Iran's sanctions regime. The entities included the National Cyber Security Center (NCSC) and Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) as well as Volant Media, Global Media, and DMA Media and anti-Iranian TV channels that they support namely, BBC Persian and the so-called Iran International.

The ministry underlined that the measures by the listed entities led to "riots, violence, and terrorist acts" against the Iranian nation.

The EU foreign ministers had decided a week earlier to levy sanctions against 11 Iranian individuals and four entities over the country's response to the foreign-backed riots that followed the death of a young Iranian woman in police custody.

> SEE PAGE 8

Drone, a Pretext for **Exerting Pressure**

In recent days Ukraine has started a verbal attack against the Islamic Republic of Iran, and its Western allies have used this baseless claims and remarks as a pretext to increase pressure on Tehran to force it to sign the JCPOA deal which has currently come to a standstill

Ukraine as well as Western media claimed that Tehran has supplied attacking drones to Russia and they claimed that this move is against the UN Resolution Resolution which it bars Iran from any arms deal with any country by 2023 and they urged the United Nations to take action. The United States and its European allies have in recent months accused Iran of providing Russia with drones to be used in the war in Ukraine.

The Islamic Republic of Iran reacting to this media hype and claims of Ukraine and its allies has repeatedly refused these claims and Tehran believes it is new game of the West for exerting pressure on it for forcing it to give concession by signing the JCPOA revival deal.

On Monday Iran warned the United Nations against implementing the West's "instructions" to conduct a so-called investigation in the context of Security Council Resolution 2231 to assess the type of unmanned aerial vehicles allegedly used in the current conflict in Ukraine.

The anti-Iran claims first emerged in July, with U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan alleging that Washington had received "information" indicating that the Islamic Republic was preparing to provide Russia with "up to several hundred drones, including weapons-capable UAVs on an expedited timeline" for use in the war in Ukraine.

Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations Amir Saeed Iravani on Monday sent a letter to the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, President of the Security Council Michel Xavier Biang and Facilitator for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015) Fergal Mythen regarding the allegations, saying the "resolution itself provides no legal basis for such an investigation."

Tran cautions the Secretariat against conducting such an illegal investigation or engaging in any activity that advances and implements the Western States' 'instructions' and urges the secretary general to prevent the conduct of any such flawed tasks by the Secretariat [and] refrain from reporting on such irrelevant requests and unsubstantiated claims in his subsequent report on the implementation of Resolution 2231," Iravani said.

He categorically rejected all accusations against Iran contained in the letters sent by the E3 - France, Germany, and Britain - and Northern Ireland to the president of the Security Council as well as those raised by its certain members and non-members.

"It is ironic that these countries, particularly the three permanent members of the Security Council, accuse Iran of violating a specific paragraph of Security Council Resolution 2231, while they continue to be in flagrant violation of all their explicit legal obligations under that same resolution," he said.

He also pointed out that the United States' illegal withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), is in material breach of the peremptory norms of international law, the UN Charter and Security Council Resolution 2231.

Even Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said his country is ready to discuss the Western countries' allegations about exporting drones to Russia in a joint session with Ukrainian officials. See Page 7

Dubai Expo Rally Ends With Naming the Best



ffix Dubai Expo was held on October 19-20 in the largest city of the United Arab Emirates. Every year, many brokers for months plan to attend the largest expo to challenge their capabilities by attending this financial event. Also, digital currency and forex activists were also present at this exhibition with the motivation of exchanging information and expanding their fields of activity. Expofix is the title chosen for this financial and fintech event, which aims to introduce the best brokers. This important event this year hosted 200 brokers and financial market companies, all of whom were pioneers in this field. But among them, there is a broker who was able to win the award for the fastest growth among the competitors. This broker has an Iranian founder, Dr. Farzad Vajihi nicknamed as "Master Aron", for this reason he attracted our attention, and he has been able to achieve significant fame among Iranian traders in a much shorter period of time than his competitors, relying on his skills, he has taken the Aaron Group to its current position in the world.

Iran to Sue UK-Based Hostile News Networks Over Riots

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Culture Mohammad Mehdi Esmaeili said that Tehran will soon file a lawsuit at international legal bodies against London-based

Esmaeili did not give an exact time on when the lawsuit will be presented, but said that the Culture Ministry has already opened a dossier focusing on activities by those news networks. He explained that the ministry is working on cases of violations of professional rules by the networks, including presenting official trainings on violence and terror-related acts.

Iran Friend of Its Neighbors in **Difficult Times**

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi said in a meeting with the Kuwaiti ambassador that the Islamic Republic of Iran has always been a friend of its neighbors in difficult times.

In a meeting on Wednesday, Badr Abdullah al-Manikh, the new Kuwaiti ambassador to Tehran submitted his credentials to Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi.

The existing capacities in Iran and Kuwait make it possible for the two countries to increase their economic cooperation and trade relations, Raisi said in this meeting. Iran has always been a friend of its neighbors in difficult times, Raisi added. He also noted that the dialogue between neighbors and the promotion of cooperation

between countries in the region is the most effective solution to the problems. The intervention of foreigners in regional issues has not solved the problems but has

Belarus President Due

In Iran in Near Future

TEHRAN (MNA) - Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko is set to pay a visit to Iran

in the near future, Iran's top diplomat said in a

joint press conference with his Belarusian

Iranian top diplomat Hossein Amirabdollahian on

Wednesday noon welcomed his Belarusian

The two Iranian and Belarusian top diplomats

held a meeting and discussed several issues.

Details of their meeting have not been

A comprehensive cooperation program

document between the foreign ministries of the

Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of

Belarus was signed during the meeting of

After the bilateral meeting, the two foreign

"The long-term comprehensive cooperation

document of the two countries will be signed in

Tehran along with other documents," Hossein

Iran's top diplomat warned the European Union

not to continue the old failed strategy toward Iran,

adding, "The leaders of a few countries in the

European Union have extreme and hasty views on

the regional and international developments, and a large part of the European Union members act in

He once again rejected the baseless allegations

about sending drones to Russia for being used

counterpart on Wednesday.

Amirabdollahian and Makei.

Amirabdollahian said.

the direction of rationality."

ministers held a press conference.

published yet.

counterpart Vladimir Makei in Tehran.



always caused problems, he stressed.

Although building trust in bilateral relations is the starting point of comprehensive regional cooperation, the enemies are trying to hinder the development of regional cooperation with deceptive tricks, the Iranian president said, adding that

Badr Abdullah al-Manikh is the first Kuwaiti ambassador to Tehran after seven years. Abdullah al-Manikh submitted a copy of his credentials to Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian on Saturday.

Gov't Determined to Contain High Inflation

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Finance Minister Ehsan Khandouzi says the government is determined to contain high levels of inflation in the country through tighter fiscal and monetary policies.

Speaking in a press conference, Khandouzi admitted that the government was not content with the pace of rises reported in consumer prices in Iran in the past three months.

However, he said that major economic indicators reported in September, including a decrease in the pace of money supply growth in Iran, showed that the country is on the right path to contain inflation.

"These are signs that government's determination to control inflation is not just words," the minister was quoted

The remarks came two days after the Iranian government's statistics agency said that the country's annual consumer prices index (CPI) had risen by 0.8% to 42.9% in September.

The agency said in a report that Iran's month on month inflation rate had also surged by 0.8% to 3% in September while CPI calculated on a point-to-point basis was reported at 48.6% against the same month last year.

Khandouzi said that the rise in September's inflation rate was mainly a result of higher rents and hikes in the prices of certain consumer goods.

However, he said the rises were not acceptable to the government, adding that President Ebrahim Raeisi had demanded explanations from various departments responsible for the issue.

In interviews and statements made in April, Khandouzi and other members of Raeisi's economic team had boasted about government's success in bringing down Iran's inflation rate to below 40% for a first time in a year. That comes as Iran has reported increases in the CPI of around one percentage point per month since July.

Iran Urges Global Action Against Israeli Crimes

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman has condemned the Israeli aggression against Palestinians in the West Bank city of Nablus, calling for international action to stop the regime's crimes in the occupied Palestinian territories.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, Nasser Kanaani criticized the "hypocritical and duplicitous" positions of the United States and some Western countries on human rights issues across the world.

"Their unconditional support for the usurping Zionist regime and its daily crimes against the oppressed Palestinian nation is the biggest example of human rights violations which have been going on for consecutive decades," he added.

Pointing to the continuation of Israeli crimes and terrorist acts in the occupied West Bank, including the siege and attack on Nablus, Kanaani called on the international community to take action to condemn and stop the Zionist regime's genocide in Palestine.

He hailed the courageous resistance of Palestinian people, especially the youths, in al-Quds, Jenin and Nablus, urging international support for the Palestinian struggle against the Zionist regime until the full liberation of Palestine from the Israeli occupation.

Europe Cannot Squeeze New Concession Via Sanctions

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Europe cannot resort to the imposition of new sanctions on Iran in a bid to squeeze new concessions

Abolfazl Amouei said that if Europe dreams of squeezing new concessions from the Islamic Republic by resorting to such a sanction policy, it is quite clear that they do not know Iran precisely.

The lawmaker, who is representing Tehran in the Iranian Parliament, noted that fresh European sanctions on certain Iranian officials and entities would destroy the infrastructure of bilateral ties between Iran and Europe and

that the Islamic Republic will react seriously and effectively in the face of the recent embargo. The new sanctions would not be effective because the Iranian authorities do not have any assets in Europe to be

The spokesperson of the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of Parliament went on to say that the

issue of the death of Iranian woman Mahsa Amini and the following protests are completely internal affairs, so the Western states are not entitled to intervene in such issues. The European Union imposed sanctions on 11 Iranian officials and four entities, which entails bans on issuing visas and freezing the assets of these individuals.

The so-called human rights sanctions on Iran have targeted 97 individuals and eight entities so far. Amouei emphasized that the Iranian authorities have reviewed the issue of the death of Mahsa Amini and that

Iran to Provide Free Literacy To Foreign National Refugees

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Chairman of the Literacy Movement Organization Alireza Abdi said educating foreign refugees is on the agenda of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Pointing out that the refugees and foreign nationals need education, Abdi said that adult foreign refugees enjoy free education like the Iranians inside the country.

Referring to principled education, he highlighted that the refugees who have identity documents like passports and educational support papers can register in the Literacy Movement Organization, adding that those who do not have any of these documents can also register temporarily with the legal traffic paper for refugees.

He expressed the Organization's readiness to provide educational requirements, physical space, and manpower based on its legal duties in order to provide training to foreign refugees in an appropriate way.

U.S. Sent Message On JCPOA Revival Talks

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Mohammad Eslami said that the U.S. had recently delivered a message announcing its readiness to continue talks over the revival of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

Eslami said that the U.S. conveyed its message three or four days ago, contrary to its position last month that talks with Iran were no longer on its agenda.

The official made the comment at a meeting with participants at the 18th General Assembly of the Organization of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA) underway in Tehran.

He also spoke about Iran's nuclear activities, saying that the country's nuclear program has been under extensive inspections by the UN atomic watchdog over the past decades.

Despite that, Eslami added, enemies of Iran have done whatever they could to hinder the country's progress, including in the nuclear technology sector.

The recent attempt, he said, was the riots that were instigated across Iran in the past month.

The Iran nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, was thrown into disarray in 2018 when the US withdrew and imposed sanctions on Iran.

Talks to revive the deal have been ongoing since April 2021, in which the U.S. has participated indirectly.

Some 30k Visiting Hospitals Daily For Respiratory Complications

TEHRAN (IFP) - An Iranian health official says around 30,000 patients are currently visiting hospitals countrywide on a daily basis to seek medical care for respiratory complications, more than half of whom are diagnosed with influenza.

Deputy Health Minister Saeed Karimi said that the new wave of infections with influenza, triggered by the previously-known H1N1, A, H3N2 variants, had now reached a peak in the country.

Explaining the reason behind the sudden flu outbreak, he said infections with the disease had seen a sharp decline in the past three years amid the coronavirus pandemic, which prompted people to wear masks as a precaution.

The official said strict adherence to the health protocols over the past few years had contained the spread of flu as well, thus weakening the public's immunity against the virus.

With a let-up in the coronavirus pandemic, many are no longer wearing masks, a situation that enabled the flu virus to begin circulation again, he added.

Out of the over 30,000 people who visit health facilities daily, about 1,200 get hospitalized, over 50 percent of whom are diagnosed with flue, while only 10 percent are infected with Covid-19, he said.

Karimi also advised those categorized in high-risk health groups, including the elderly and patients suffering from rare diseases, to receive vaccines against both influence and coronavirus.

from the Islamic Republic, an Iranian legislator said.

sanctioned, but the Europeans' behavior will create negative sentiments towards them, he warned.

the administration, parliament as well as medical and police entities published reports in this respect.

Over 300,000 Tons of Sponge Iron Exported in Hi

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran exported 312,000 tons of sponge iron in the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA) announced.

Based on the ISPA's report, the six-month sponge iron output indicates 54 percent drop as compared to the production in the first half of the previous year, which was 673,000 tons.

As previously announced by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), Iran's export of sponge iron increased 25 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), from the preceding year. The IMIDRO's data put the country's sponge iron export at 1.055 million tons in 1400, and at

843,000 tons in 1399. Direct reduced iron (DRI), also called sponge iron, is produced from the direct reduction of iron ore (in the form of lumps, pellets, or fines) into iron by a reducing gas or elemental carbon produced from natural gas or coal. Many ores are suitable for direct reduction.

While Iran is fighting the U.S. severe sanctions on its economy, and the country's different industrial and economic sectors have been affected by the limitations and difficulties caused by the sanctions condition, the country's mining sector is moving forward noticeably, overcoming such barriers.

Among the mining sector's different products, sponge iron is an outstanding example, as the production of this item is rising more and more in the country.

in the Ukraine war. Elsewhere in his remarks, Iran's foreign minister criticized the US double standards toward Iran, saying that some American officials insist on reaching a deal, but they also support terror and chaos in Iran at the same time.

The Belarusian foreign minister, for his part, cited that his country opposes unilateral economic and

"We want the implementation of international law and we do not like harming the economy of other countries," Makei stressed.

Makei also added that Iran and Belarus are moving towards a strategic partnership.

PRAYER TIME

Noon (Zohr) 11:48 **Evening (Maghreb)** 17:33

■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr) 04:58 **Tomorrow's Sunrise** 06:22

103. The Great Terror will bring them no grief: but the angels will meet them (with mutual greetings): "This is your Day,- (the Day) that ye were promised." 104. The Day that We roll up the heavens like a scroll rolled up for books (completed),even as We produced the first creation, so shall We produce a new one: a promise We Surah 21. The Prophets (103 - 104) have undertaken: truly shall We fulfil it.

Iran-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement To Be Implemented Soon

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafei expressed his satisfaction that soon the free trade between Iran and Pakistan will be finalized and said that setting up a joint arbitration committee between the two countries is important as chambers of commerce of both countries have reached agreement.

Leading a trade delegation to Pakistan, Shafei met with President of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Irfan Iqbal Sheikh and in the meeting both sides explored ways for boosting ties.

In the meeting and in the First Pakistan-Iran Joint Business Council, Shafei called Iran and Pakistan as two great nations in the region who have fought for their independence. He added that it is better both countries to make most of this historic close and sincere ties and boost the ties.

He expressed hope for materialization of the 5-billion-trade target between the two countries and stipulated that ICCIMA is in Pakistan for finding ways for advancing economic cooperation between the two states and taking positive steps for broadening trade and diversifying cooperation.

He termed the joint trade council of Iran and Pakistan which is to be launched as a special opportunity and invited all traders of both countries which cooperate or intend to cooperate with each other to join the council and advance the trade through exchange of information and views.

Shafei added that Iran is one of the biggest energy suppliers of the world and it can meet the rising energy demands of Pakistan. He then termed transit as the other capacity for cooperation between the two countries, noting that and in recent years special cooperation has been shaped in this field and if some problems are resolved and required facilities for electronic TIR are provided, then a fast East-West Corridor will be available.

He noted that due to closeness of Chabahar Port to Pakistani ports like Gwadar and said that it helps trade in the region to develop through creating sea transportation.

He then pointed to some obstacles which do not let trade relations between Iran and Pakistan be satisfactory and named trade tariffs and some restrictions by governments

JOINT BUSINESS COU 26TH OCTOBER, 2022



Shafei went on to say that according to the agreements, the free trade agreement between Iran and Pakistan will be soon finalized, and except some goods which both countries are sensitive on them, other trade items can be traded with lower tariffs.

He also pointed to tourism as one of the grounds for cooperation between the two countries and said that existing commonalities between Iran and Pakistan, joint borders, religious and cultural commonalities make Iranians and Pakistanis consider both counties as their own second home and called for planning on this issue through the chambers of the two countries.

He then said that both chambers have reached agreement for the formation of the joint arbitrary committee and the agreement will be signed.

He expressed hope the statesmen of the two countries by eliminating hurdles and preparing required infrastructures would help broadening of trade exchanges between Iran and Pakistan

Then Chairman FPCCI's Pakistan-Iran Business Council Mr. Najam Ul Hassan Jawa, for his part, blamed lack of banking relation is the main hurdles in way of trade cooperation between Iran and Pakistan. He added that there are great capacities for joint investment and pointed to the successful experience of Iranian economic activists in Pakistan in fields of tile and ceramic industry. He added that such productions in Pakistan will provide capacity for exporting these products to other countries and it can also resolve Iran's sanctions problem.

He then pointed to the significance of barter trade between the two countries and said that the forex and liquidity sources of both countries is limited and according to it, using national currencies of Iran and Pakistan can be a solution. He reiterated that of course what is important in trade is export and import together and while we think of exports we should think of buying from the counterpart country.

Najam Ul Hassan Jawa added that Iran can take seriously investment in Pakistan in the field of foodstuff and today, Chinese and Turkish traders are active in this field in Iran but Iranians have not taken action in this field while foodstuff is one of the best markets in Pakistan.

HOSCO Sets Third Monthly Record for Production

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Hormozgan Company Steel (HOSCO) sets its third month record for slab production this year due to God's blessing and smart planning and endeavors of the staff.



The CEO of Hormozgan Steel Company Mr. Ataollah Maroufkhani announced this achievement and said that due to hardworking and endeavors of the personnel, the company produced 153,232 tons of slab in Iranian month of Mehr which is a new record for monthly slab production and it took a big stride towards materializing the annual targets.

He added that due to its experiences in the past years and facing energy restrictions in different seasons of the year, the company planned its programs in a way that all overhauls and annual repairs are carried out during the time when the company faces restriction in energy supply and it helped the production is not affected by the halt in production.

Maroufkhani added that registering the monthly record for production in the first month of year Farvardin was the first solid stride of his colleagues in this year as the company produced 150,494 tons and this record was improved in month of Shahrivar to 151,742 tons and the company got closer to its set targets.

He went on to say that the third record in month of Mehr showed the capacities and capabilities of personnel and production lines of the company are beyond all restrictions and in case energy is provided, the company can set more records.

The company produced 153,232 tons of slab steel in month of Mehr which is the third record for monthly production this year.

Maroufkhani reiterated that the hardworking personnel of the company are soldiers of the economic war front and they will spare no effort for breaking all restrictions and setting records.

He then pointed to some actions taken by the company for improving production like implementing developmental projects in the company and upgrading the production lines.

Lamerd Economic Zone to Turn

Into "Mining Assalouyeh" of Iran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - On the sidelines

of Kish INVEX2022

because of its rich minerals and location.

Iran, Belarus Stress **Developing Joint Industrial Productions**



TEHRAN (MNA) - Deputy Minister of Industry Alireza Payman-Pak and Deputy Minister of Industry of Belarus Dmitry Kharitonchik on Tuesday emphasized developing trade ties and also launching oint production line for industrial productions.

During the meeting, the two sides explored avenues for expanding trade relations, setting up joint production line for various industries including auto, home appliances and medical equipment.

Payman-Pak stressed Iran's readiness for launching joint auto and home appliances' production lines and added, "In trade exchanges, it is important that balance of trade between the two countries grow proportionally and in this field, the bartering goods is helpful."

Turning to the capacity of North-South Corridor, he announced Iran's readiness for the transit of Belarusian goods through this route.

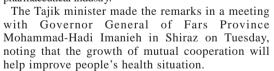
During a trip to Belarus in coming days, Iranian business delegation including representatives of important companies will hold bilateral meetings with the directors of Belarusian companies to further strengthen ties on relevant fields, he added.

Belarusian deputy minister of industry, for his part, pointed to the useful experiences of Iran in economic development and added that Belarus must take advantage of Iran's high experience.

He expressed his thanks to Iranian officials in transferring their experiences to the Belarusian side. Kharitonchik emphasized the development of cooperation in the field of producing light- and heavy- vehicles jointly with the Iranian companies and added that Belarus is ready to clinch a bartering deal with Iran.

Tajik Minister Calls for Cooperation With Iran on Medical Herbs

SHIRAZ (IRNA) Minister of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan Abdullozoda Jamoliddin Abdullo has called for mutual collaboration with the Islamic Republic of Iran in the field of medical herbs and pharmaceutical industry.



He also said that Iran is well-known in different fields in particular in medicine and that Tajikistan is seeking to acquire medical know-how and exchange proper experiences.



medical services. The governor general expressed readiness to provide Tajik patients with the opportunity to travel to the province because there is a good capacity for health tourism in this province.

In the meeting, a representative envoy of the Shiraz University of Medical Science emphasized that the renowned academic center is prepared for the exchange of experiences in terms of medical herbs breakthroughs and accepting medical students

they came back to exhibition, manager of Tajikistan and provided public relations of Lamerd their compatriots with Special Economic Zone (LSEZ) said the zone will soon turn into the "mining Assalouyeh" of the country

According to the

minister, many Tajik

physicians studied at the

universities of Shiraz to

upgrade their knowledge

in terms of organ

transplantation; then,

Aluminum Corporation (SALCO) in the LSEZ produces by itself some 300,000 tons per year and with implementation

of its second and third phases, the production capacity of this complex will reach one million tons per year. He added that the preliminary project of SALCO was carried out with \$1.2b through finance of the Chinese. He then highlighted the properties of the zone and reiterated that the zone can be the country's "mining Assalouyeh", adding that the zone offers incentives for

Mr. Hamed Farahani said that the biggest and most

modern aluminum plant of the country is located in Lamerd

Special Economic Zone and the total aluminum production

of Al-Mahdi Aluminum Company, Jajarm Alumina

Company and other companies of the country is around

400,000 tons per year while the first phase of South

roads connecting three southern provinces of the country. LSEZ as the biggest industrial-mining pole of the country in south of Fars Province is located at the confluence of three provinces rich in oil and gas and minerals (Fars, Bushehr and Hormozgan Provinces).

investors like tax exemption and pointed to the advantages

of the zone for investment due to the access to the sea and

This industrial center with an area around 8500 hectares is the subsets of Iranian Mines, Mining Industries Development and Renovation (IMIDRO) and is considered as a distinguish place in the national documents for national industrial development and materialization of leap in production.

LSEZ was created for transfer of technical knowhow, preventing crude sales and creating huge value added, attracting domestic and foreign investments, boosting export capabilities, providing high quality basic goods via developing mother industries and completion of mineral industries chain and materializing sustainable occupation and eradicating poverty from the surrounding areas.

Over 300,000 Tons of Sponge Iron Exported in H1

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran exported 312,000 tons of sponge iron in the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA) announced. Based on the ISPA's report, the six-month sponge iron output indicates 54 percent drop as compared to the production in the first half of the previous year, which was 673,000 tons.

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The IMIDRO's data put the country's sponge iron export at 1.055 million tons in 1400, and at 843,000 tons in 1399.

Direct reduced iron (DRI), also called sponge iron, is produced from the direct reduction of iron ore (in the form of lumps, pellets, or fines) into iron by a reducing gas or elemental carbon produced from natural gas or coal. Many ores are suitable for direct reduction.

While Iran is fighting the U.S. severe sanctions on its economy, and the country's different industrial and economic sectors have been affected by the limitations and difficulties caused by the sanctions condition, the country's mining sector is moving forward noticeably, overcoming such barriers,

Among the mining sector's different products, sponge iron is an outstanding example, as the production of this item is rising more and more in the country.

Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization, Iran's largest metals and mining holding, has stated that one of the most important reasons for the increase in sponge iron production in Iran is the establishment of new sponge iron plants, adding that in recent years, with its new strategy and with the participation of the private sector, the organization has been able to launch several projects to produce sponge iron.

Ethiopia's Peace Talks Open in South Africa

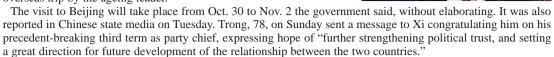
CAPE TOWN (Dispatches) - Peace talks to end Ethiopia's Tigray conflict have begun in South Africa, a South African government spokesman said Tuesday. It is the highest-level effort yet to end two years of fighting that has killed perhaps hundreds of thousands of people.





Vietnam Party Chief To Visit China's Xi

BEIJING (Dispatches) - The chief of Vietnam's ruling Communist Party Nguyen Phu Trong will visit China next week on the invitation of President Xi Jinping, Vietnam's government said on Tuesday, in a rare overseas trip by the ageing leader.





Zelensky Asks Donors for \$38b as Russia Shells Bakhmut



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky asked the international community to cover an expected budget deficit of \$38 billion next year for his war-torn country, with Moscow's invasion also badly hitting the economy.

Fatal Russian shelling meanwhile was pummelling the eastern Donbas city of Bakhmut, where AFP journalists saw smoke rising from fierce battles between Moscow's forces and Ukraine's army trying to keep them at bay.

And pro-Russian authorities in the southern Ukraine city of Melitopol, now controlled by Moscow's forces, said a car bomb had exploded near the offices of a local media outlet injuring five people.

At an international reconstruction conference for Ukraine in Berlin, Zelensky urged European leaders to offer greater financial support for his country more than eight months after Vladimir Putin sent Russian troops into Ukraine.

"At this very conference we need to make a decision on assistance to cover next year's budget deficit for Ukraine," Zelensky said via video-link. "It's a very significant amount of money, a \$38 billion deficit," he added. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz meanwhile said that rebuilding Ukraine would be a "generational task" that must start immediately, even as Russia's invasion rages on.

"What is at stake here is nothing less than creating a new Marshall Plan for the 21st century -- a generational task that must begin now," Scholz said.

Russian forces, after being pushed back from Kyiv early in the invasion and the northeastern Kharkiv region, have set their sight on wresting territory in Donbas, an eastern industrial zone.

In Bakhmut, a town Russians have been eyeing for weeks, an AFP journalist saw smoke rising despite heavy rain

and a Ukrainian missile shooting down a Russian drone.

A 28-year-old soldier, who declined to give his name to AFP over security concerns, claimed Ukraine's forces had made gains in the region overnight, but declined to give further details.

Seven civilians were killed and three injured the wine-making and salt-mining town a day earlier, the regional governor said Tuesday.

Three bodies of civilians killed earlier were also discovered in two places in the region, which has been at the centre of intense fighting with the Russian army for months, said Governor Pavlo Kyrylenko.

In a residential area of the Bakhmut, AFP journalists saw blood stains on the ground in the wake of what residents said was a fatal attack the day before.

Donetsk, the eastern region where Bakhmut is located, is one of the four Ukrainian regions that Russian President Vladimir Putin claims to have annexed, and where martial law has been imposed.

Ukrainian forces have however been largely holding back Moscow's weekslong push for Bakhmut and in the southern Kherson region are moving closer towards its main city there.

The Russian-backed authorities there said Tuesday that more than 22,000 residents had fled from the town and nearby settlements over to the left bank of the Dnipro River following calls to evade Ukraine's advance.

On the road to Kherson from Ukraine-controlled territory, two old friends who worked as truck drivers before the war were sitting in a trench.

"We go up this road under fire and come back down this road under fire," one of the men, a 51-year-old grumbled with a mischievous twinkle in his eye.



LONDON (Dispatches) - Rishi Sunak became Britain's third prime minister in two months and pledged to lead the country out of a profound economic crisis and rebuild trust in politics.

Sunak quickly reappointed Jeremy Hunt as his finance minister in a move designed to calm markets that had balked at his predecessor's debt-fuelled economic plans.

The former hedge fund boss said he would unite the country and was expected to name a cabinet drawn from all wings of the party to end infighting and abrupt policy changes that have horrified investors and alarmed international allies.

Speaking outside his official Downing Street residence, Sunak praised the ambition of his predecessor Liz Truss to reignite economic growth but acknowledged mistakes had been made.



U.S. Considers HAWK Air Defense Equipment for Ukraine

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States is considering sending older HAWK air defense equipment from storage to Ukraine to help it defend against Russian drone and cruise missile attacks, two U.S. officials told Reuters.

The HAWK interceptor missiles would be an upgrade to the Stinger missile systems - a smaller, shorter range air defense system - that the United States has already sent to blunt Russia's invasion.

The Biden administration would use the Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA) to transfer the HAWK equipment which is based on Vietnam-era technology, but has been upgraded several times. The PDA allows the United States to transfer defense articles and services from stocks quickly without congressional approval in response to an emergency.

Reuters was unable to determine how many HAWK systems and missiles the United States has available to transfer. The White House declined to comment.

The HAWK system is the predecessor to PATRIOT missile defense system made by Raytheon Technologies which remains off the table for Ukraine, U.S. officials have told Reuters.

U.S. President Joe Biden pledged to Ukraine President Volodomyr Zelenskiy that Washington would provide Ukraine with advanced air systems after a devastating missile barrage from Russia earlier this month.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has said that Spain intends to send four HAWK launchers. read more

The United States would likely initially send interceptor missiles for the HAWK system to Ukraine because it was unclear if enough U.S. launchers were in good repair, one U.S. official told Reuters. The U.S. systems have been in storage for decades. A PDA is being considered for later this week,

U.S. officials have said. One U.S. official said it would likely be about half the size of the recent security assistance packages which have been around \$700 million.

"I have been elected as leader of my party and your prime minister, in part to fix them," said Sunak, who broke with the tradition of standing beside his family and cheering political supporters.

"I understand, too, that I have work to do to restore trust, after all that has happened. All I can say is that I am not daunted. I know the high office I have accepted and I hope to live up to its demands."

Sunak said difficult decisions lay ahead as he looks to cut public spending. Hunt, who Truss appointed to calm markets roiled by her dash for growth, has been preparing a new budget alongside borrowing and growth forecasts due out on Monday.

The new prime minister also restored Dominic Raab to the post of deputy prime minister, a role he lost in Truss's 44 days in office.

With his new appointments, Sunak was seen to be drawing ministers from across the Conservative Party while leaving others in post - a move that should ease concerns that Sunak might appoint loyalists rather than try to unify the party.

Cyclone Lashes Bangladesh Killing Nine, Flooding Low-Lying Areas

DHAKA (Dispatches) - A cyclone roared into the Bangladesh coast, killing at least nine people, destroying houses, uprooting trees and disrupting road, power and communication links, officials said.

Mass evacuations before Cyclone Sitrang made landfall on the west coast helped save lives, but the full extent of the casualties and damage would only be known after communications were fully restored, they said.

"It was terrible. It looked like the sea was coming to grab us," Mizanur Rahman, a resident of Bhola district, told Reuters after communications were restored in his neighborhood.

The cyclone barrelled in from the Bay of Bengal with winds gusting up to 88 kph (55 mph) and a storm surge of about 3 meters (10 feet) that flooded low-lying coastal areas. Power and telephone links have largely been cut and

coastal areas plunged into darkness, officials said.

Around 2,000 electric poles were damaged, leaving 8 million people without electricity, said Nasrul Hamid, junior minister for power, energy and mineral

resources. "Efforts are underway to restore electricity as soon as possible," he told reporters.

Most of the people killed were crushed by falling trees.

Some 10,000 homes, 6,000 hectares (14,826 acres) of cropland and 1,000 fishing enclosures were damaged by the cyclone, Enamur Rahman, the junior

No major damage was reported in refugee camps in southeast Bangladesh, where more than a million ethnic Rohingya refugees from neighbouring Myanmar are living in flimsy shelters.

Officials advised nearly 32,000 Rohingya refugees who had moved from the camps to a flood-prone island in the Bay of Bengal to stay indoors. "We felt the force of the strong wind but were spared," Rohingya refugee Mohammed Arman told Reuters by phone.

Heavy rain fell on the streets of the capital, Dhaka, causing some flooding and disruption to commuters.

The cyclone also affected the eastern Indian state of West Bengal.

South Asia has experienced increasing extreme weather in recent years causing large-scale damage. Environmentalists warn that climate change could lead to more disasters, especially in places like densely populated Bangladesh. Farah Kabir, Bangladesh country director of ActionAid group, said 2022 had climate emergencies such as floods and droughts "on a scale that has never been witnessed before".

"The climate crisis is growing, and here in Bangladesh we feel its ferocity," he said.

"When extreme weather events like Cyclone Sitrang strike, communities are left devastated. We urgently need access to funds that support communities living through the reality of the climate crisis."



Saudi Blasts Release of Oil Reserves to Manipulate Markets RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia's energy minister blasted the release of emergency oil stocks as an attempt to "manipulate markets",

the latest apparent salvo in a spat with Washington over oil production. "People are depleting their emergency stocks, had depleted it, used it as a mechanism to manipulate markets while its profound purpose was to mitigate shortage of supply," Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman told an investor conference in the Saudi capital.

"However, it is my profound duty to make it clear to the world that losing emergency stock may become painful in the months to come."

Prince Abdulaziz did not single out the US in his comments about emergency stocks, but last week US President Joe Biden announced he was putting the final

15 million barrels on the market from a record release of US strategic reserves. That tranche was to complete a 180 million barrel release authorised in the spring, in response to price hikes linked to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

It also came on the heels of a decision by the OPEC+ oil cartel, which Riyadh co-leads with Moscow, to cut oil production by two million barrels a day from November.

The cartel's decision has drawn intense criticism from the White House, which has said it amounted to "aligning with Russia" in the Ukraine war. Prince Abdulaziz pushed back against that assessment on Tuesday.

"I keep listening, are you with us or against us? Is there any room for, 'We are for Saudi Arabia and for the people of Saudi Arabia'?" he said to applause. Asked about getting the decades-old partnership between Riyadh and Washington back on track, he said: "I think we as Saudi Arabia decided to

be the maturer guys and let the dice fall."

Hundreds of CEOs and finance moguls are in Riyadh for the three-day
Future Investment Initiative (FII), a Davos-style investment conference
that analysts say will highlight Saudi Arabia's geopolitical muscle despite
strained ties with Washington.

Palm Oil Prices **Seen Ticking Up**

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - Palm oil prices are likely to strengthen further as excessive rain in key producing countries curbs output, while demand increases for its use in food and biofuels, industry officials said.

Palm oil prices have climbed by around a fifth this month but are still trading far below an all-time high set in March. The expected spike in prices will add to the burden of consumers already hit by inflation triggered by the Russia-Ukraine war, but higher exports and lower production would help major palm oil producers Indonesia and Malaysia bring down inventories.

Traders said November shipments of crude palm oil to India, the world's biggest importer, are being offered at US\$976 per ton inclusive of cost, insurance and freight.

January deliveries are being quoted at US\$1,010 per ton, they said.

"But prices could move above US\$1,100 if Indonesia decides to restore export levies, which is very likely," said a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trading firm.

Indonesia's decision to suspend export levies in July because of a buildup of stocks pulled down palm oil prices from the March high of about US\$2,010 per ton.

Despite this month's rise in prices, palm oil trades at a discount of about \$400 per ton to rival soyoil, the highest in a decade, the traders said. Crude soyoil for November delivery in India is being quoted at \$1,405 per ton.

"The spread between palm oil and soyoil is massive and unsustainable," said Pradeep Chowdhry, managing director of Gemini Edibles and Fats India Pvt Ltd, a leading Indian importer.

"The way demand has been shifting towards palm oil from other edible oils, it's very likely that palm oil (prices) would move higher."

Typically, palm oil output starts tapering off from November in Indonesia and Malaysia, which account for more than 80 per cent of global production. But this year, the drop in output is expected to be sharper as a rare third consecutive La Nina weather pattern brings heavy rainfall across South-east Asia.

"We are facing heavy downpours for the past three days, there are minor floods here and there," said Fabian Lim, a plantation manager in Malaysia's biggest palm oil producing state of Sabah. "It is affecting my evacuation of crop."

Floods and heavy rain make it difficult for workers to harvest the palm oil crop and moving the fruit to factories for processing.

The discount to soyoil, as well as the suspension of the export levy, has speeded up exports of palm oil in Indonesia and stocks are falling at a faster pace than anticipated, said the Mumbai-based dealer. Indonesia's palm oil stockpile fell to 4.04 million tons by the end of August, compared to 5.91 million tons a month earlier and 6.69 million tons at end-June, according to estimates by the Indonesian Palm Oil Association (GAPKI).

Demand for palm oil-based biodiesel is also seen rising, GAPKI data showed. In January-August, Indonesia exported 206,000 tons of biodiesel, surpassing the 167,000 tons the country exported in 2021. Supplies of sunflower oil, an alternative to palm oil, from the Black Sea region have been volatile after the Russia-Ukraine war, traders said.

The Black Sea region accounts for 76 per cent of world sunflower oil exports and any disruption could result in more palm oil demand, said Sandeep Bajoria, chief executive of broker Sunvin Group.

Indonesia's decision to suspend export levies pulled down palm oil prices and the decline accelerated after sunflower oil shipments resumed from the Black Sea region under a UN-brokered deal in August. Bajoria said the supplies could be disrupted again as the war intensifies.



Toyota Scrambles For EV Reboot With Eye on Tesla

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Toyota is considering a reboot of its electric-car strategy to better compete in a booming market it has been slow to enter, and has halted some work on existing EV projects, four people with knowledge of the still-developing plans said.



The proposals under review, if adopted, would amount to a dramatic shift for Toyota and rewrite the \$38-billion EV rollout plan the Japanese automaker announced last year to better compete with the likes of Tesla.

A working group within Toyota has been charged with outlining plans by early next year for improvements to its existing EV platform or for a new architecture, the four individuals said.

In the meantime, Toyota has suspended work on some of the 30 EV projects announced in December, which according to the sources and a document reviewed by Reuters include the Toyota Compact Cruiser crossover and the battery-electric Crown.

Toyota said it was committed to carbon neutrality but declined to comment on specific initiatives.

"In order to achieve carbon neutrality, Toyota's own technology - as well as the work we are doing with a range of partners and suppliers - is essential," the company said in response to questions from Reuters. The four sources declined to be identified because the plans have not been made public.

The revamp under consideration could slow the rollout of EVs already on the drawing board. But it would also give Toyota a chance to compete with a more efficient manufacturing process, as industrywide EV sales run past Toyota's earlier projections.

In addition, it would address criticism by green investors and environmental groups who argue that Toyota, once a darling of environmentalists, has been too slow to embrace EVs.

As part of the review, Toyota is considering a successor to its EV-underpinning technology called e-TNGA, unveiled in 2019. That would allow Toyota to bring down costs, the people said.

The first EV based on e-TNGA — the bZ4X crossover — hit the market earlier this year although its launch was marred by a recall that forced Toyota to suspend production from June. Production resumed earlier this month.

The review was triggered in part by the realisation by some Toyota engineers and executives that Toyota was losing the factory cost war to Tesla on EVs, the sources said.

Toyota's planning had assumed demand for EVs would not take off for several decades, the four people said. Toyota designed e-TNGA so that EVs could be produced on the same assembly line with gasoline cars and hybrids. That made sense based on the assumption Toyota would need to sell about 3.5 million EVs a year – roughly one-third of its current global volume – by 2030 to stay competitive, the sources said. But sales of EVs are growing faster. Automakers globally now forecast plans for EVs to represent

more than half of total vehicle production by 2030, part of a wave of industry-wide investment that now totals \$1.2 trillion.

The person leading Toyota's EV review is Shigeki Terashi, former chief competitive officer, according to six people with knowledge of the work, including two people close to Toyota. Terashi did not respond to a request for comment.

Terashi's team has been designated a "BR" or "business revolution" group within Toyota, a term used for major changes including a revamp of its development and production processes two decades ago.

"What's driving Mr Terashi's effort is the EV's faster-than-anticipated takeoff and rapid-fire adoptions of cutting-edge innovations by Tesla and others," one of the people said.



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China to Promote Foreign Investment in Manufacturing

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China said it will promote foreign investment with a focus on manufacturing industries, after President Xi Jinping called in China to "win the battle" in core technologies during the Communist Party Congress that ended over the weekend.

China will encourage foreign enterprises to invest in high-tech equipment and components, according to a statement published on the website of National Development and Reform Commission, China's powerful planning agency.

China will also strengthen financial support for foreign enterprises, including fund-raising by eligible enterprises through listings on China's stock markets, the statement said.





Rising U.S. Rates Pose Biggest Risk For Japan But Recession Unlikely

TOKYO (Dispatches) - The biggest risk to Japan's economy over the next year is a prolonged period of U.S. monetary tightening, although the world's third-largest economy is unlikely to sink into a recession, the majority of economists polled by Reuters said.

Tuesday's survey result came as Japan struggles to prop up its currency from a 32-year-low against the dollar, largely blamed on diverging yields between the United States and Japan.

Of the 29 economists who responded to the question of what posed the greatest risk to Japan's economy in the coming year, 17, or 59%, chose longer-than-expected rate hikes by the Federal Reserve, the Oct. 11-20 survey showed.

The Fed's aggressive rate action would prolong and deepen the U.S. recession, which would spill over to the global economy and in turn hit Japanese exports, said Harumi Taguchi, principal

economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

"It could also cause worrying repercussions on (Japan's) corporate spending and wages as firms are finding it more difficult to transfer rising cost burdens stemming from the

yen's sharp decline," she added.

Policymakers worldwide, including the International Monetary Fund, have cut global growth projections for 2023, citing elevated prices and higher cost of borrowing.

In the October Reuters poll question, which allowed up to two choices as the largest risks to Japan's economy, 15 respondents selected "a slowdown in U.S. and European economic growth" while 11 picked the equivalent for China, Japan's biggest trade partner.

Another seven said the weak yen's negative impact and persistent price hikes posed the biggest danger.

"The Japanese yen could depreciate to 170 against the dollar" as long as the Bank of Japan (BOJ) sticks to its ultra-easy policy, which could impair households' real income further, said Chiyuki Takamatsu, chief economist at Fukoku Mutual Life Insurance.

Three selected "geopolitical instability, such as over North Korea or Taiwan" and one picked "new coronavirus variants".

While most economists agreed that such risks would not plunge

Japan into a recession, they said that was mainly owing to a low base. "Japan's economy appears robust compared with overseas peers, but that's just because its recovery from the pandemic has been lagging behind," said Fukoku's Takamatsu. "It's still in a catch-up growth period."

The poll also showed respondents expecting consumer inflation to stay above the BOJ's 2% target until April-June 2023, before cooling to 1.0% or below in the final three months of next year and beyond.

Japan's core consumer prices rose 3.0% in September, the highest since 2014, on higher raw material and energy costs amplified by the yen's decline. Three-quarters of economists expected no change to Japan's massive monetary easing at least until the second half of 2023, while the difficulty in predicting the timing of the Fed's pivot also keeps the BOJ's policy prospects murky. Twenty-five of 28 economists said the central bank's next policy change would be to scale back its easing, and 19 said the most likely means would be a tweaking of its forward guidance.

Eleven said raising the 10-year yield control target from "around 0%" or widening the yield fluctuations cap from around 0.25% would also be an option. Elsewhere in the poll, a median estimate of 34 respondents had the Japanese economy expanding an annualised 2.0% in October-December, slightly better than the 1.9% forecast in the September poll. Projections for the first and second quarters of 2023 were also upgraded by 0.1 point each.

World Is in Its First Truly Global Energy Crisis SINGAPORE (Dispatches) -

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Tightening markets for liquefied natural gas (LNG) worldwide and major oil producers cutting supply have put the world in the middle of "the first truly global energy crisis", the head of the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Tuesday.



Rising imports of LNG to Europe amid the Ukraine crisis and a potential rebound in Chinese appetite for the fuel will tighten the market as only 20 billion cubic meters of new LNG capacity will come to market next year, IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol said during the Singapore International Energy Week.

At the same time the recent decision by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, known as OPEC+, to cut 2 million barrels per day (bpd) of output is a "risky" decision as the IEA sees global oil demand growth of close to 2 million bpd this year, Birol said.

"(It is) especially risky as several economies around the world are on the brink of a recession, if that we are talking about the global recession...I found this decision really unfortunate," he said.

Soaring global prices across a number of energy sources, including oil, natural gas and coal, are hammering consumers at the same time they are already dealing with rising food and services inflation. The high prices and possibility of rationing are potentially hazardous to European consumers as they prepare to enter the Northern Hemisphere winter.

Europe may make it through this winter, though somewhat battered, if the weather remains mild, Birol said.

"Unless we will have an extremely cold and long winter, unless there will be any surprises in terms of what we have seen, for example Nordstream pipeline explosion, Europe should go through this winter with some economic and social bruises," he added.

economic and social bruises," he added.

For oil, consumption is expected to grow by
1.7 million bpd in 2023 so the world will still need

Russian oil to meet demand, Birol said.

G7 nations have proposed a mechanism that would allow emerging nations to buy Russian oil but at lower prices to cap Moscow's revenues in the wake of the Ukraine war.

Birol said the scheme still has many details to iron out and will require the buy-in of major oil importing nations.

A U.S. Treasury official told Reuters last week that it is not unreasonable to believe that up to 80% to 90% of Russian oil will continue to flow outside the price cap mechanism if Moscow seeks to flout it.

"I think this is good because the world still needs Russian oil to flow into the market for now. An 80%-90% is good and encouraging level in order to meet the demand," Birol said.

South Korea's Economy Likely Ground to Near Halt in Q3

BENGALURU (Dispatches) - South Korea's economy likely slowed to a near halt in the third quarter as weakening exports and rising interest rates knocked the wind out of what had been a resilient run, a Reuters poll of economists found.

The export-led economy was expected to have expanded a seasonally-adjusted 0.1% last quarter, according to the median forecast of 21 economists, a sharp slowdown from the 0.7% quarterly growth in April-June.

Three economists forecast an outright contraction and two expected the economy to flatline. On an annual basis, gross domestic product (GDP) likely expanded 2.8%, according to the median forecast from 22 economists polled Oct. 20-24, down from 2.9% in the second quarter.

The data will be published on Oct. 27.

"GDP growth is likely to have been slower in 3Q22 compared with 2Q22, mainly due to the slowdown in consumption. The weakness in exports and manufacturing production is likely to have continued amid the deterioration in the global economic outlook," noted Oh Suktae, economist at Societe Generale.

"GDP growth should remain sluggish, at least in the near term, with consumption growth normalising from the post-pandemic recovery and the export and investment environments likely to remain weak."

Exports in Asia's fourth-largest economy grew at the slowest pace in nearly two years in September and were expected to weaken further with growing fears of global recession and an economic slowdown in China, the country's largest trade partner.

ECB Weighs Options to Limit Banks' Gains From Crisis Loans

LONDON (Dispatches) - The European Central Bank is searching for ways to stop lenders from profiting unduly as it raises interest rates to combat record inflation.

The issue concerns about €2.1 trillion (US\$2 trillion) of ultra-cheap loans, known as TLTROs, that were granted at the height of the pandemic to keep credit flowing and stave off deflation.

While the initiative was successful, it's since become a thorn in the side of policymakers as banks can park the proceeds of the loans at the ECB and earn interest that exceeds their costs.

Doing so is becoming ever more lucrative as rates that were below zero as recently as July have risen to 0.75% and are expected to be doubled on Thursday. That may prompt the

ECB to act when it meets this week.

Such risk-free profits for banks look bad at a time when Europe's energy crisis is sending household heating bills soaring and prompting some firms to curb production. But there are policy implications too: the steady source of income discourages early repayments that would help officials fight inflation. Euro-zone central banks could also post losses.

Estimates for how much lenders are currently benefiting vary. Economists at Morgan Stanley reckon they could be getting additional stimulus of almost €28 billion.

President Christine Lagarde said last month that parts of the ECB's remuneration mechanisms must be revisited and will be reviewed "in due course". Since then, officials have narrowed the debate over surplus cash being held at the ECB to three options.

Making the conditions on the TLTRO loans tougher has emerged as the favorite option.

Banks currently face interest equivalent to the average deposit rate over the life of the loan. The ECB could make this more expensive.

Changing contracts retroactively could pose legal challenges and jeopardize takeup at any future TLTRO offerings. But officials reckon those obstacles are surmountable because the case underpinning the agreements has vanished.

Indeed, credit to businesses is growing at almost 9% a year – the fastest pace since 2009. That's threatening to stoke inflation that, at just short of 10%, is already five times the ECB's medium-term target.

With an early-repayment deadline days before the ECB Governing Council's December policy meeting, officials may push for a solution this week. Officials have signalled that waiting until the bulk of the loans – about €1.3 trillion – expires in June 2023 isn't an option.

Another way of reducing payments to banks would be to make some deposits subject to a lower rate of interest, or no interest at all.

Vietnam Hikes Key Rates by 100 Points as Dong Weakens



Effective Tuesday, the refinancing rate will be increased to 6.0% and the discount rate to 4.5%, the State Bank of Vietnam (SBV) said in a statement.

Like most of its neighbours, Vietnam has faced upward pressure on inflation and has seen its currency take a hit in recent months, with the dong losing 9% against the dollar this year.

The central bank said global inflation remains high and the US Federal Reserve had raised its rates five times recently, with more hikes expected this year and in 2023.

"This, coupled with the strengthening of the dollar, has put pressure on domestic interest rates and exchange rates," SBV said in the statement late on Monday.

Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh last week said Vietnam would keep prices in check and pursue flexible, prudent monetary policy throughout next year as high energy prices and global supply issues add to inflationary pressure.

Vietnam's main stock index earlier on Monday hit its lowest level since January 2020 and closed down 3.3%, recovering slightly from a 4.1% fall earlier. The dong slumped to a fresh record low for a 13th consecutive session in earlier trade.

The SBV said it would closely monitor local and overseas markets "to timely manage" measures and monetary tools. It said it was willing to intervene in monetary and foreign currency markets "to meet financial institutions' liquidity needs".

The SBV said it would also raise the cap on dong deposit rates at commercial banks by 50 bps to 100 bps depending on maturities.

Market analysts had earlier said faster-than-expected gross domestic product growth for this year has offered the central bank some room to raise its policy rates.

Thailand Has Highest Income Inequality in East Asia

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Thailand has the highest income inequality in east Asia, with rural households bearing the brunt of poverty challenges, according to a new report by the World Bank.

The report, titled "Thailand Rural Income Diagnostic", said the national poverty rate has fallen from 58% in 1990 to 6.8% – but has been rising since 2016.

The situation is especially bad in rural areas, which account for 79% of the poor, mainly in agricultural households.

The poverty rate in rural areas was 3% higher than in urban zones in 2020.

The bank cited the slowing economy, stagnating farm and business incomes, and the Covid-19 crisis as reasons for Thailand's rising poverty rate.

Worst affected by poverty are the South and Northeast, with rates almost double those of the national average, according to the report.



Meanwhile, the average monthly income for rural households was only around 68% of urban households. The report said rural households are also suffering from low education levels, a high number of dependents, and difficult living conditions.

"Thailand has the potential to support faster and sustained income growth of rural households," said Fabrizio Zarcone, World Bank country manager for Thailand.

"As Thailand's economy adjusts to a new normal post-Covid-19, policy measures that increase agricultural productivity, support diversification to higher value crops, and improve access to markets through better rural connectivity and digital technology adoption can help overcome the constraints faced by the rural poor," he added.

The report also forecast that the economic impacts of the Covid-19 crisis would linger longer in rural areas than in cities

Israel's Conventional Weapons Arsenal Threat to Region

TEHRAN (MNA) - A senior Iranian United Nations diplomat has called out the Israeli regime over its suspected weapons of mass destruction and outsized conventional military spending.

"Last year, Israel with 5.2 percent of its GDP spent \$24.3 billion [on defense] and is among the top five military spenders in the Middle East," Heidar Ali Balouji, Iran's envoy

to the UN's disarmament committee, said.

"In addition to its WMDs, the large arsenal of sophisticated offensive conventional weapons of the Israeli regime continues to threaten the peace and security of the region and beyond. This regime is the largest cumulative recipient of US foreign assistance since World War II," the Iranian diplomat added.



Pipeline Blasts Leave Nord Stream in Insurance Limbo

LONDON (Dispatches) - With the mystery of the blasts that destroyed undersea gas pipelines between Russia and Germany unsolved, Nord Stream 1's insurers and reinsurers are grappling with how to respond to hundreds of millions of dollars in potential claims.

Munich Re and syndicates within the Lloyd's of London market are among the major underwriters for Nord Stream 1, four industry sources with knowledge of the situation said, adding that it was unclear whether they would renew its cover.

If the insurance is not renewed, the prospect of the pipeline bringing gas to Europe under the Baltic Sea ever being repaired and restarted becomes more remote.

Even before leaks were found, supplies via Nord Stream 1 had been halted as a result of a dispute over Western sanctions on Russia, while the newly-built Nord Stream 2 pipeline had not started commercial deliveries.

While a claim has not yet been made for the damage and disruption to the pipeline, two of the sources told Reuters, Nord Stream 1's underwriters may dispute any submitted on the grounds that the damage was an act of self-sabotage, or of war, neither of which are generally covered by insurance.

Amid speculation as to who was behind alleged sabotage that severed the pipelines at the center of an energy crisis prompted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Danish police said on Oct. 18 that the damage to Nord Stream 1 was caused by powerful blasts.

While damage itself would not necessarily affect the renewal of a property policy, insurers might ask for more premium, said Tim Shepherd, a litigation partner at Mayer Brown.

For the underwriters of the pipeline system, which Nord Stream's website says was built with 7.8 billion euros (\$7.6 billion) of investment, the stakes are high.

Reuters was not able to identify all of its underwriters, but another of the sources said Swiss insurer Zurich also had exposure to Nord Stream 1.

Munich Re, Zurich and Lloyd's all declined to comment.

"Even if you are taking a small size (of cover), it is a big risk," one of the four industry sources said

"The issue is going to be what happens if you can't prove it is a state sponsor (responsible for the blasts), you end up with a massive claim for damage," the source added

for the blasts), you end up with a massive claim for damage," the source added.

Nord Stream 1's majority shareholder with a 51% stake is a subsidiary of Russian energy group Gazprom, which is subject to sanctions by the United States, Britain

and Canada as well as some European Union restrictions.

Two of the sources said renewal of Nord Stream 1 cover by the Lloyd's syndicates would be challenging given the risk of tighter sanctions on Gazprom, which would

prevent paying claims.

German energy groups Wintershall (WINT.UL) and E.ON (EONGn.DE), meanwhile,

hold 15.5% each. Wintershall did not immediately respond to a request for comment. An E.ON spokesperson said Nord Stream 1's operating company was responsible for operational issues, including insurance.

"Nord Stream AG remains in close contact with relevant authorities about the recent incident. Due to prevailing uncertainties, we as a shareholder continuously monitor developments and are in close contact with the other relevant stakeholders," the spokesperson said.

Gazprom and Swiss-based Nord Stream AG, did not respond to requests for comment, while French energy provider ENGIE, which has a 9% stake, declined to comment.

Dutch natural gas infrastructure company N.V. Nederlandse Gasunie, which also has a 9% stake, said it would assess the situation as soon as there was more clarity.



"The exact extent of the damage and possible follow-up actions can only be determined after inspection of the pipelines and that is not yet possible at this moment," Gasunie said.

"We are in close contact with our European partners and the relevant government authorities," it added.

Nord Stream's insurers will have to prove that its policy does not cover the damage caused by the blasts in order to avoid paying out on any claim, lawyers said.

Although property policies typically exclude malicious damage, policy holders often buy extra cover, which is likely in Nord Stream's case, legal and insurance

sources said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said the United States and its allies blew up the pipelines, an allegation that has been dismissed by the White

House. U.S. President Joe Biden has said damage to Nord Stream was a deliberate act of sabotage.

The West has not directly pointed the finger at Moscow, which has denied any involvement.

French President Emmanuel Macron said earlier this month that Nordic leaders had told their European partners it was still impossible to say at this stage who was behind the damage.

If a Western state actor was found to be responsible, the damage might be

designated as an act of terror, which one broking source said might be covered by insurance.

However, if investigations found Russia to have been involved, insurers could argue it was an act of "self-sabotage", given Gazprom is owned by the state.

"If there was a deliberate act by the policyholder, you are not going to have a covered claim," said David Pryce, managing partner at Fenchurch Law, which is not involved with the policy.

If there was any Russian involvement it could also mean the Nord Stream 1 damage being designated as an act of war, something that is typically excluded by insurance policies.

Drone, a Pretext for...

FROM PAGE 1

In response to Western countries' claims about Iran selling drones and other military equipment to Russia to be used against Ukraine, he said, "We have not sold and will not sell any weapons and drones to be used in the war against Ukraine, and cooperation



between Iran and Russia will continue without having anything to do with the Ukraine war."

The Iranian foreign minister said Tehran and Moscow engage in various kinds of cooperation, including in the defense field, adding, "We have both received weapons from Russia and supplied weapons to Russia in the past, but not in the course of the Ukraine war."

Now that the war in Ukraine is reaching its critical point and the JCPOA's future is in doubt, the Western states have used Ukraine as a pawn to accuse Iran of supplying drones and even missiles to Russia in order to increase pressure on Tehran to bring it to the negotiation table and giving concession.

Tehran strongly refutes such baseless claims because it is courage enough to take responsibility of its actions and it does not need to hide it like what the West does through hiding behind Ukraine.

And Ukraine is recommended to settle its account with Russia and not to involve Iran in this war because Tehran has always been opposed to any war because it believes war in any part of the world will destabilize global peace and economic condition as we now see the consequences of Ukraine-Russia war that has worsened economies and energy in the world.

So it is better the West and Ukraine to resolve their problems with Russia instead of involving other states in this devastating war which will have no real winner, and both parties and above all Europe are the genuine losers and the world suffers from consequence of this war.

Tehran Iran Decries...

FROM PAGE 1

"The Israeli regime's aggression against Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity continues unabated, despite repeated requests from the Arab Republic of Syria for the Security Council to clearly condemn it," the senior Iranian diplomat said.

"The Security Council's silence has emboldened the Israeli regime to carry out its aggression and crimes more openly and broadly, most particularly the systematic and intentional targeting of civilians and vital infrastructure in Syria, which is a flagrant violation of international law, including international humanitarian law," he said.

Iranavi also criticized the Security Council for its double standards concerning the Syria issue, and urged the UN body to condemn Israeli strikes and indict the Tel Aviv regime for its crimes which endanger regional peace and security.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Iravani pointed to the presence and activities of terrorist groups in Syria, saying, "The free movement of terrorist groups within Syrian territory where foreign forces are illegally present endangers Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as regional peace and security."

He added that humanitarian conditions in the country are still appalling, "causing a significant impact on the Syrian people. In many areas, more needs to be done to alleviate their suffering."

Iravani also underlined the importance of humanitarian assistance to Syria, stating that unhindered, fast and safe provision of humanitarian aid to people hit by the ongoing foreign-sponsored conflict should be given a priority.

He went on to stress the need for the elimination of terrorists in Syria and the removal of cruel and illegal sanctions against the country.

"We support the Syrian government's full cooperation with the United Nations and humanitarian organizations involved in delivering aid in Syria, and in this context, we applaud the Syrian Government's efforts to improve the humanitarian situation on the ground, including by providing assistance to the UN to enhance the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need, and to implement early recovery projects mandated by the resolution 2642," Iravani added.

"Moreover, the ongoing efforts to effectively implement resolution 2642 must be accelerated and focused on the early recovery projects essential for people, such as electricity, water, sanitation, health, education, and shelter," he said.

He also reiterated the Islamic Republic's position that the ongoing crisis in Syria can only be resolved by concentrating on political solutions, calling on the United Nations to facilitate a genuine intra-Syrian political dialog.

Cholera: Killer of the Poor

PARIS (Dispatches) - Cholera, which has made a comeback in Haiti three years after a devastating outbreak, is a highly contagious waterborne bacterial disease that can kill in a matter of hours.

The illness mainly affects poverty-stricken people and after years of decline, it is spreading once more.

The World Health Organization warned last month of a "worrying upsurge" in the number of cholera outbreaks and noted that they were increasingly deadly. Here are five things to know about a killer that can be easily stopped in its tracks with proper sanitation and medicine.

Cholera is an acute diarrhoeal infection caused by a comma-shaped bacterium called vibrio cholerae, transmitted through water or food that is contaminated by human faecal matter.

It mainly affects people living in extreme poverty or in conflict zones, with little or no access to clean water and sanitation.

Climate change is fuelling a resurgence, with growing numbers of floods, cyclones, droughts and other extreme weather events reducing access to clean water, creating an ideal environment for cholera to thrive.

The World Health Organisation estimates that there are between 1.3 and 4.0 million cases of cholera worldwide each year, causing up to 143,000 deaths.

Three-quarters of people infected show no symptoms but in 10-20 percent of cases it causes severe diarrhoea and dehydration which can kill within hours if left untreated.

It is usually treatable with oral rehydration solutions (sachets dissolved in water) but in more severe cases patients require intravenous fluids and antibiotics.

Up until the 19th century, cholera only existed in the Ganges delta in India.

Then in 1817, it spread to other parts of Asia, as well as the Middle East and east Africa, marking the start of the first cholera pandemic.

Millions of people have been killed in six subsequent pandemics, all of which began in Asia and then spread to the four corners of the globe.

So far this year, 29 countries have reported outbreaks, up from under 20 for the previous five years combined, according to the WHO.

Iran Ready to Cooperate With GECF Members in Gas Sectors

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian Oil Minister voiced Iran's readiness to cooperate with all the members of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) in all areas of development of the gas industry.

Speaking on the sidelines of the 24th GECF ministerial meeting, Javad Owji stated that Iran is one of the largest owners of proven natural gas reserves in the world and one of the largest owners of the domestic gas distribution network and is ready for any cooperation in the fields of exploration, drilling, development, exploitation, and distribution of natural gas.

"Natural gas, as a clean, flexible and accessible fuel, has a very important and decisive role in meeting the world's energy needs, especially in a situation where the world is on the path of energy transition and towards achieving sustainable development goals and is transitioning towards clean energy sources. Natural gas has a significant ability to replace polluting fossil fuels such as coal due to its environmental advantages. According to the latest gas outlook report of GECF, the share of natural gas in the world's energy portfolio is expected to increase from 23% in 2022 to 27% in 2050. However, we should not forget that the realization of this requires large investments in the natural gas supply chain, support policies, market stability and free access to financial resources," said Owji regarding the importance of natural gas in providing the world's energy security.

The Iranian minister also spoke about the role of the GECF in improving the position of natural gas in the world's energy consumption portfolio, saying, "Considering the strategic position of the member countries of the forum, which have more than 70% of the world's gas resources, and more than 50% of the world's gas exports, whether through pipelines or in the form of LNG, this forum can take important steps in improving the position of natural gas in the world's energy consumption mix. In this regard, it is necessary for member countries to increase synergy and collective coordination to protect the interests of members of the forum and protect the security of the global natural gas supply. Even now, despite the many challenges in the global gas market in recent years, GECF has been able to strengthen consensus, coordination, and cooperation among the member countries within the framework of its statute and long-term strategy. These strategic arrangements have enabled the Forum to play its key role in maintaining and promoting global energy security during the outbreak of the coronavirus and in the period after it. At the same time, we have a long and uncertain road ahead, which requires greater solidarity and cooperation among the members of the Forum."

Speaking about the role of Iran, as one of the founding members of the forum, in advancing the forum's goals, Owji said, "Iran is ready to play a role in the framework of the special initiative of Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, the President of Iran, entitled "Natural gas at the service of the global economy in the post-Corona era", which was proposed at the sixth summit of the Forum in Doha, Qatar. As one of the largest owners of proven natural gas reserves in the world and one of the largest owners of the domestic natural gas distribution network in the world, Iran is ready for any cooperation in the fields of exploration, drilling, development, exploitation and distribution of natural gas. The realization of this requires improvement of the power and strategic management and technical and engineering capabilities, and in this context, encouraging international joint investments plays a prominent role. This strategy is a collective strategy and through it, the technological power of the member countries of the forum is strengthened in the development chain of the natural gas industry."

Why Ukraine's Southern Kherson Region Is a Strategic Prize

KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukrainian forces are piling pressure on Russian troops in the southern region of Kherson that Moscow occupied at the start of its invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24. Losing control of the region would be another big setback for President Vladimir Putin.

Here is why the region is strategically important for the course of Russia's war in Ukraine.

Kherson region borders Crimea and provides Moscow with a land bridge to the Black Sea peninsula that it

seized from Kyiv in 2014. Ukraine retaking swathes of Kherson region would deprive Moscow of that land corridor. It would also bring long-range Ukrainian artillery closer to Crimea, which Moscow sees as vitally important to its interests.

The Ukrainian peninsula, whose annexation Putin sees as a key achievement of his more than two decades in power, is home to a huge Russian military force and the Black Sea Fleet, which Moscow uses to project power into the Mediterranean and the Middle East.



England Recall Roy For Australia ODI Series

ONDON (Dispatches) - Jason Roy has been given a chance to revive his England career after being included in the squad announced Tuesday for next month's one-day international series against Australia.

Opening batsman Roy was dropped from the England squad currently competing in the T20 World Cup in Australia and removed from the list of centrally contracted players following a run of low scores at both international and domestic level.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

Switchboard:

(+98) (21) 44253448

Public Relations Tel:

(+98)(21) 44253450 Editorial Board: 44253449

Public Relations Fax:

(+98)(21) 44253395

Advertising Department: Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234

Website:

Address: No 13. Paiouhesh St..

E-Mail Address:

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info@irannewsdailv.com

P.O. Box: 15875-8551

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Pegula Claims Guadalajara Title

GUADALAJARA (Dispatches) - American Jessica Pegula captured her first WTA 1000 crown with a 6-2 6-3 win over Maria Sakkari in the Guadalajara Open final.

The third seed, who will be making her first appearance at the season-ending WTA Finals in Texas this month, beat four Grand Slam champions en route to the final, where she needed only 70 minutes to beat Sakkari. "All the people I beat, my draw to get here in my opinion was honestly the toughest out of everybody," said Pegula, who beat major winners Victoria Azarenka, Sloane Stephens, Bianca Andreescu and Elena Rybakina in the earlier rounds.

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Juventus Crash out of **Champions League**; Chelsea, PSG Through

PARIS (Dispatches) - Juventus were knocked out of the Champions League in the group stage for the first time in nine years on Tuesday but Chelsea, Paris Saint-Germain, Benfica and Borussia Dortmund all secured qualification for the knockout stage with one group game to spare. A 4-3 defeat away to Benfica in Portugal sealed the fate of a Juventus side who have been in decline in Europe for several seasons and have now lost four of their five matches in Group H. Having already won when the sides met in Italy, Benfica went ahead in Lisbon when

Antonio Silva headed in an Enzo Fernandez cross Moise Kean quickly equalised for Juve with a goal that was confirmed following a VAR review, but Joao Mario restored Benfica's lead from the penalty spot and then set up Rafa

Silva to make it 3-1 before half-time with a superb backheel flick. The same player then got Benfica's fourth early in the second half, and a Juventus fightback that produced goals by Arkadiusz Milik and Weston McKennie came too late. Juventus had been knocked out in the last 16 in each of the last three seasons but they have not been eliminated from the Champions League in the group stage since 2013/14. Benfica are joined in qualifying from Group H by PSG, with the 2020 Champions League

runners-up through after crushing Israel's Maccabi Haifa 7-2 at the Parc des Princes. Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe both turned on the style, each scoring twice, while Neymar netted once and forced an own goal from Sean Goldberg.

Carlos Soler completed the scoring for PSG as they equalled their own record for goals scored in a single European game.

Abdoulaye Seck scored twice for Maccabi Haifa, and they could still finish third above Juventus. Earlier, two-time Champions League winners Chelsea clinched their place in the

U.S. basketball Star's Drug Sentence Upheld in Russia

RASNOGORSK (Dispatches) - A Russian court dismissed U.S. WNBA basketball star Brittney Griner's appeal against a nine-year sentence for possessing and smuggling vape cartridges containing cannabis oil.

Griner and her lawyers had asked for acquittal or at least a reduction in her sentence, which they said was disproportionate to the offence and at odds with Russian judicial practice.

After retiring for no more than 30 minutes to consider the appeal, the presiding judge said the original verdict was upheld "without changes" except for the counting of time served in pre-trial detention as part of the sentence.

Griner, a two-time Olympic gold medallist, was arrested on Feb. 17 at a Moscow airport, a week before Russia sent troops into Ukraine, and her case has inevitably been viewed in the context of the ensuing crisis in U.S.-Russian relations.

Washington was quick to respond

"We are aware of the news out of Russia that Brittney Griner will continue to be wrongfully detained under intolerable circumstances after having to undergo another sham judicial proceeding today," White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said in a statement

He said the United States would "continue to engage with Russia" to bring her home.

The state prosecutor had said Griner's Aug. 4 sentence of nine years in a penal colony was "fair", but Alexander Boykov, one of her lawyers, had told the three-judge panel sitting in Krasnogorsk, on the outskirts of Moscow:

"No judge, hand on heart, will honestly say that Griner's nine-year sentence is in line with Russian criminal law."

He listed a series of what he said were procedural flaws in Griner's conviction and requested an acquittal, but asked that "if the court wants to punish her, [it should] give her a new, 'fair' verdict and mitigate the punishment".

"The severity and cruelty of the sentence applied to Griner shocks people around the world," he said.



Victory extended Chelsea's unbeaten run under Potter to nine games.

AC Milan are best-placed to go through with Chelsea after the Serie A champions won 4-0 in Zagreb, with Matteo Gabbia heading in the opener and Rafael Leao doubling their lead before Olivier Giroud netted a penalty and a Robert Ljubicic own goal completed the scoring. Milan are now a point clear of Salzburg with the teams meeting at San Siro next week

to decide which one progresses. Dortmund are into the last 16 after getting the point they needed in a 0-0 draw at home to a Manchester City side who had already qualified.

City required just a point to secure top spot in Group G and they got it despite taking Erling Haaland off at half-time against his former club.

In fact, Pep Guardiola's side could have got all three points but Riyad Mahrez had a second-half penalty saved by Gregor Kobel.

Sevilla will therefore drop into the Europa League despite beating FC Copenhagen 3-0 earlier on Tuesday with second-half goals by Youssef En-Nesyri, Isco and Gonzalo Montiel. David Khocholava was sent off at the end for Copenhagen, who have still not scored a

Meanwhile, RB Leipzig inflicted a first defeat of the season on reigning European champions Real Madrid as they took a big step towards joining the Spaniards in qualifying from Group F.

Joskpo Gvardiol and Christopher Nkunku scored to have Leipzig two goals ahead before Vinicius Junior pulled one back. Timo Werner got Leipzig's third with Rodrygo converting a late penalty for Real as it ended 3-2.

In Scotland, a stunning Mykhailo Mudryk goal gave Shakhtar Donetsk a 1-1 draw away to Celtic, for whom Giorgos Giakoumakis had opened the scoring.

While Celtic are out, Leipzig need just a draw at Shakhtar next week to advance.



PARIS (Dispatches) - Rafa Nadal will return to competition at next week's Paris Masters before taking his place at the season-ending ATP Finals, coach Carlos Moya said.

Nadal has struggled with injuries this year, capturing his 14th French Open title while playing with pain-killing injections to deal with a chronic foot injury and pulling out of Wimbledon due to an abdominal problem.

Following his defeat to Frances Tiafoe at the U.S. Open in September he said he needed to "fix things" and was unsure about when he would play again.

The Spaniard, who has won a men's record 22 Grand Slam titles, partnered Roger Federer in a doubles match at the Laver Cup last month before pulling out of the tournament.

He also took time off for the birth of his first child with wife Mery Perello on Oct. 8.

Moya confirmed that Nadal would use the Masters 1000 event in Bercy, which the world number two has never won, as part of his preparations for the ATP's finale in Turin from Nov. 13-20.

"Before arriving in Turin, you have to play matches in Paris, which are similar," Moya told IB3 TV.

"Rafa is competitive wherever he is and we go with hope and illusion."

Schedule Ahead of World Cup Is Crazy



last 16 as Group E winners, completing an

impressive turnaround after they lost their

first game to Dinamo Zagreb in September.

Graham Potter's side won 2-1 away to

Red Bull Salzburg, with a stunning Kai

Havertz strike 26 minutes from time

proving the difference between the teams

after Junior Adamu cancelled out Mateo

Kovacic's opener for the Blues.

ONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea defender LCesar Azpilicueta said the number of games being crammed into the schedule ahead of the World Cup next month is "crazy" and that player welfare is being jeopardized.

Azpilicueta's team mate N'Golo Kante has been ruled out of the World Cup after undergoing an operation on a hamstring

injury, while Reece James is in a race to be fit for the tournament after injuring his knee. Chelsea have three league fixtures, two Champions League games and a League Cup tie before the World Cup in Qatar begins on Nov. 20.

"It's difficult and it's sad because as players you want to go to the World Cup, but we have this schedule where we have to play for our club and do our best," Azpilicueta told reporters on Monday.

"We are fighting a lot for player welfare because the schedule is crazy. Sometimes we have to consider everything and I think we are in conversations with FIFA. It's difficult because I understand that the fans want to see football.

"We have five subs now, but we have in our team a couple of injuries that make it more difficult to rotate. We are playing every few days, but it's how it is and

Azpilicueta is expected to feature in Spain's squad for the World Cup, where they have been drawn into Group E alongside Germany, Costa Rica and Japan. They begin their group campaign on Nov. 23 against Costa Rica.

Qatar Faced Unprecedented Criticism Over Hosting World Cup

OHA (Dispatches) - Qatar has faced unprecedented criticism since winning the bid to host the 2022 World Cup, some of which amounted to slander, its ruler, Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, said on Tuesday.

"We initially dealt with the matter in good faith," Sheikh Tamim said in a televised policy speech, adding that some of the early criticism was constructive.

But, he said, a campaign against Qatar expanded to "include fabrications and double standards that were so ferocious that it has unfortunately prompted many people to question the real reasons and motives behind the campaign".

Qatar, the first Middle Eastern country to host the World Cup, has come under intense international criticism for its treatment of foreign workers and restrictive social laws.

The emir was addressing a session of the Persian Gulf Arab state's advisory Shura Council as Doha gears up to host soccer's main global event, which kicks off on Nov. 20. Oatar expects 1.2 million visitors during the tournament, creating an unprecedented logistical and policing challenge for the tiny Persian Gulf Arab state.

Sheikh Tamim said hosting the World Cup was "a great test for a country the

"We accepted this challenge out of our faith in our potential, we the Oataris, to tackle the mission and make it a success," he said. "It is a championship for all, and its success is success for all."

Doha has introduced reforms including rules to protect workers from heat and a monthly minimum wage of 1,000 riyals (\$275), and says it continues to develop its labor system.

Hazard Ready to Take Belgium All The Way in Qatar

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Belgium skipper Eden Hazard said his country need to win the World Cup in Qatar to justify the 'golden generation' tag they have carried for the past 10 years as they look to deliver the country's first major trophy.



The 31-year-old Real Madrid forward has captained Belgium since 2015 and will participate in his third World Cup, hoping to go further than their third place at Russia 2018. "I have to set the bar high. I'm going to try to do better than in 2018. It'll be tough because that was already pretty good." Hazard told the FIFA website.

"I'm fortunate to be the captain of a great team and a big footballing nation, and so we owe it to ourselves to have high expectations."

A generation of top players representing some of Europe's biggest clubs like Hazard. goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, Kevin De Bruyne and Romelu Lukaku have given hope to a

nation of almost 12 million people that they can win a major trophy at last. "There's always talk of the 'golden generation' but there's some truth to it. We've spent almost 10 years together. Now we've got young players starting to come through," Hazard said.

"Of course, we've got an incredible generation of players, but we still haven't won anything. If we really want to earn that 'golden generation' nickname, I think that's the one thing we still need to do.

"Our collective experience has definitely helped us in previous tournaments, so I hope that it will continue in the same vein for some time yet."

Belgium kick off their campaign against Canada on Nov 23 before facing Morocco four days later and Croatia on Dec. 1.