

Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan Is Set to Visit Tehran Today at the Invitation of Iranian President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi and During His Visit He Will Discuss Ways for Boosting of Cooperation

IRAN NEWS

Health Ministry Announced on Monday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic In Iran Increased to 144,576 With Five More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

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Possible German Sanctions on IRGC Illegal, Unconstructive

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's foreign ministry spokesman has described as irresponsible the recent comments by German officials on the possibility of imposing sanctions on the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC).

Nasser Kanaani said in his weekly news briefing that Berlin's possible move is a result of the "wrong" approach of the German government.

Kanaani added that the IRGC is an official military institution of Iran, expressing hope that the German and other governments are aware of the result of their "unconstructive" measures and do not sacrifice their mutual interests for "short-term political benefits."

Also on the war in Ukraine, the spokesman said Iran exports arms to neither side of the war, stressing this includes Russia.

"Iran is opposed to the wars in Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, ... and believes that it is necessary to use political solutions to resolve disagreements," he said. Kanaani also said Iran has sought a political approach to end the war contrary to the behavior of the self-styled champions of human rights, which have been exporting billions of dollars of equipment to Ukraine.

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IRGC Seizes Foreign Vessel Smuggling 11m Liters of Fuel in Persian Gulf

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A high-ranking Iranian Judiciary official says the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has confiscated a foreign tanker ship carrying millions of liters of smuggled fuel in the Persian Gulf waters and arrested all crew members.

Mojtaba Ghahremani, head of the Justice Department of Iran's southern province of Hormozgan, said on Monday that forces from the first naval zone of the IRGC seized the vessel in the Persian Gulf, as part of operations to detect and fight against organized smuggling, while it was carrying 11 million liters of smuggled fuel.

Ghahremani said the vessel was seized after a month of detailed technical and intelligence work, without providing details on the nationality of the confiscated ship.

He put the value of the cargo of the oil tanker at over \$51.8 million, saying those involved in the smuggling will be prosecuted. "The criminal acts by fuel smugglers who plunder national assets in coordination with foreigners will not be hidden from the sight of Judiciary officials and officers, and the perpetrators of such crimes will be punished severely and without leniency," Ghahremani said.

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Tehran, Moscow Strike \$6.5b Gas Deals



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - About \$6.5 billion from a memorandum with Russian energy giant Gazprom has been converted into a firm contract, a senior Iranian official says.

"God willing, the rest of the memorandum worth \$40 billion will be converted into contracts in the next month, and the negotiations are ongoing," deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy Mehdi Safari was quoted as saying Monday.

The National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and Gazprom signed the \$40 billion memorandum in July on the day Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Tehran for a summit with his Iranian and Turkish counterparts.

Under the agreement, Gazprom will help NIOC in the development of the Kish and North Pars gas fields and also six oil fields. The Russian gas producer will also be involved in the completion of liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects and construction of gas export pipelines.

Earlier this month, Iranian Minister of Petroleum Javad Owji visited Moscow where the two sides discussed the swap of Russian oil and oil products, with the figures to be agreed upon in the next few days, Safari said.

"The Russian gas swap contract is also being finalized," he added.

The swap deal, in addition to economic benefits and reducing the cost of gas transit from Iran's south to the country's north to supply fuel to the northern provinces, will increase political solidarity between Iran and Russia and the intermediary countries such as Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, Safari said.

"This is a very intelligent approach that leads to political and security stability and peace among nations."

Safari said Iran's scenario for gas trade with Russia is to buy gas from the country and export its own gas to neighboring countries.

"We must also consider a situation that may lead us to swap gas or consume Russian gas inside power plants, but all our efforts are to re-export the gas purchased from Russia to the countries of the region," he added.

Safari touched on the fact if Iran does not buy or swap Russian gas, the Russians will start such cooperation with other countries. "Hence, we must take advantage of the opportunities quickly," he said.

Safari said Iran's oil ministry has been moving in the "right direction" for oil and gas interaction with Russia in order to protect national interests.

The focus of the Russian oil swap negotiations is to swap 10 million tons a year and the agreements are about to be finalized, he said.

Safari clarified that soon a joint company between Iran and Russia would be established to build a gas pipeline to the countries along the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, where the share of the two countries is 50%, and the Russians will build the unique technology for the construction of the marine pipeline in this project.

Safari noted that, in addition to economic benefits and reducing the cost of gas transit from the south of Iran to the north to supply fuel to the northern provinces, the Russian gas swap would increase political solidarity between the countries of Iran, Russia and intermediate countries including Turkmenistan and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Gas swap is considered a thoughtful approach and leads to political and security stability and peace among the nations. Iran and Russia have also signed MoUs to export gas to Pakistan and Oman.

Tehran has completed work on its side of the pipeline up to the border of Pakistan and is ready to deliver the gas but Islamabad has yet to start construction of the line on its territory.

The Islamic Republic has also agreed to revive a long-stalled project to lay an undersea pipeline to carry gas to Oman. The two countries signed a deal valued at \$60 billion over 25 years in 2013 to supply gas to Oman.

Safari said the Russians are supposed to invest in the projects, stressing that Iran will not hand over the pipelines to any country.

According to the official, Russian companies will carry out the contract for building pipelines inside Pakistan in order to export gas from Iran.

Security Forces Arrest 6 Affiliated With Shah Cheragh Terrorist Attack

TEHRAN (IP) - Intelligence Ministry of Intelligence announced Monday afternoon that six people affiliated with Shah Cheragh terrorist attack were identified and arrested.

Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib also said on Monday that Iranian security forces last night managed to identify and detain the second perpetrator of the Shah Cheragh terrorist attack. The terrorist was arrested in Shiraz, according to the Iranian intelligence minister.

Khatib also added that the security forces arrested the terrorist with the help of widespread reports.

Political, Security and Social Deputy of Fars province Governorate Esmail Mohebbi Pour said that the second terrorist had not entered the Shah Cheragh shrine but was supporting the first person and communicated plans to him.

Mohebbi Pour added that Iran's intelligence forces are seriously pursuing to find any other clues, factors, and elements related to the Shiraz terrorist attack, adding that the terrorists will be handed over to justice.

Last Wednesday (October 26), a terrorist armed with a machine gun opened fire on the pilgrims and evening prayer worshippers at the Shah Cheragh holy shrine in Shiraz, martyred 15 innocent people and seriously wounding 25 others.

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Country Needs Deterrence Against Economic Threats

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's First Vice President says that all must stand firm and bring the country to the point of deterrence against economic threats.

Speaking at the National Conference of Passive Defense on Monday, Mohammad Mokhber said: "For 15 years, whenever the US talked about Iran, they claimed that they had a military option on the table, but now there is no such matter because no one imagines a military attack on Iran, as it gets powerful."

He also said: "During the coronavirus pandemic, we were able to import the vaccine and even produce it inside the country." Also, in the same conference, the Head of the passive defense organization stressed that one of the most important requirements for developing all-around security is to pay attention to passive defense.

Brigadier Gholamreza Jalali said that passive defense is a dynamic concept, and it should be capable of identification and countering threats.

U.S. Plans to Deploy Nuclear-Capable Bombers To N. Australia

TEHRAN (MNA) - The United States is preparing to send six nuclear-capable B-52 bombers to an air base in northern Australia, media sources say.

Dedicated facilities for the bombers will be set up at the Australian air force's remote Tindal base, about 300 km (190 miles) south of Darwin, the capital of Australia's Northern Territory, said the source, who declined to be identified because they are not authorized to speak publicly on the issue.

The development was first reported by the Australian Broadcasting Corp (ABC)'s Four Corners program, citing U.S. documents. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Australia engages with the United States on defense alliances "from time to time."

"There are visits, of course, to Australia, including in Darwin, that has US Marines, of course, on a rotating basis stationed there," Albanese said during a media conference.

Australia's Northern Territory is already hosting frequent military collaborations with the United States. Thousands of US Marines rotate through the territory annually for training and joint exercises, started under Barack Obama.

Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles' office declined to comment. The United States has drawn up detailed plans for what it calls a "squadron operations facility" for use during the Northern Territory dry season, an adjoining maintenance center, and a parking area for the B-52s, the ABC report said.

China Warns U.S. to Stop Trying Suppress Beijing

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi decried the U.S. policy of containment and suppression against Beijing in a call with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

In a statement, the Chinese foreign ministry said Wang told his American counterpart that the US should stop the practice of containment and suppression against China and warned Washington against creating new obstacles in relations between the two sides. "The U.S. side should stop its efforts to contain and suppress China, and not create new obstacles to the relationship between the two countries," a readout from the Chinese foreign ministry said.

"Wang Yi pointed out that bringing China-U.S. relations back to the track of stable development is not only in the common interests of China and the U.S., but also the general expectation of the international community."

The top Chinese diplomat also criticized US export curbs, insisting that it has severely damaged the country's legitimate rights and must be rectified.

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Leader to Receive Group of Students

TEHRAN (MNA) - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei will receive a group of Iranian students today (Wednesday).

The meeting will be held on the occasion of the commemoration anniversary of 13 Aban (Nov. 4) on which the Iranian students took over the US embassy (Den of Espionage) in the early years after the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Iran's Security Red Line For Government, Nation

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi says security is a red line for the Islamic Republic, and it will not allow the enemies to undermine it.

"Security is a red line for the government and nation of the Islamic Republic of Iran and we will never allow the enemy's scheme to undermine this national and valuable asset to be realized," the president said.

Raisi's remarks came after earlier the same day, he lauded the Iranian people's massive presence at funerals held for the victims of a recent terrorist attack at a holy shrine in southern Iran.

Addressing a cabinet meeting, Iran's president said what happened during the attack in the city of Shiraz was the materialization of a part of the enemy's plan to sow insecurity and disrupt people's life through unrest, rioting and assassination.

He added that the main message of people's presence on the streets in Shiraz and other Iranian cities was not only to condemn the terrorist attack on the Shah Cheragh shrine, but also to highlight the need to decisively confront the terrorists in order to safeguard the country's security.

"At the present time, it is incumbent on the officials to do all they can to maintain the calm and security in the country, provide [necessary] services to people, and eliminate all barriers to their business, education and everyday life," Raisi said.

In another part of his speech, Raisi emphasized on the full implementation of the laws and referring to the demand of the people and non-governmental organizations to solve the problem of air pollution, and required all relevant institutions to implement the clean air law unconditionally and added, "If a department could not fulfil its legal duties, it must declare the reason".

Referring to the imminent start of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, the President assigned the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to interact with Qatari officials in this important sports event to provide the ground for predicting and preventing possible problems.



Referring to the report of the Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs, Ayatollah Raisi appreciated the measures taken to empower women heads of the household and also the cooperation with the Ministry of Education to equip girls' schools.

Later the Cabinet's Economic Coordination Board reviewed the general aspects of the support package for rural and nomadic livestock farmers, and decided that the details of this package should be reviewed and approved in the next meeting of the board, so that based on that, the country's banking network can provide the working capital needed to supply livestock inputs at a faster rate.

In the meeting of the Cabinet's Economic Coordination Board, which was held under the chairmanship of Raisi, the central bank presented a report on the implementation of the resolutions of the board in the field of inflation control.

Also, based on the decision of the Cabinet's Economic Coordination Board, a committee consisting of the representatives of the First Vice-President, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, the Plan and Budget Organization and the Central Bank was formed to monitor the inflationary decisions of the executive bodies.

After examining the general aspects of the support package for rural and nomadic livestock farmers, the members of the Cabinet's Economic Coordination Board decided that the details of this package should be reviewed and approved in the next meeting of the board, so that based on that, the banking network of the country can provide the working capital necessary to provide livestock inputs quickly.

17th Iran Int'l Auto Parts Exhibition Kicks Off in Tehran

TEHRAN (MNA) - The 17th edition of Iran International Parts Exhibition was inaugurated in Tehran Permanent Intl. Fairgrounds on Monday with the participation of the deputy industry.

The prestigious exhibition will be held with the participation of more than 600 domestic and foreign companies (including 45 knowledge-based companies, more than 500 domestic and 55 foreign companies) from 11 countries including China, Germany, Italy, Turkey, the Netherlands, United Arab Emirates (UAE), India, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan and Indonesia.

The exhibitors will showcase their latest products and achievements on a land area as large as more than 70,000 square meters.

This exhibition is held with the participation of industrial and automotive guild unions, consisting of parts manufacturing equipment and machinery, engineering research and design, raw materials and car accessories, trading and after-sales services, specialized car industry periodicals, car decorative accessories, car repair and maintenance, car cleaning products and other related items.

The 17th Iran International Auto Parts Exhibition will last for four days until Nov. 03 and opens at 8:00 am and closes at 15 pm.

Iran, Russia Building Strong Ties

TEHRAN (Shana) - Iran's ambassador to Russia said Tehran and Moscow have established very good cooperation in the field of energy, and one of these areas is investment in oil and gas fields.

Kazem Jalali, in an interview with Shana, underlined the 16th meeting of the Joint Economic Commission of Iran and Russia, and stated that the relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Russia are developing day by day.

"This relationship development can be evaluated in two approaches; one of them is the issue of the neighborhood of the two countries and the second issue is the closeness of the views of Iran and Russia in the world arena," he said, adding, "Iran and Russia have a common and close view on global management, as well as global power structure."

He added: "The closeness of views in the two countries prompts us to be able to develop our relations more than in the past. Fortunately, Iran and Russia have had good relations in the fields of security, politics, defense and military since the past, and today the relations in these sectors are growing and developing, however, there are shortcomings in the field of relations concerning trade and economy."

The ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Russia stated: "We are currently in a period where after the visit of the president to Russia in February 2022, new alignments have been established in the relations between the two countries."

Loading, Unloading In Qeshm Ports Hit Over 4m Tons

TEHRAN (MNA) - Over 4 million tons of goods have been unloaded and loaded in the ports of Qeshm in the first 7 months of the current Iranian year of 1401 (March 21-October 22), an official said.

During the said period, 4,227,286 tons of goods were unloaded and loaded in the ports, according to Qeshm Ports and Maritime Organization's Director.

Ali Ashtari went on to say that during the same period last year, 3,156,245 tons of goods were unloaded and loaded in the ports of Qeshm Island.

Qeshm Island with 150,000 population is located in the south of Hormozgan province and in the Persian Gulf.

Iran Warns About Consequences of Foreign Presence in Region



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Speaking to his Azerbaijani counterpart, Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has reiterated Iran's strong opposition to any foreign presence in the region, stressing that cooperation between regional countries is the key to their collective peace and security.

"We consider the regional security to be a contiguous category, and consider the Azerbaijani republic's security to be [integrated with] that of the region and that of our own," the top diplomat told Jeyhun Bayramov during a phone call.

"We declare our opposition to any deployment of foreign forces in the region and deem it to be contradictory to the regional peace, stability, and cooperation," the Iranian official added.

The Islamic Republic, he said, is of the opinion that foreign presence complicates the status quo in the region.

Tehran believes that it is only "regional mechanisms" that could help resolve the region's problems, including the 3+3 mechanism of cooperation among regional countries, which features the three South Caucasian countries of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan plus Russia, Turkey, and Iran, Amirabdollahian stated.

The Iranian foreign minister noted that the Islamic Republic would invariably keep up efforts to resolve standing differences between Azerbaijan and its estranged neighbor Armenia.

His remarks came against the backdrop of a bubbling and periodically deadly dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, but has been populated by ethnic Armenians.

For his part, the Azeri official touted Iran for its attempts at contributing to regional peace and stability.

He likewise conveyed Baku's objection to foreign deployments in the region, emphasizing the importance of continued regional cooperation, including within the 3+3 format.

Bayramov, meanwhile, said sustained direct contact between the Iranian and Azeri counterparts indicated the depth of the countries' relations, adding, "We attach importance and respect to these ties."

The Azeri official also welcomed a planned trip to his country by Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf, calling it an important step towards further development of the bilateral ties.

Bosnian Diplomat Gets Familiar With Iranian Industrial Capacities

QAZVIN (IRNA) - Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina Ahmet Halilovic became familiar with the industrial capabilities of Iran stationed in the industrial areas of Qazvin Province.

Halilovic was in Qazvin on Monday to visit the exhibition displaying the capabilities of the city's small and medium-sized industries at Caspian Industrial Town.

In addition to paying a visit to the exhibition, the Bosnian official visited some manufacturing units at



the Caspian Industrial Town as well as Lia Industrial Town active in producing polymer and chemical products.

Other officials, including the deputy foreign minister for parliamentary affairs and ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina along with the managing director of industrial towns in Qazvin and the head of the Qazvin chamber of commerce,

industries, mines, and agriculture accompanied Halilovic on the tour.

Iran Strategy in Confronting Threat Relies on All-Out Defense

TEHRAN (MNA) - On the occasion of Passive Defense Week, the Ministry of Defense issued a statement on Sunday evening and said that the strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in confronting threats depends on the comprehensive defense.

With a deep understanding of all threats and especially the modern threats, organizations and institutes affiliated to the Ministry of Defense along with other organizations of the Armed Forces have put passive defense measures at the top of their agenda, the statement added.

As it is reiterated by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the issue of the passive defense is a very important issue and the importance of the passive defense increases day by day.

The strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in decisive confronting threats depends on all-out defense, so, all components of the national power should be used optimally in providing maximum interests and national security of the country.

Passive defense is one of the best defense methods that reduces the vulnerability of national infrastructures and vital, sensitive and important centers and ensures the continuation of essential activities and ultimately national stability, the statement added.

Iran, Tajikistan Stress Expansion of Bilateral Ties

TEHRAN (IP) - In the meeting with his Iranian counterpart in Dushanbe, the Minister of Culture of Tajikistan underlined enhancing Iran-Tajikistan ties, considering the cultural commonalities of the two countries.

In a meeting with Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad-Mahdi Esmaili, Zulfiya Davlatzoda considered Iran's cultural week in Tajikistan as important in expanding cultural relations between the two countries.

The meeting was held in the building of the National Library of Tajikistan.

She pointed out that Radio Farhang of Tajikistan is

ready to exchange cultural programs with Iran.

In the meeting, Esmaili thanked the officials and people of the Republic of Tajikistan for their hospitality and evaluated the cultural week of Tajikistan in Iran as a diverse and unique program.

He added that the presidents of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Tajikistan always underline cementing ties between the two countries in all fields.

He called all-round interactions with friendly countries as one of Iran's priorities and announced the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance's readiness to hold joint book exhibitions and theater and music festivals.

Tajik MFA Rejects Allegations of Assembling Iranian Drones

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan has rejected the allegations raised by Ukrainian blogger Dmitry Gordon that Iranian drones are assembled in Tajikistan.

A statement released by Tajik MFA, in particular, says "the Republic of Tajikistan does not export military equipment to third countries."

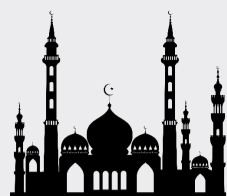
Tajikistan's Foreign Ministry recommends that "Dmitry Gordon henceforth carefully address such comments and verify the accuracy of the information disseminated."

"We also inform that the Tajik side has not received any appeals from official Kyiv on this issue," the statement emphasizes, according to Asia-Plus.

Last week, the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs also followed up with a statement rejecting the allegation that Iranian drones were, or are, being assembled in Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan also urged the Ukrainian authorities to take appropriate measures to prevent the Ukrainian media from spreading such unfounded accusations and other unreliable information.

The allegations were raised in an interview between Ukrainian journalist Dmitry Gordon and Zionist businessman Leonid Nevzlin.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:47
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:28
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:02
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:27

III. "I know not but that it may be a trial for you, and a grant of (worldly) livelihood (to you) for a time."
 II2. Say: "O my Lord! judge Thou in truth!" "Our Lord Most Gracious is the One Whose assistance should be sought against the blasphemies ye utter!"
 Surah 21. The Prophets (111 - 112)

Ukraine No More On Iran's First Grain Suppliers List

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Board of Directors of Federation of Iranian Food Associations says Ukraine is no more on Iran's first grain suppliers list after Ukraine's war with Russia.

Speaking to ILNA and reacting to Russia's decision for suspending grain export deal from the Black Sea, Mohammad Reza Mortazavi said that if this suspension is not resolved, the rise in the price of grain in the international markets is inevitable and Iran will undoubtedly will be affected by it.

He added that suspension of grain export will affect the downward trend in the basic goods prices in the international markets and added that big harvests will help downward trend in prices in the international markets and if Ukraine leaves this market, it is possible the prices to rise and for this reason one can hope this suspension is lifted.

Mortezavi added that the prices of oil and corn will be affected by this suspension, adding that it seems this rise in price will ultimately affect the food securities of the countries especially Iran.

He noted that the price of grain was appropriate for Iran before the war broke out but after the Ukraine-Russia war, Ukraine was eliminated from Iran's first grain suppliers list and Iran expanded its sources for provision of its grain.



Mortezavi went on to say that a couple of years ago he said Iran would need at least 10m tons of grain per year in the next 10 years and some people criticized his viewpoint and termed it unrealistic but after several years it was proved that Iran needs at least to import 20m tons of basic goods per year like wheat, corn, sugar, oil, sugar, oil seeds and barely and it is unlikely that one can reach self-sufficient point in the upcoming years.

He also called for joining the FATF and reiterated that remaining out of the FATF will please middlemen who have taken hostage the country because of being out of the FATF. He added that there is no reason to remain on the blacklist of the FATF, adding that currently only two countries are on this list and economic activists believe it is not to the benefit of the country but at the same time some people in the country are proud of being out of the FATF.

Mortezavi went on to say that remaining on the blacklist of the FATF will not the country's foreign trade and it will increase the costs of the international trade and it is expected these costs would increase in the upcoming years.

Volume of Iran-Kazakhstan Transit to Increase Four-Fold



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Iranian Roads and Urban Development Minister has said that with a new agreement between Iran and Kazakhstan, the volume of bilateral transit between the two nations will increase four-fold.

Rostam Ghasemi, Iranian Roads and Urban Development Minister made the remarks while speaking to reporters about a joint meeting he held with Serik Zhumangarin, the new Acting Deputy Prime Minister - Minister of Trade and Integration of the Republic of Kazakhstan and accompanying delegation in Tehran on Monday.

"The two countries agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding to increase cooperation in the field of transportation and transit, which includes three important issues: electronification of customs, coordinating tariffs duties, and issuance of visas for Iranian truck drivers and businessmen," Ghasemi said.

Referring to the recent meeting between Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan and the tripartite agreement to facilitate the issue of transportation and transit, the Iranian minister also said, "Kazakhstan is the railway from China to Turkmenistan and Iran, and there are agreements on facilitating transit on this route reached with Kazakhstan trade minister in this regard."

He further added that "the Kazakhstan minister along with his accompanying delegation will visit Shahid Rajaei port [in Iran's Chabahar] tomorrow and it was decided to cooperate with Iran in various areas of transportation, including rail transportation, road transportation, sea transportation, air transportation, and cargo transfer from the north-south and east-west corridors."

Stating that the volume of transit between Iran and Kazakhstan is currently one million tons per year, he noted, "According to the joint agreement that will be signed today, an increase in the volume of transit between the two countries is expected to rise from one million tons to 4 million tons annually."

Serik Zhumangarin, for his part, said about the agreement between Tehran and Astana to increase cooperation in various fields of transportation, transit and logistics and said, "The two countries have agreed on the existing issues in the field of transit and drawing a road map to solve these problems between Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, which was also recently discussed in a joint meeting in Turkmenistan."

The Kazakh official pointed to the agreement between the two countries to sign a memorandum of understanding in order to enhance the level of infrastructure cooperation in the field of transportation logistics.

First Phase of Rail Link To Chabahar Finished



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's transportation ministry (MRUD) says construction works for the first phase of a key rail link to the ocean port of Chabahar has finished.

Abbas Khatibi, a senior MRUD official, said on Sunday that government authorities will soon inaugurate the 154-kilometer railway line between Zahedan and Khash in Iran's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan.

The line is a key section of the 628-kilometer rail link that will connect the provincial capital of Zahedan to Chabahar on the Sea of Oman.

Back in 2019, the Iranian government approved 300 million euros in special funds for the railway after foreign companies decided to pull out of the project because of American sanctions on Iran.

Khatibi said some 250 million euros of the fund had already been earmarked to the Chabahar-Zahedan project and another 50 million euros will be made available in the near future.

He said more than 60% of the construction works for the entire railway had been completed, including track-laying from Chabahar to Iranshahr and to Khash.

Once completed, the railway will lead to a major surge in activity in Chabahar where cargo from the Indian Ocean can be shipped via Iran to Afghanistan and other landlocked countries in Central Asia.

Chabahar is home to a port terminal where India has committed to massive development projects. However, reports suggest Iran has not been happy with the pace of works carried out by India in the port in recent years.

That comes as Indian companies had been supposed to contribute to the construction of the Chabahar-Zahedan railway as part of an understanding with the MRUD.

Iran Telecoms Ministry Vows Action Against Google Play

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's telecoms ministry says it will take action against Google Play Store over a decision by the U.S.-based internet platform to impose restrictions on the normal activity of Iranian mobile applications.

In a statement issued, the ministry condemned restrictions imposed by Google Play and other American internet platforms on some of the most popular mobile apps developed in Iran.

The ministry said it suspects the restrictions were influenced by a political agenda rather than technical issues claimed by Google Play as it reiterated that US-based internet companies have a history of bias against Iran.

"The ministry will exhaust all of its technical and legal capacities to protect the rights of Iranian (mobile app) users," read part of the statement.

The statement comes after Google Play issued warnings through its Play Protect function to users of several mobile apps that have been widely used for messaging and other purposes in Iran.

Those Iranian apps became popular in late September after the government imposed restrictions on foreign apps like WhatsApp and Instagram over their role in fomenting street unrest.

Rubika, a main Iranian app affected by Google Play's recent restrictions, said on Saturday that it had received no prior warning from the American company about alleged privacy issues in the app.

The popular mobile application, which is majority owned by Iran's first mobile operator the MCI, posted a message on its Twitter account demanding Google Play to explain its decision and to share any evidence it has to corroborate its claims about privacy breaches by the app.

Overhaul of 3 Units underway in Isfahan Refinery

TEHRAN (Shana) -- The overhaul operations of three operating units of Isfahan Oil Refinery started simultaneously in order to make optimal use of time.

According to Isfahan Oil Refinery, Mehdi Najmi, head of planning, control and maintenance and repair methods of Isfahan Oil Refining Company, said:

"Overhaul of Distillation, Viscosity Reduction and Liquid Gas No. 2 units started on Sunday, October 30 with the efforts of the company's experts."

Pointing to the great importance of the mentioned units, especially the distillation unit as the largest



refining unit, he added: "One month of work has been planned to carry out the overhaul operations."

The head of planning, control and maintenance and repair methods of Isfahan Refinery announced the news that this is also the first time in the history of overhaul operations in the country that operations are being monitored online, adding that it is expected that by

benefiting from this method and monitoring activities, the overhaul duration will be significantly reduced.

Najmi said overhaul of the mentioned units are done once every four years, taking into account the operational conditions.

Lufthansa Flights to Iran Resumed

TEHRAN (MNA) – Civil Aviation Organization of Iran (CAOI) said that Lufthansa flights to Iran have been resumed until the official announcement of Germany.

CAOI has issued a communique elaborating on the reason for the temporary halting of Lufthansa flights to Iran. After Lufthansa airline claimed that a corpse was found aboard its Airbus 340 plane, flight number 601 on its Tehran-Frankfurt flight, on October 27, it had electronic contact after the incident with the Iranian aviation officials and the airport asked for the temporary halting of its flights to Iran.

Accordingly, the security workgroup of Imam Khomeini International Airport immediately arranged for an urgent meeting to probe into the issue, the communique added.

"But since the German officials have not yet officially announced their viewpoints about the event, the Lufthansa flights to Imam Khomeini International Airport are resumed," it further noted.

If the authorized German aviation officials confirm the incident, the CAOI will embark on a joint investigation, it said.

Businessmen of 15 States to Attend Nat'l Festival, Exhibition on Medicinal Plants

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Director-general of the international business development office, as part of the Iranian Vice-Presidency for science and technology affairs, Rouhollah Estiri, said that businessmen and investors from 15 countries will take part in the 6th National Festival & Exhibition on Medicinal plants, Natural Products & Traditional medicine of Iran.

Estiri said that the sixth National Festival and Exhibition on Medicinal plants, Natural Products and Iranian Traditional Medicine will be held on November 1-4, 2022, in Imam Khomeini Mosalla.

He added that this exhibition will be held by the Medicinal plants and Traditional medicine Sciences and Technologies development Headquarters of the Presidential Deputy of Science and Technologies.

The festival aims to introduce the latest scientific and industrial achievements in the technological products of medicinal plants and remove the barriers and challenges which the development of the medicinal plant industry is facing.

Rise of Production and Decrease of Energy Consumption at ESCO

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

ISFAHAN – Head of Blast Furnace of Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) says the production in this unit has increased in the first half of the year and the energy consumption has decreased in the blast furnace of the company.

Speaking on the activities of the company for reducing energy consumption, Shahram Goli said that in the first half of the year, the total coke consumed in the blast furnace was 772,072 tons, and on the whole in the three blast furnaces of the company and for production of every ton of cast iron, some 517 kilos of coke has been consumed and the amount of soft coke has been 13 kilograms per ton while hard coke has been 504 kilograms.

He added that in the iron-rich section and in three blast furnace plants, the total pellet consumed has been 628,649 tons.

On the amount of energy consumption in three blast furnaces, he said that in the first half of the year some 12.22 gigajoule energy has been consumed per one ton iron cast production and the figure shows 1.13% decrease comparing to the same period last year.

Then caretaker of the blast furnace No.2 of the company Mohammad Reza Shaneh explained the performance of the furnace in the first half of the year and said that some 575,016 tons of cast iron has been produced and at the same time the amount of coke consumed for production has decreased considerably which is a big achievement.

He noted that although they are satisfied with the performance of the unit in the first half but they believe it can improve much better and hailed the incentives of the personnel in this unit which is important for boosting output.

Israelis Kill Palestinian After Alleged Car Ramming

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Israelis shot dead a Palestinian who, according to the army and medics, had rammed his car into soldiers in the occupied West Bank.

The incident near the city of Jericho comes amid mounting violence across Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank.

"An assailant accelerated his vehicle toward IDF (Israeli army) soldiers who were at a bus station adjacent to the Nabi Musa Junction," the army said, before he continued and drove at other soldiers nearby.



Mussolini Supporters Mark "March on Rome" Centenary

ROME (Dispatches) - Thousands of supporters of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini paraded in his birthplace Sunday to mark the centenary of the historic "March on Rome" that ushered in Fascism.

Local police estimated the crowd at about 2,000 people who gathered to march in the small hilly town of Predappio in Emilia-Romagna, Mussolini's birthplace and site of his family crypt where he is buried.

Mussolini's tomb is a pilgrimage site that regularly attracts tens of thousands of visitors each year.



Lula Wins Brazilian Election, Bolsonaro Has Not Conceded



BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Brazilian leftist leader Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva narrowly defeated President Jair Bolsonaro in a runoff election, but the far right incumbent did not concede defeat on Sunday night, raising concerns that he might contest the result.

The Supreme Electoral Court (TSE) declared Lula the next president, with 50.9% of votes against 49.1% for Bolsonaro. The 77-year-old Lula's inauguration is scheduled for Jan. 1.

It was a stunning comeback for the leftist former president and a punishing blow to Bolsonaro, the first Brazilian incumbent to lose a presidential election.

"So far, Bolsonaro has not called me to recognize my victory, and I don't know if he will call or if he will recognize my victory," Lula told tens of thousands of jubilant supporters celebrating his win on Sao Paulo's Paulista Ave.

A source in the Bolsonaro campaign told Reuters the president would not make public remarks until Monday. The Bolsonaro campaign did not respond to a request for comment.

Bolsonaro last year openly discussed refusing to accept the results of the vote, making baseless claims that Brazil's electronic voting system was vulnerable to fraud.

One close Bolsonaro ally, lawmaker Carla Zambelli, in an apparent nod to the results, wrote on Twitter, "I PROMISE you, I will be the greatest opposition that Lula has ever imagined."

Financial markets might be in for a volatile week, with investors gauging speculation about Lula's cabinet and the risk of Bolsonaro questioning results.

The vote was a rebuke for the fiery far-right populism of Bolsonaro, who emerged from the back benches of Congress to forge a novel conservative coalition but lost support as Brazil ran up one of the worst death tolls of the coronavirus pandemic.

U.S. President Joe Biden congratulated Lula for winning "free, fair and credible elections," joining a chorus of compliments from European and Latin American leaders.

International election observers said Sunday's election was conducted efficiently. One observer told Reuters that military auditors did not find any flaws in integrity tests they did of the voting system.

Truck drivers believed to be Bolsonaro supporters on Sunday blocked a highway in four places in the state of Mato Grosso, a major grains producer, according to the highway operator.

In one video circulating online, a man said truckers planned to block the country's main highways, calling for a military coup to prevent Lula from taking office.

Lula's win consolidates a new "pink tide" in Latin America, after landmark leftist victories in Colombia and Chile's elections, echoing a regional political shift two decades ago that introduced Lula to the world stage.

He has vowed a return to state-driven economic growth and social policies that helped lift millions out of poverty during two terms as president from 2003 to 2010. He also promises to combat destruction of the Amazon rainforest, now at a 15-year high, and make Brazil a leader in global climate talks.

"These were four years of hatred, of negation of science," Ana Valeria Doria, 60, a doctor in Rio de Janeiro who celebrated with a drink. "It won't be easy for Lula to manage the division in this country. But for now it's pure happiness." A former union leader born into poverty, Lula organized strikes against Brazil's military government in the 1970s. His two-term presidency was marked by a commodity-driven economic boom and he left office with record popularity.

Twin Bombings in Somalia Kill At Least 100, Injure 300

MOGADISHU (Dispatches) - The number of people killed in an attack on Saturday at a busy intersection in the Somali capital Mogadishu has risen to 100, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud said.

"So far, the number of people who died has reached 100 and 300 are wounded, and the number for both the death and wounded continues to increase," he said after visiting the blast location.

Two cars packed with explosives blew up minutes apart near the busy Zobe intersection, followed by gunfire in an attack targeting Somalia's education ministry.

The afternoon explosions tore through walls, shattered windows of nearby buildings, sending shrapnel flying and plumes of smoke and dust into the air.

The victims included women, children and the elderly, police spokesman Sadik Dudishe said.

"The ruthless terrorists killed mothers. Some of them died with their children trapped on their backs," he said on Saturday, adding that the attackers had been stopped from killing more "innocent civilians and students."

The attack took place at the same busy junction where a truck packed with explosives blew up on October 14, 2017, killing 512 people and injuring more than 290, the deadliest attack in the troubled country.

Mohamud described the incident as "historic," saying "it is the same place, and the same innocent people involved."

"This is not right. God willing, they will not be having an ability to do another Zobe incident," he said, referring to the Islamist group Al-Shabaab.

Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement, saying its fighters were targeting the ministry of education. The bloody siege drew international condemnation from Somalia's allies, including the United Nations, Turkey as well as the African Union force tasked with helping Somali forces take over primary responsibility for security by the end of 2024.

The UN mission in Somalia UNSOM vowed to stand "resolutely with all Somalis against terrorism."

Lebanon is being run by a caretaker government as political divisions have prevented the formation of a new cabinet ever since legislative elections in the spring.

This comes at a time Lebanon has yet to enact most of the reforms required for it to access billions of dollars in loans from the International Monetary Fund.

Lebanon's Aoun Vacates Presidential Palace

BAABA (Dispatches) - Michel Aoun was vacating Lebanon's presidential palace on Sunday, amid acclaim from his supporters, a day before his mandate expires without a designated successor, threatening a new power vacuum in the crisis-torn country.

A few thousand well-wishers gathered to pay tribute to the Maronite Christian former army chief and head of the Free Patriotic Movement which is allied with the powerful Shiite movement Hezbollah.

FPM supporters, some brandishing portraits of the outgoing head of state widely referred to as "General", flocked to the presidential palace in the hills above the capital Beirut, where some had spent the night in tents, to accompany him to his private home.

"We have come to escort the president at the end of his mandate, to tell him that we are with him and that we will continue the struggle by his side," said teacher Joumana Nahed.

Lebanese lawmakers have tried but failed four times in a month to agree on electing a successor after Aoun's six-year term ends Monday, stoking fears of a deepening political crisis.

The term of Aoun, who is in his late 80s, was marred by mass popular protests, a severe economic crisis and currency collapse, and the August 2020 portside blast of ammonium nitrate that killed hundreds and laid waste to swathes of the capital.

Neither the Hezbollah camp, the powerful armed movement which dominates political life in Lebanon, nor its opponents have the clear majority to impose a candidate to succeed him.

Lebanon is being run by a caretaker government as political divisions have prevented the formation of a new cabinet ever since legislative elections in the spring.

This comes at a time Lebanon has yet to enact most of the reforms required for it to access billions of dollars in loans from the International Monetary Fund.

West Urges Russia to Reverse Ukraine Grain Deal Suspension

LONDON (Dispatches) - Western governments are calling on Russia to reverse its decision to pull out of a UN-brokered grain deal, a move that undermines efforts to ease a global food crisis, with Ukraine saying Moscow had planned the move well in advance.

The Turkey and UN-brokered deal was signed between Russia and Ukraine in July under which Moscow allowed the grain ships to leave Ukrainian Black Sea ports. The agreement has already allowed more than 9 million tonnes of Ukrainian grain to be exported and was due to be renewed on November 19.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Sunday expressed "deep concern" as Ukraine's maritime grain exports were halted.

"The Secretary-General continues to engage in intense contacts aiming at the end of the Russian suspension of its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative," Guterres' spokesman said.

"The same engagement also aims at the renewal and full implementation of the initiative to facilitate exports of food and fertilizer from Ukraine, as well as removing the remaining obstacles to the exports of Russian food and fertilizer."

A ship with 40,000 tons of grain bound for Ethiopia under the United Nations aid program could not leave Ukraine on Sunday as a result of Russia's suspension of the deal, said Olexandr Kubrakov, Ukraine's minister of infrastructure.

Currently, some 176 ships loaded with grain are being prevented from sailing from Ukraine's ports, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, adding it was destined for seven million people in need.

Moscow suspended its participation in the deal on Saturday, effectively blocking shipments from Ukraine, one of the world's top grain exporters, in response to what it called a major Ukrainian drone attack earlier in the day on its Black Sea Fleet headquarters near the port of Sevastopol in Russian-annexed Crimea.

"Russia's decision to suspend participation in the Black Sea deal puts at risk the main export route of much needed grain and fertilisers to address the global food crisis caused by its war against Ukraine," European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on Twitter on Sunday.

"The EU urges Russia to [reverse] its decision."

The center coordinating the deal's logistics said in a statement that no traffic was planned for Sunday.

"A joint agreement has not been reached at the JCC for the movement of inbound and outbound vessels on 30 October," it said in a statement. "There are more than ten vessels both outbound and inbound waiting to enter the corridor."

US President Joe Biden on Saturday called the move "purely outrageous", saying it would increase hunger, while US Secretary of State Antony Blinken accused Moscow of weaponising food.



South Korea Mourns, Wants Answers After Halloween Crush

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Shocked family members collected bodies, parents searched for children and a country sought answers on Sunday after at least 153 people were crushed to death when a crowd in South Korea surged in an alleyway during Halloween festivities.

President Yoon Suk-yeol declared a period of national mourning and designated Seoul's popular Itaewon district a disaster zone after the Saturday night disaster.

"This news came like a bolt from the blue sky," said a father who burst into tears as he collected his daughter's body from a morgue in the nation's capital.

A huge crowd celebrating in Itaewon surged into an alley, killing at least 153 people, most of them in their 20s, emergency officials said, adding the death toll could rise. The parties, some still in their teens and many in Halloween costumes, were ready to enjoy the bars, nightclubs and restaurants where the revelry routinely spills over into narrow and often steep side streets.

Instead, the street became filled with people crying for help, while emergency workers desperately sought to free trapped bodies and perform CPR on people played across the debris-littered ground.

Choi Sung-beom, head of the Yongsan Fire Station, told a briefing at the scene 82 people were injured, 19 of them seriously. The deaths included 22 foreigners, he said.

Families and friends desperately sought word of loved ones at community centres turned into facilities for missing people.

At least 90% of the victims had been identified by midday, with delays affecting some foreign nationals and teenagers who did not yet have identification cards, the Interior Ministry said.

Makeshift memorials began appearing near the site, with onlookers leaving flowers and notes.

President Yoon expressed condolences to the victims and his wishes for a speedy recovery to the many injured in one of the South Korea's worst disasters and the world's worst stampedes in decades.

"This is truly tragic," he said in a statement, vowing an investigation into the cause of the disaster. "A tragedy and disaster that should not have happened took place in the heart of Seoul last night."



Higher LNG Exports May Turbocharge U.S. Energy Transition



LITTLETON (Dispatches) - Sales of U.S. "freedom gas" are on track to smash volume and earnings records in 2022, but the stellar short-term gains for exporters may have long-term consequences for the entire U.S. energy sector due to the resulting higher natural gas prices.

Total U.S. liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports jumped nearly 11% in the first 10 months of 2022 from the same period in 2021, Kpler data shows, but soared nearly 150% to Europe as desperate buyers there paid top dollar to replace reduced Russian pipelined supplies.

Revenues from that export bonanza have been equally eye-catching, topping \$25 billion through July, according to the latest data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), compared with just over \$13 billion in the same slot in 2021.

Those higher European purchases have affected far more than just the gas exporters who raked in record profits.

The entire U.S. power market has been churned by the resulting rise in domestic gas costs, which have averaged 85% more through October than in the same period last year.

That has not only added to inflationary woes for American households and industry, but has also made power produced from renewable sources look cheaper - and more attractive - than ever.

The administration of former president Donald Trump touted U.S. liquefied natural gas as "freedom gas" that gives Europe an alternative to Russian supply.

Natural gas is by far the largest power source in the United States, accounting for 37.1% of power generation across the lower 48 states through Oct. 24, EIA data shows.

U.S. gas production is on track to surpass 2021's record tally of 34.5 trillion cubic feet this year, with so-called dry natural gas output through July running 3.8% above the same point in 2021.

However, that higher output pace has been dwarfed by the growth in total U.S. natural gas exports, which climbed by 7.1% over the same period thanks to a 14.3% surge in LNG shipments.

Domestic gas demand has also outgrown production, climbing nearly 5% in the opening seven months of 2022, and leading to a tightening in the overall U.S. gas market despite the record output pace.

As the brisk LNG export pace and uptick in local use resulted in reduced supplies for domestic consumers, U.S. gas prices have trended higher, averaging \$6.60 per MMBtu through Oct. 24 compared with \$3.56 for the same period last year.

Forward markets suggest prices will stay elevated well into 2023, with benchmark prices for LNG in Asia holding sharply above U.S. domestic prices through the end of next year, presenting sustained profit-making opportunities for LNG exporters.

At the same time, however, the sustained stretch of above-normal gas prices is likely to spur substitution toward lower-cost alternatives by utilities, households and businesses alike.

According to the EIA's Annual Energy Outlook for 2022, which estimated costs for electricity from new facilities entering service in 2024, the leveled cost of electricity from a natural gas plant already exceeded that from onshore wind and standalone solar installations.

Since the report's publication in March, natural gas prices have pushed more than 20% higher, while the outlook for renewable energy supply has sharply increased thanks to aggressive new government support for clean energy projects in the recently passed Inflation Reduction Act.

Indeed, the combination of sizeable government subsidies for clean energy supplies and the prevailing high cost of power from natural gas are likely to accelerate power-source switching in a variety of ways.

Portuguese Textiles Become Int'l Player



LISBON (Dispatches) - Shaken in the last 20 years by competition from Asia, Portugal's textile industry has found its footing again and become a major player, supplying firms not just in Europe but also in the United States.

The industry has benefited from its flexibility and inexpensive labour along with a spirit of innovation focused on limiting damage to the environment.

Near Vila Nova de Famalicao, in the northern district of Porto, the Riopelle factory hums with a deafening noise of nearly 200 state-of-the-art weaving machines that run 24 hours a day six days a week.

The textile industry's advantages are "reactivity and the capacity to adapt", engineer Jose Rosas told AFP as he stood by a digital screen where he follows the massive workshop's activity in real time.

One of the jewels in an industry anchored in the Ave valley, the company founded in 1927 and its thousand employees are struggling to meet orders after a respite during the Covid crisis.

Every day, the factory produces 40,000 meters of fabric, 98 per cent of which is earmarked for export.

Among its growing customers are Spain's Inditex, which owns Zara, and France's SMCP (Sandro, Maje, Claudie Pierlot and Fursac), according to Portuguese industry figures.

There is also increased demand from firms in Germany and Italy as well as in the United States such as Tommy Hilfinger.

Customers value a "capacity to be different" from foreign competition, Riopelle group director Albertina Reis told AFP, citing her firm's ability to use "new techniques" for sustainable output without compromising on aesthetics.

Alberto Paccanelli, who heads Brussels-based Euratex, which represents the European textile and clothing industry, paid tribute to Portugal's sector.

"Portugal has the advantage of a workforce that remains competitive" by offering "quality products at reasonable prices," according to the president of Euratex, which held its annual conference in Porto in mid-October.

Portugal's textile sector has made a dramatic comeback.

Shaken by competition from companies relocating to Asia for cheaper production costs, the sector lost between the years 2000 and 2015 nearly 100,000 jobs out of a total of 235,000 recorded at the start of the era, according to the Portuguese Textile Association (ATP).

Riopelle is one of Portugal's biggest textile producers but there are many others, including JF Almeida and the TMG group.

Since then, the sector has resumed hiring, benefiting from a minimum salary of €705 (RM3,329) per month paid over 14 months, one of the lowest wages in the European Union, after those in eastern Europe.

Exports of textile products from Portugal, which find their largest markets in Spain and France, hit last year the record sales figure of 5.4 billion euros, 16.4 percent higher than the previous year, according to the ATP.

The industry group hopes to do even better this year. This success is owing not only to Portugal's low production costs, but also to the sector's capacity to "adapt to the market", ATP President Mario Jorge Machado said.

Following the pandemic, which led to delays in deliveries, the industry prefers to use supply chains that are closer to home, Machado said.

"The companies understood that they needed to find solutions and partners to reconcile sustainable development with competitiveness," he said, hitting on the theme of the Porto conference.



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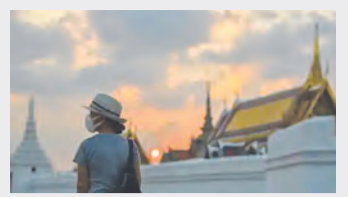
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Thailand Receives Over 7m Foreign Tourist Arrivals Jan-Oct

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Thailand recorded 7.35 million foreign tourist arrivals from Jan. 1 to Oct. 26, as the vital sector picks up following an easing of coronavirus restrictions, the Tourism Authority of Thailand said.

The top five source markets were Malaysia with 1.25 million arrivals, India with 661,751, Laos with 538,789, Cambodia with 373,811, and Singapore with 365,593, the TAT said in a statement dated Friday. A revival of tourism is a key driver of growth in Southeast Asia's second-largest economy, and the finance ministry on Friday predicted 10.3 million foreign tourist arrivals this year and 21.5 million in 2023.



Kazakhstan's President Unveils Plans To Attract Foreign Investments

ASTANA (Dispatches) - Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev revealed the country's plans to attract up to nearly \$150 billion in foreign direct investments (FDI) by 2030.

In his address to the People's Coalition as a candidate for the presidency, President Tokayev vowed that the National Fund assets would reach \$100 billion within seven years.

"Everything that rightfully belongs to the people of Kazakhstan will serve their interests," he said as part of his election campaign program titled "Just Kazakhstan: For All and For Everyone." "To do this, we will ensure effective management of the fund and increase its investment income."

According to the Kazakh president, the primary focus will be placed on strengthening the country's manufacturing sector, modernization of infrastructure, and building up energy capacities.

"We will give a powerful impetus to the agricultural sector, strengthen the basic industries and create new industries that produce highly processed products," President Tokayev said. "We will pursue a balanced and transparent tax, budget, monetary, and tariff policy. We will take systematic measures to curb inflation."

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev believes that such an economic system "will become the basis for the sustainable growth of the well-being of our people."

Kazakhstan has lured nearly \$400 billion of foreign direct investments since 1991, turning the country's economy into the wealthiest and largest one in Central Asia.

Officials in Kazakhstan have long been working to increase the country's investment attractiveness by reviewing policies and introducing various benefits for doing business. In 2019, the Kazakh government announced the country's intent to join the world's top 30 economies by 2050.

Doing business in Kazakhstan has become easier, according to the World Bank's 2020 ranking. The country ranked 25th, ahead of countries like Russia (#28) and China (#31), and some of the world's developed economies, such as Italy (#58) and Brazil (#124).

One of Kazakhstan's bold initiatives to attract investors and improve the investment climate is the introduction of a new investment policy concept, which aims to bring the level of investment in fixed assets to 25.1 percent of GDP and increase the inflow of FDI to \$25.5 billion in 2026.

Kazakhstan's economy is recovering well from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021, foreign direct investment (FDI) flows into the Kazakh economy rebounded to pre-pandemic levels reaching \$23.8 billion and growing 38.9 percent compared to 2020. Yet, the World Bank expects this to slow mainly because of the fallout from the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Moscow's aggression against Ukraine and subsequent Western sanctions are significantly affecting Kazakhstan, a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) that shares a long border and has extensive trade and economic relations with Russia. The Kazakh national currency has lost value due to the volatility of the Russian ruble. Kazakhstan has also been burdened by the measures taken to comply with Western embargos on Russia to avoid being subject to secondary sanctions.

Italian Inflation Surges in October Ahead of Euro Zone Figures

ROME (Dispatches) - Italian inflation surged to a new record high in October, data showed, underscoring the economic challenges facing new Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and increasing the risk of a further rise in the euro zone as a whole.

Italy's EU-harmonized consumer price index (HICP) jumped a preliminary 12.8% year-on-year, the highest level since the series began in 1996, from 9.4% in September, statistics bureau ISTAT reported.

The data far outstripped expectations for a 9.9% rate in a Reuters survey.

Energy price inflation leapt to 73.2% from 44.5% the month before, ISTAT reported, while core inflation, net of energy and fresh food, climbed to 5.7% from 5.3%.

"Inflation at this level is one of the immense economic problems for the new government, which only has limited resources to tackle them because of the huge public debt," said Lorenzo Codogno, the head of LC Macro Advisors and a former chief economist at the Italian Treasury.

He said Meloni should direct government help to poor families rather than the general population, by directly paying a proportion of their energy bills and thus easing their financial burden and also reducing prices.

"Looking ahead, conditions don't seem to be there yet to call the inflation peak," ING bank said in a note to clients, citing pipeline pressures evident in producer price data for September.

"What we will likely see is more volatility in headline numbers over the next few months."

Energy driven, sky-high inflation around the euro zone led the European Central Bank to hike its deposit rate on Thursday for the third time since July, but prices now seem to be rising faster in Italy than in most of its euro zone neighbours.

Inflation in Germany climbed to 11.6% in October from 10.9% the month before. France jumped to 7.1% from 6.2%, while in Spain it eased to 7.3% from 9.0%.

Data for the 19-nation currency bloc will be released on Monday.

On Friday the ECB's Survey of Professional Forecasters, a key input in policy deliberations, showed euro zone inflation will be higher than feared for years to come and could stay above the bank's 2% target indefinitely.

The share of income Italians were able to save between March and August fell by 78% compared with the first two months of the year, research by online bank N26 showed, a much sharper drop than seen in Germany, France or Spain.



China's Biggest Refiner Sees Profits Drop Amid Weak Fuel Demand

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Sinopec, the biggest refiner in China and Asia, has suffered from the Covid lockdowns and weaker Chinese fuel demand this year as its January-September net profit dropped by 5.6% compared to the same period of last year.

Sinopec's net profit declined to \$7.8 billion (56.66 billion Chinese yuan) in the nine months to September, according to a stock exchange filing, as demand was slack while operating costs jumped with high energy prices and high crude oil prices.

Revenues, however, increased by 23% to \$338 billion (2.45 trillion yuan) between January and September. The fuel refining business suffered from the snap Covid lockdowns in China this year, which have weighed on fuel demand in the country and have had analysts concerned about the trend in oil demand in the world's top crude oil importer.

Another major state-held Chinese corporation, PetroChina, however, saw its profit jump by 60% year-on-year to \$16.66 billion from January to September. PetroChina is the second-largest refiner in China and the biggest oil and gas producer in Asia.

Despite pandemic lockdowns across the nation, PetroChina saw its domestic crude oil output rise by 2.7% and its domestic gas output rise by 5.1% from January to September. Numbers for refining, however, were lower than in the same period in 2021, with PetroChina crude oil refining down 1.8%, reflecting consumption stifled by the ongoing zero-Covid policy.

Pakistan Needs at Least \$16.3b for Post-Flood Rehab

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Putting the flood damage and loss estimates at over \$30 billion (around Rs6.5 trillion), leading international agencies have warned of a substantial increase in poverty levels, widening fiscal and external account deficits amid political and economic instability.

Based on these estimates, Pakistan called for relaxing the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) conditions and demanded "climate justice" to invest in rehabilitation and climate adaptation efforts.

The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) — conducted jointly by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the European Union with the support of the Pakistan government — called for a coordinated international support for \$16.3bn (Rs3.5tr) funding for recovery and building disaster resilient economy, infrastructure and institutions to fight rising challenges of climate change.

"Given Pakistan's limited fiscal resources, significant international support and private investment will be essential for a comprehensive and resilient recovery," said the PDNA report, adding that Pakistan's commitment to accelerate reforms would be critical to generating more domestic and international resources for efficient and effective utilization.

The report was formally launched at a function presided over by Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, who requested the IMF to allow Pakistan to utilize its development funds for disaster recovery, particularly the condition of spending at least 40 per cent of the development budget only in the last quarter of the financial year, which he said was unwarranted under current circumstances and must be revised.

Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman said on the occasion that Pakistan had geared up its efforts to make a case for "climate justice" at the COP27 climate change conference in Egypt next month.

The PDNA report laid bare the inadequacy of Pakistani institutions and systems related to urban planning, water management, infrastructure maintenance, governance structures and risk management and reduction capacity, but it noted that the devastating flooding was "one in a 1,000-year" event that further exposed these weaknesses.

Erdogan Inaugurates Plant for Togg Turkey's 1st National Car

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The Turkish public is witnessing another milestone: The long-anticipated opening of a massive manufacturing plant that will be building the country's first domestic car brand.

The opening ceremony in the northwestern province of Bursa on Saturday, coinciding with the 99th anniversary of the Turkish Republic, marks the official start of the mass production for the car that is expected to hit the road in the coming months.

The event, which has also seen Togg's first all-electric SUV being rolled off the assembly line, puts Turkey and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan closer to fulfilling a long-held dream of building the country's first national automobile.

The Turkish leader has long pushed industrialists to build a domestic automobile as part of his vision for making Turkey an economic powerhouse.

The vehicle is being produced by a consortium of five Turkish companies called the Automobile Initiative Group of Turkey, or Togg, in cooperation with the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB).

Construction of Togg's engineering, design and production facilities began in mid-2020, almost two years after President Erdogan unveiled the consortium, which is led by former tech-giant Bosch executive Mehmet Gürcan Karakaş. The plant has been built on an area of 1.2 million square meters (12.92 million square feet) in Bursa's Gemlik district.

Bursa is dubbed the country's automotive capital as it is home to manufacturing facilities of many foreign brands, including the Turkish-French joint venture Oyak Renault and Tofaş, a joint venture of Turkey's Koç Holding and Italian-American carmaker Fiat Chrysler.

In December 2019, Erdogan unveiled SUV and sedan prototypes of Togg, both fully electric and C-segment models. The SUV is expected to hit the market in the first quarter of 2023 and will be the first electric sport utility vehicle produced in continental Europe by a nontraditional manufacturer.

Togg will be manufacturing five different models — SUV, sedan, C-hatchback, B-SUV and B-MPV — through 2030. Mass production of the SUV will be followed by the sedan.

The brand aims to produce 1 million vehicles across five different segments by 2030.

The car was designed by Italy's Pininfarina design company, which has created models for Ferrari and California-based electric carmaker Karma.

Togg has opted for advanced lithium-ion battery technology company Farasis as its business partner for the battery. The homegrown car is expected to reach 80% charge in under 30 minutes with fast charging. It will have a range of between 300 kilometers to 500 kilometers (186 miles to 310 miles).

Apple Earnings Rise as Economic Gloom Hits Tech



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Apple Inc reported revenue and profit that topped Wall Street targets, one of the few bright spots in a tech sector battered by spending cutbacks due to inflation.

The forecast for the holiday quarter was more grim. While not providing specific numbers, Apple said revenue growth would fall below 8% in the December quarter but did not go as far as Amazon.com, whose dire holiday outlook sent its shares down 14%.

Apple shares initially dipped in after-hours trading but recovered in positive territory.

The Cupertino, California-based tech giant was saved by its oldest technology, its laptop computers, while its star, the iPhone, stumbled.

Although iPhone sales were not as strong as some analysts had targeted, they were still a record for the September quarter. Mac sales of \$11.5 billion were far ahead of analyst estimates of \$9.36 billion.

Apple's results showed some resilience in the face of a weak economy and strong U.S. dollar that has led to disastrous reports from many tech companies. Like Facebook parent Meta and Snap, Apple is seeing softness in advertising spending.

Overall, Apple said quarterly revenue rose 8% to \$90.1 billion, above estimates of \$88.9 billion, and net profit was \$1.29 per share, topping with the average analyst estimate of \$1.27 per share, according to Refinitiv data.

"We did better than we anticipated, in spite of the fact that foreign exchange was a significant negative for us," said Chief Financial Officer Luca Maestri.

The rising U.S. dollar has hit many companies such as Apple that generate substantial foreign revenue and are getting less cash back when they convert it. For consumers, it increases the price of new devices when bought in countries outside of the United States.

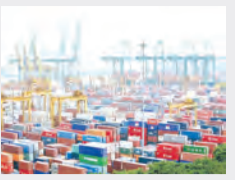
Iran Non-Oil Exports Up By 25% in Month

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Spokesman for the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade announced on Sunday evening that Iran's export of non-oil commodities in the Iranian month of Mehr (Sep. 21 - Oct. 22) registered a 25 percent hike.

Iran's export of non-oil goods from Sept. 21 to Oct. 22 showed a 25 percent increase as compared to a month earlier, Omid Ghalibaf added.

Turning to Iran's foreign trade value, he said that country's value of foreign trade exceeded \$60 billion during the seven months of the current year (from March 21 to Oct. 22). Iran's import of goods in the Iranian month of Mehr hit \$5.7 billion, showing a 30 percent hike as compared to a month earlier.

Iran's foreign trade value in seven months of the current year exceeded \$60 billion, Ghalibaf reiterated.



Poland Chooses U.S. to Build Its First Nuclear Power Plant

WARSAW (Dispatches) - Poland has chosen the U.S. government and Westinghouse to build the central European country's first nuclear power plant, part of an effort to burn less coal and gain greater energy independence.

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said late Friday on Twitter that Poland would use the "reliable, safe technology" of the Westinghouse Electric Company for the plant in Pomerania province near the Baltic Sea coast. The exact location remains to be identified.

A strong Poland-U.S. alliance "guarantees the success of our joint initiatives," Morawiecki said.

Poland is planning to spend \$40 billion to build two nuclear power plants with three reactors each, the last one to be launched in 2043. The deal with the U.S. and Westinghouse is for the first three reactors of the Pomerania plant, which officials saying should start producing electricity in 2033.

Poland has planned for decades to build a nuclear power plant to replace its aging coal-fired plants in a country with some of the worst air pollution in Europe. Construction of a Soviet-technology nuclear plant began in the early 1980s, when Poland was in the East Bloc.

Protests by residents and environmentalists, the 1986 disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine and budget shortages led to the scrapping of the project.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine this year and its use of energy to put economic and political pressure on European nations have added urgency to Poland's search for alternative energy sources.

Polish government spokesman Piotr Mueller said Saturday that the government would adopt a decision at its meeting Wednesday, which will launch environmental approval and investment procedures.

Mueller said the nuclear plant in northern Poland would require improving infrastructure in the area, including roads.

U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said the project would create or sustain more than 100,000 jobs for American workers.

"This is a HUGE step in strengthening our relationship with Poland to create



energy security for future generations to come," Granholm said.

"This announcement also sends a clear message to Russia: We will not let them weaponize energy any longer," Granholm said. "The West will stand together against this unprovoked aggression, while also diversifying energy supply chains and bolstering climate cooperation."

Poland had also considered offers from France and South Korea. Poland State Assets Minister Jacek Sasin suggested there could still be a role for South Korea in the project and more talks are scheduled in Seoul next week.

Westinghouse has sued in federal court to block a potential deal for competitor Korea Hydro and Nuclear Power to sell reactors to Poland.

The United States is one of the most important allies of NATO-member Poland. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February, the U.S. increased its military presence in the country, creating a permanent presence for the first time, and using Poland as a hub for sending weapons to Ukraine.

China's Largest Banks Weather Property Woes But Margins Narrow



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's largest lenders have posted third-quarter profit rises of more than 4% as their diverse lending portfolios kept them above the fray of property market woes.

But banks mostly logged shrinking net interest margins - a key gauge of bank profitability - in a sign that loan demand is weak as the world's second-largest economy slows.

Industrial and Commercial Bank of China Ltd, the world's largest commercial lender by assets, said net profit rose 6.8% year-on-year in the third quarter in a Friday filing.

Agricultural Bank of China Ltd., Bank of Communications Co Ltd and Bank of China Ltd, followed suit with net profit up 6.4%, 6.7% and 4.83%, respectively.

China Construction Bank, led the pack with net profit growth of 8.61%.

The diversity of China's largest bank portfolios has insulated them against the turmoil in the property market, which has seen loan defaults mount and cash-flow issues continue to dog the industry.

"Big state-owned banks' lending to property developers accounts for 3%-7% of their total loans ... a proportion lower than small and medium-sized lenders," said Vivian Xue, director of financial institutions at Fitch Ratings, referring to the position at the end of the first half.

"And the big banks mainly lend to state-owned or high-quality developers," Xue added.

However, most of the lenders logged a squeeze on net interest margins (NIMs).

ICBC's NIM fell to 1.98% at the end of September compared with 2.03% at the end of the prior quarter. AgBank and BoCom also saw a small fall over the same period, to 1.96% from 2.02% and 1.50% from 1.53% respectively. CCB's slid to 2.05% from 2.09%.

BoC bucked the trend with a slight uptick from 1.76% at the end of June to 1.77% at the end of September.

China's third-quarter GDP data showed domestic demand waned towards the end of the quarter as a flare-up in coronavirus cases led to lockdowns, while export growth slowed and the key property sector further cooled, pointing to a fraught recovery.

"As overall credit demand remained weak, Chinese banks have to lower loan-interest rates to lend out money, posing pressure on their net interest margins," said Michael Zeng, a banking analyst at Daiwa Capital Markets.

Zeng expects the sector's NIM to further narrow in the fourth quarter.

What Is Long COVID and Who's at Risk?

LONDON (Dispatches) - SARS-CoV-2 infection can saddle people with persistent symptoms. An ongoing NIH effort will examine the long-term health effects of infection.

You may have heard the big long COVID news that came out recently: A Scottish study reported that about half of people infected with SARS-CoV-2 have not fully

recovered six to 18 months after infection. That result echoes what many doctors and patients have been saying for months. Long COVID is a serious problem and a huge number of people are dealing with it.

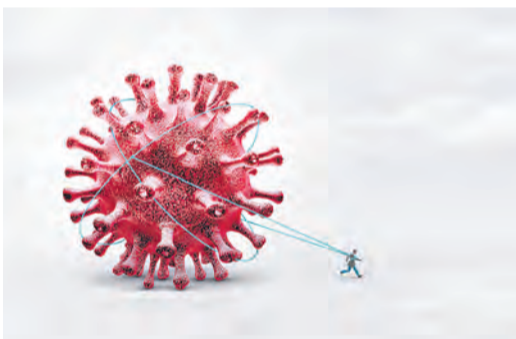
But it's tough to find treatments for a disease that is still so ill-defined. One major research effort in the United States hopes to change that. And one of my colleagues, Science News' News Director Macon Morehouse, got a peek into the process.

In the last two months, Morehouse has donated 15 vials of blood, two urine specimens and a sample of saliva. Technicians have measured her blood pressure, oxygen level, height, weight and waist circumference and counted how many times she could rise from sitting to standing in 30 seconds. Morehouse is not sick, nor is she collecting data for her health. She's doing it for science.

Morehouse is participating in a long COVID study at Howard University in Washington D.C. It's part of a many-armed giant of a project with an eye on one thing: the long-term health effects of COVID-19. Launched last year by the National Institutes of Health, the RECOVER Initiative aims to enroll roughly 60,000 adults and children. At the Howard site, Morehouse is volunteer No. 182.

She's somewhat of a unicorn among study participants: As far as she knows, Morehouse has never had COVID-19. Ultimately, some 10 percent of participants will include people who have avoided the virus, says Stuart Katz, a cardiologist and a RECOVER study leader at NYU Langone Health in New York City. Scientists continue to sign up volunteers, but "omicron made it harder to find uninfected people," he says.

RECOVER scientists need participants like Morehouse so the researchers can compare them with people who developed long COVID. That might reveal what the disease is — and who it tends to strike. "Our



goals are to define long COVID and to understand what's your risk of getting [it] after COVID infection," Katz says. Their results could be a first step toward developing treatments.

Within the pandemic's first year, doctors noticed that some COVID-19 patients developed long-term symptoms such as brain fog, fatigue and chronic cough. In

December 2020, Katz and other physicians and scientists convened to discuss what was known. The answer, it turned out, was not much. "This is a novel virus," he says. "Nobody knew what it could do." Around the same time, Congress OK'd \$1.15 billion for the NIH to study COVID-19's long-term health consequences.

Fast forward five months, and the agency had awarded nearly \$470 million to NYU Langone Health to serve as the hub for its long COVID studies. "The whole thing was on a very, very compressed timeline," Katz says. NYU then hustled to come up with a study plan focused on three main groups: adults, children/families and finally, tissue samples from people who died after having COVID-19. It wasn't your typical research project, Katz says. "We were charged with studying a disease that didn't have a definition."

Today, RECOVER has enrolled just over half of a target 17,680 adults. Katz hopes to cross this finish line by spring 2023. The child-focused part of the project has further to go. The goal is to enroll nearly 20,000 children; so far, they've got around 1,200, says Diana Bianchi, director of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and a member of RECOVER's executive committee.

Some scientists and patients have criticized RECOVER for moving too slowly. As someone who has recovered from long COVID himself, Katz says he gets it. "We started a year and a half ago, and we don't yet have definitive answers," he says. "For people that have been suffering, I can understand how it's disappointing."

But for RECOVER — with more than 400 doctors, scientists and other experts involved, roughly 180 sites across the country enrolling participants and a grant timeline that scuttled the usual order of events — the old saying about building the plane while flying it fits, Katz says. "We are working very, very hard to move as quickly as we can."

Security Forces Arrest...

FROM PAGE 1

CCTV footage of Shah Cheragh published by Iran's police shows an ISIS terrorist attacker shooting people inside the holy site of Shah Cheragh.

Police immediately arrested the attacker after he launched the attack. He died later in the hospital due to injuries.

The ISIS terrorist group claimed responsibility for the bloody attack.

On the same day, Iran's police and security forces foiled a bombing attempt in Shiraz. The perpetrator of the failed bombing was identified and arrested in Shiraz.

He wanted to detonate his bomb in a crowded Maali Abad neighborhood in Shiraz.

Possible German Sanctions...

FROM PAGE 1

The spokesman also described the activity of the London-based Iran International news channel as similar to a "terrorist media", saying Iran's viewpoints on the news network have been conveyed to Saudi Arabia — which funds the channel — through diplomatic channels.

Iran International, he said, is serving as a "war room" for operations against the Iranian nation, adding that Tehran is pursuing legal measures against the "pseudo-medium".

Kanaani then turned to the issue of the Iran nuclear deal and the International Atomic Energy Agency, saying outstanding issues between Iran and the IAEA will be resolved if the agency abandons "politicking".

The spokesman also touched on the call by the IAEA chief on Iran to fulfill its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal. "If the agency does not engage in politicking, issues between the two sides could be surely resolved with a technical approach and expert and technical negotiations," he said.

The spokesman also hailed slain Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani's major role in countering Daesh, warning of the worldwide impact of the terrorist group's crimes had it not been for the Islamic Republic's counter-terrorism efforts.

General Soleimani, Iran's lead anti-terror commander, was assassinated in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3, 2020, three years after he declared the final victory against Daesh.

"If it weren't for the leading role Iran and eminent General Soleimani played in the fight against Takfiri terrorism and Daesh, the whole world and all those claiming to champion human rights would be still impacted by the crimes of this terrorist group," Kanaani said.

Kanaani made the remarks while lamenting the martyrdom of 13 pilgrims, including a woman and two children, in a Wednesday terrorist attack targeting the Shah Cheragh shrine in the southern province of Fars.

Asked to comment on Western countries' interference in Iran's internal affairs, including in the recent nationwide riots, Kanaani slammed their "unconstructive, and irresponsible measures" and "meddlesome statements" which, he said, turned peaceful protests into riots.

He added that due to the current state of riots, the voice of those who wanted to peacefully express their criticisms could not be heard.

Elsewhere in his press conference, Kanaani said European officials claim they're supporting women's rights while endorsing indiscriminate sanctions imposed by the US against Iran that target women and children.

The spokesman added the U.S. and its European allies' "hypocritical" stance on the unrest further paved the way for chaos across the country.

IRGC Seizes Foreign...

FROM PAGE 1

Back on May 27, the IRGC seized two Greek oil tankers in the Persian Gulf over violations, days after an Iranian oil tanker was captured by Greece in its territorial waters followed by transfer of its oil to the US.

"The IRGC Navy today seized two Greek oil tankers for violations they have carried in the azure waters of the Persian Gulf," the IRGC said in a statement at the time.

In mid-August, the Iranian-flagged tanker Lana left Greece after fully recovering its oil cargo that had been illegally confiscated by the United States.

Analysts have described the failed US attempt to seize Iranian oil cargo as a major blow to Washington's campaign of maximum pressure on Iran.

China Warns U.S. to...

FROM PAGE 1

The top diplomats discussed the need to "responsibly manage the competition between our two countries," Blinken wrote in a tweet.

Meanwhile, Blinken brought up the issue of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the US Department of State said in a separate statement.

The Biden administration has stressed the need to maintain and keep open lines of communication between the two countries, but also recently highlighted the implications if Beijing were to support Moscow in the Ukraine conflict.

As Russia's strategic partner, China has been firmly on the fence on the Ukraine conflict, criticizing the Western sanctions against Russia but stopping short of endorsing Moscow's military operation that is now in its ninth month.

Blinken also discussed with his Chinese counterpart the need to responsibly manage Sino-US relations, according to the statement.

Chinese President Xi Jinping said on Wednesday that China was willing to work with the United States to find ways for peaceful coexistence and mutual prosperity.

The call between the top diplomats comes amid reports that Biden has expressed his willingness to hold his first face-to-face talks with Jinping on the sidelines of the next month's G20 summit in Indonesia.

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: http://www.irannewsdaily.com

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Ledecky Smashes World Record

TORONTO (Dispatches) - American swimmer Katie Ledecky broke the women's short-course world record in the 1,500 metre freestyle at the FINA Swimming World Cup in Toronto, shaving nearly 10 seconds off the previous mark set by Germany's Sarah Wellbrock.
Ledecky, a 10-times Olympic medalist, led from wire to wire on her way to capture the gold in a time of 15:08.24, which was more than 40 seconds faster than second-place finisher Beatriz Dizotti of Brazil (15:48.82).

Vingegaard Wins Inaugural Singapore Criterium

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Jonas Vingegaard put on a blistering show in the final lap to win the inaugural Tour de France Singapore Criterium cycling race.
The reigning Tour de France champion broke away in the crucial last kilometre of the 65km street race in Singapore's Marina Bay district.
Battling against a hot tropical sun, the Danish cycling star threw both hands in the air in triumph as he crossed the finish line.

Hornets Sting NBA Warriors in Overtime

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - PJ Washington scored 31 points, including six in overtime, as the Charlotte Hornets beat reigning NBA champion Golden State 120-113 as Stephen Curry's hometown heroics didn't pan out.
The Oklahoma City Thunder also won in overtime on Saturday, edging the Mavericks in Dallas 117-111.
Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder with 38 points, six rebounds and nine assists. Dallas star Luka Doncic had a triple-double of 31 points, 16 rebounds and 10 assists, but the Mavs squandered a 16-point lead in the final five minutes of regulation.
It was also close in Utah, where three-point shots by Kelly Olynyk and Malik Beasley put the Jazz up 124-120 with 23 seconds remaining.
Dillon Brooks nailed a three-pointer for Memphis with 15.6 seconds left, but the Grizzlies — playing without star Ja Morant — wouldn't get another shot and Utah won 124-123.
At Charlotte, Gordon Hayward scored 23 points and Kelly Oubre added 18 for the Hornets, who once again spoiled Warriors star Curry's trip to the city where he played high school basketball and his father, Dell Curry, starred for the Hornets.
The Warriors haven't won in Charlotte since February of 2019, and the Hornets kept that streak alive despite the absence of injured LaMelo Ball and Terry Rozier.
Curry led the Warriors with 31 points and 11 rebounds. He missed a contested three-pointer at the end of regulation that would have given Golden State the win.
The Warriors, trailing 62-50 at halftime, battled back to seize a four-point lead on Andrew Wiggins' dunk with 62 seconds left in the fourth quarter, but baskets from Washington and Dennis Smith tied it at 107-107 with 23.1 seconds remaining.
Curry had the ball as the clock ticked down, but could barely get the shot up in the face of swarming defence by Smith. "I got wrapped in the trying to play hero ball in a hometown buzzer-beater type situation," Curry admitted.
In overtime, Jalen McDaniels turned the tide for the Hornets with a three-pointer that put them up 114-111 with 2:01 remaining.



Smith followed with a driving layup as the Hornets pulled away. In Brooklyn, the Nets' early-season struggles continued with a 125-116 loss to the Indiana Pacers.
The Nets, featuring the superstar duo of Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving, have lost four in a row to fall to 1-5 in the young season.
Rookie Benedict Mathurin scored a career-high 32 points for the Pacers, including a career-best six three-pointers.
Overall, the Pacers poured in 23 three-pointers, tying the record for most three-pointers made against the Nets in a game.
The Pacers also out-rebounded the Nets 53-34.
The Milwaukee Bucks, meanwhile, improved to 5-0 with a 123-115 victory over the Atlanta Hawks.
Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 30 of his 34 points in the second half and Jrue Holiday poured in another 34 for the Bucks, who battled back after slipping behind by one in the fourth quarter of a game in which they led by as many as 12.

Morata Suffers Swollen Ankle Before World Cup

MADRID (Dispatches) - Atletico Madrid said Alvaro Morata suffered a swollen ankle in the 3-2 La Liga defeat at Cadiz, leaving the Spain striker just three weeks to recover before the World Cup in Qatar.
Morata is Spain's main striker and has scored 27 goals in 57 appearances for the 2010 world champions.
"Alvaro Morata is suffering from soft tissue oedema in his ankle, according to medical tests he underwent on Sunday morning," Atletico said in a statement.
"The Spanish international striker was substituted after just 10 minutes in Saturday's game in Cadiz and the evolution of his discomfort will condition his return to the squad."
Spain, who are in Group E at the World Cup with Germany, Costa Rica and Japan, have yet to announce their final squad for the tournament. They begin their group campaign on November 23 against Costa Rica.

Pakistan Keep World Cup Hopes Alive

PERTH (Dispatches) - Pakistan kept their T20 World Cup semi-final hopes alive Sunday by cruising to a first win of the tournament while Bangladesh got their challenge back on track by holding off Zimbabwe in a thriller.
Pakistan hammered the Netherlands by six wickets in Perth, reaching their target of 92 off just 13.5 overs to boost their net run rate, crucial in a tight Group 2.
Pakistan restricted the Netherlands to 91-9, and then cruised to 95-4 with Mohammad Rizwan making 49.
Pakistan need to win their remaining matches against South Africa on Thursday and Bangladesh in a week's time and need other results to go their way to have any chance of securing a semi-final place.
"Very happy. Performed very well in the bowling and in the batting," said Pakistan captain Babar Azam.
"In my opinion we could chase better than this. But a win always gives you confidence. We'll try to do our best in the next matches and win."
It was the bowlers who set up victory for a Pakistan side that lost their opening Super 12 match to India and then suffered an upset defeat to Zimbabwe.
Man of the match Shadab Khan took 3-22 as Pakistan dominated a Dutch side who are now out of the semi-final running after a third straight defeat.
"I have bowled against a few of their players in county cricket, so I know how they play," said Shadab.
"All our bowlers bowled well. The fast bowlers put pressure on in the powerplay, and I took wickets because of the pressure that built."
Earlier in Brisbane, Bangladesh secured a dramatic last-ball win over Zimbabwe, aided by opener Najmul Shanto's maiden half-century and Taskin Ahmed's three wickets.
Shanto's 71 helped steer Bangladesh to 150-7 in a match that went to the wire with Zimbabwe needing 16 off a last over that turned into an incredible finale.
Two wickets fell, a big six was hit before the teams walked off thinking the match was over, only to be called back on the field.

Swiatek Disappointed by Halep's Failed Drugs Test



LONDON (Dispatches) - World number one Iga Swiatek said she was left feeling confused after Simona Halep was handed a provisional ban for doping and hoped there would be more clarity soon on the future of the Romanian player she has looked up to.
Two-times major winner Halep was provisionally suspended by the International Tennis Integrity Agency this month after she tested positive for the banned blood-booster roxadustat.
Halep was tested during the U.S. Open and both her A and B samples confirmed the presence of the anti-anaemia drug that stimulates the production of red blood cells, much like the prohibited substance Erythropoietin.
"Well, for sure it was confusing to me because I wouldn't expect hearing this news.

Simona, from my point of view, seems like a person who always cared about being fair and she was a great example for me," Swiatek said, speaking ahead of the WTA Finals tournament which begins in Fort Worth, Texas on Monday.
Halep had described the ban as the "biggest shock of her life" and denied knowingly taking any banned substance.
"I don't know how it works in terms of the system ... Is she going to be tested a couple of more times or whatever? Hopefully it's going to be more clear for fans and for us," Swiatek added.
"But it's disappointing and she must feel really bad. From my point of view, the most important thing for me is just taking care of myself, being safe always, making my environment more safe and being careful. So we'll do that."
Halep's ex-coach Darren Cahill, who worked with the former world number one for six years and guided her to her first Grand Slam title, said last week there was "no chance" she had knowingly taken a prohibited substance.

Arsenal Back On Top of the Premier League

LONDON (Dispatches) - Reiss Nelson was the unlikely hero as Arsenal retook top spot in the Premier League with a 5-0 thrashing of Nottingham Forest.
Nelson was introduced for the first time in the Premier League this season after Bukayo Saka was forced off with a concerning injury for England boss Gareth Southgate just weeks ahead of the World Cup.
Saka set up the opening goal for Gabriel Martinelli after just five minutes before being replaced due to an ankle injury.
Nelson struck his first Premier League goal since July 2020 early in the second half to give Arsenal breathing space.
He added a second just three minutes later and then teed up Thomas Partey to curl into the top corner.
Martin Odegaard rounded off a performance that shrugged off doubts over Arsenal's ability to contend for the title by firing high past Dean Henderson 13 minutes from time.
Victory lifts Mikel Arteta's men a point above Manchester City at the top of the table.
The Arsenal players came together to show support to teammate Pablo Mari before kick-off.
Mari, who is on loan at Monza, was stabbed during a knife attack in an Italian supermarket this week that left one person dead.
That incident put Arsenal's bad week on the field into perspective after a 1-1 draw at Southampton last weekend was followed by a 2-0 defeat to PSV Eindhoven in the Europa League.
Any fears that the Gunners were beginning to feel the fatigue of a packed schedule were blown away in a blistering opening.
Martinelli ducked to meet Saka's inviting cross with his head to open the floodgates.



Medvedev Wins Second Title of Year

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Daniil Medvedev celebrated becoming a father for the first time earlier this month with his second ATP title of the year in beating Canada's Denis Shapovalov 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 in the final in Vienna.
The 26-year-old former world number one dropped his first set of the week as Shapovalov produced some eye-catching tennis by firing down 21 winners.
However, Medvedev -- whose wife Daria gave birth to a baby girl on October 14 -- did not buckle and stormed back to level the match with some terrific shots of his own.
The third set was a procession as the Russian broke Shapovalov several times and eventually took the title with his sixth match point.
"I am really happy," said Medvedev, who had reached the quarter-finals on the only other occasion he played in Vienna.
"This match was the best of the week because Denis was really playing unreal until probably 4-3 in the second set.
"He dropped his level by maybe two percent and I was able to use it."
"This is one of the best victories when you know your opponent is on top of you, but you try and stay there and do what you can."
Medvedev's 15th career title sets him up nicely for the final two targets for him this season. First up is the Paris Masters, where he was runner-up to Novak Djokovic last year, which get underway on Monday and the ATP Finals in Turin on November 13-20. Medvedev won that event in 2020.
"I like to play indoor hard courts at the end of the season," said Medvedev.
"I feel that I do a great job with my team not to arrive burnt out."
"I am looking forward to the last two tournaments of the year which are really important and I usually play well."

