

Water Storage in the Dams of the Tehran Province Has Declined More Than 22% in the Current Water Year (Started in September 2021) Compared to the Previous Year, an Official With the Dam Sector Said

IRAN NEWS

Health Ministry Announced on Saturday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Stayed Unchanged at 144,633 With Another Zero Death Day Over the Past 24 Hours

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Integrated Governance of Energy Sector Stressed

TEHRAN (MNA) - The 27th meeting of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) Energy and Environment Committee was held in Tehran on Saturday, during which the attendees stressed the need for an integrated governance system in the country's energy sector.

The meeting was attended by Head of the TCCIMA Energy Committee Reza Padidar, the members of the committee, and the spokesperson of the Parliament's Energy Committee Malek Shariati-Niyasar, the TCCIMA portal reported.

Speaking at the meeting, Shariati-Niyasar pointed to different scenarios for the establishment of integrated energy governance in the country and said: "One method is to integrate the state-owned companies in the energy sector and privatize the rest. Another way is to bring all state companies, including the National Iranian Oil Company, under the governance of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs."

The official also mentioned the integration of the country's energy consumption sector as another scenario and specified that based on this scenario, the total consumption in this sector should be governed under a new organization supervised by the presidency.

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Iranians Pack Turkey's Van in Black Friday Shopping Frenzy

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Iranians flocked to Turkey's eastern Van province for "Black Friday" shopping, contributing to the momentum in the bookings of Turkish hotels that haven't received many reservations from the neighboring country due to the internet blackouts amid the ongoing protests in Iran.

The now-coming crowds caught Turkish hoteliers off guard and put a smile on the sector representatives' faces as the hotels immediately saw their occupancy rates reach 100% from around 30% earlier in the month.

Yunus Yuksel, head of the Van Hoteliers and Tourism Association (VANOTED), stated that the occupancy rate in the hotels reached 100%, noting: "There were around 4,000 tourists waiting at the Iran Customs Gate. These tourists most recently crossed the border as well. More than 10,000 visitors are expected to come to Van in this three-day period."

This year's tourism season has been particularly lively in Van, where Iranian tourists have occasionally come to shop in several holiday seasons. During the summer months, the occupancy rate of the hotels in the city reached 100%. However, the events that started in Iran in October hit the hotel owners due to the restriction of the internet. The occupancy rate in hotels dropped to 30% in November.

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Iran Main Confrontation Is With Global Hegemony



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says Iran's battle is not with a group of rioters who have recently wreaked havoc in the country, adding "the main confrontation is with the global hegemony".

"These few people are either oblivious, ignorant, or mercenaries," the Leader said in a meeting with a group of members of Basij volunteer force in the capital Tehran on Saturday.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the recent riots are part of the West's pressure on Iran to compromise on its rights in negotiations, including with the US, which have deadlocked over Washington's lack of commitment.

"A group people who claim to be politically knowledgeable, but whose analyses in newspapers and virtual space really sadden one, state that in order to end these riots, you should solve your problems with America."

"Negotiation will not solve our problems with America. Only one thing would solve our problem with America and that is paying ransom to America, but not just one ransom, they are demanding permanent ransom," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

"We are even told to listen to the voice of nation. Didn't you hear the sonorous voice of the nation during the November 4 rallies [on the National Day against the Global Arrogance] then? Today, the funeral processions of martyrs project the voice of the Iranian nation. Many Iranian held rallies and participated in the funerals in Karaj, Isfahan and Shiraz," the Leader said.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution also noted that Tehran has at times engaged in talks with the United States, but Washington has refused to remove sanctions against the Islamic Republic and has kept them in effect.

He underscored that the United States has spent billions of dollars as part of a plot to harm Iran, adding that future deals that Washington and its European allies are seeking to strike with Iran are meant to strip the Islamic Republic of its defensive military might and prowess.

The Leader also said that Western colonial powers have set their eyes on the West Asia due to its rich energy resources, noting the occupying Israeli regime serves as the main base for Westerners to exert dominance and hegemony over the region.

"Iran is the most important country of the region. The 1979 Islamic Revolution tipped the balance against colonial policies, and formed a bulwark against presence of arrogant powers. Our revolution won the hearts and minds of regional peoples," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader said the US tried to topple the Syrian government because it is an ally of Iran, noting that Lebanon, Libya, Sudan and Somalia have on occasions been targeted because of their pro-Iran stances.

Ayatollah Khamenei also said that the country's Basij volunteer force is one of the best initiatives of the late Founder of the Islamic Revolution, Imam Khomeini, describing the group as a school of passion and spirituality.

"Basij should be present in all scenes and spheres. It is not a military force per se, it is a body to serve people without any expectations. Basij forces have been successful on scientific front, and our prominent nuclear scientists were members of the force indeed," the Leader added.

Ayatollah Khamenei underscored that members of Basij force sacrifice themselves to serve people, and they have fought vandals, lost lives and sustained injuries during the recent foreign-sponsored riots.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution also called on state officials to keep a watchful eye on unfolding developments, stressing that enemies are trying to dominate minds and influence the world public opinion through spreading lies and fake news.

Iran's Jewish Community Slams Riots, Warns of Polarization

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Tehran Jewish Committee has condemned weeks of riots in Iran triggered by the death of a young Iranian woman in police custody in September.

In a statement, the committee, an umbrella group of Jewish organizations working on behalf of the Jews in Iran, voiced its support for Iran and the Islamic establishment in the face of the disturbances.

The committee said it has always followed the guidelines set by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and has been at the forefront of the fight against those who wish to disrupt order and security in the country. It said the recent "unfortunate" events have hurt the feelings of all Iranians. "Enemies of the [Islamic] establishment have national unity in the crosshairs with an illusion of creating insecurity in the Islamic Republic."

The committee called on all Iranian citizens to refrain from polarizing the country and instead communicate with authorities in a peaceful atmosphere about certain shortcomings, which, it said, would undoubtedly benefit all.

The committee hoped Iran would witness unity, peace, security and happiness in the near future.

Last week, a top Iranian Sunni cleric, representing another religious minority in Iran, called for calm in the face of enemy plots to destabilize the country, saying fomenting chaos and damaging people's property are in clear contradiction to fighting for freedom and democracy.

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ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

The British Happy With Unrests

Iranians have had no good feeling towards the British governments in centuries and they believe the British are behind any plot in Iran and even they believe the British mastermind most plots in the country and they have such belief regarding the recent unrests in the country.

Since 1553 when the British actually started its presence in Iran and having ties, this country has used different plots for dominance in Iran and during the nationalization of oil in Iran, this bad feeling against the British was intensified and this bad feeling is still in blood of any Iranian regarding the British and they blame the British as the mastermind behind Iranians' interests.

The plot and conspiracy inside the country after the victory of the Islamic Revolution has intensified and this negative feeling against the British because of their interventionist policies has worsened.

Last week once again a British official with his interventionist remarks enraged Iranians and forced Iranian officials to give a due response to his vicious remarks.

Iran said the British government had better stop leveling accusations against Tehran and consider its own stability and demands of British citizens while eliminating discrimination against refugees and Muslims in Britain.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani on Friday strongly condemned the recent "delusional and meddlesome" remarks by Britain's Foreign Minister James Cleverly about the recent developments inside Iran, the Islamic Republic's right to peaceful nuclear energy, and Tehran's role in regional developments.

Speaking during an interview Sunday, Cleverly said it was "in Iran's hands" to engage successfully in the talks to salvage the 2015 nuclear agreement, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). He added, "The ball is very much in Iran's court and has been for a while now."

The foreign minister also claimed that Iran is "attempting to destabilize" regional and neighboring states.

In response to such accusations, Kanaani said, "These baseless statements are a part of a hostile political campaign by Britain and certain European countries against the Islamic Republic of Iran."

"Britain and some European countries, which should be held accountable for their inhumane moves against the Iranian nation at international circles, are undoubtedly in no position to make human rights claims and level accusations against the Islamic Republic of Iran," the spokesperson said.

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U.S. Base in Syria Comes Under Rocket Attack

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A military facility occupied by US forces in Syria's northeastern province of Hasakah has come under rockets attack from nearby areas amid public rage over presence of American occupation troops in energy-rich regions of Syria and US's attempts to further loot natural resources there.

The US military's Central Command (CENTCOM), which oversees American troops in the Middle East, said in a short statement that the rockets were launched at around 10:31 p.m. local time (1931 GMT) on Friday, and targeted the US patrol base in al-Shaddadi town.

It added that the projectiles failed to impact anything inside the base. CENTCOM further said that US-sponsored and Kurdish-led militants affiliated with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) later visited the rocket launch site, and found an unfired rocket there.

Late on November 17, a military facility housing US occupation forces in Syria's oil-producing eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr came under a rocket attack.

Sabreen News, a Telegram news channel associated with Iraqi anti-terror Popular Mobilization Units - better known by the Arabic name Hashd al-Sha'abi - reported at the time that several rockets had struck the vicinity of the US-controlled al-Omar oil field.

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Agents of Anti-Revolutionary Network Arrested in Yazd

YAZD (IRNA) - IRGC Intelligence Office officers of Yazd province identified a terrorist network after precise and painstaking monitoring of social networks, and after a series of professional operations arrested its members red-handed.

The Public Relations of Yazd IRGC Al-Qadir Troops in a statement on Friday evening announced that the heads of that anti-revolutionary network had during the past two months kept on publishing false news, intrigued the public opinion, encouraged the people to riot against the country's political system, and established relations with the anti-Iranian networks that work against the holy system of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

It stressed that the entire members of that network are arrested, warning the readers of such sites to beware about reading the false news published by such networks, which can ruin their own future.

Malaysia Among Islamic And Asian Priorities for Iran

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi has underlined the great capacities for expansion of bilateral relations in various fields between Tehran and Kuala Lumpur, saying Malaysia is one of Iran's priorities in the Muslim world and among the Asian countries.

Raisi made the remark in a phone conversation with Malaysia's newly-appointed Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on Friday, as he congratulated the 75-year-old on his swearing-in a day earlier as premier of the Southeast Asian country.

"Iran and Malaysia have great and diverse capacities in the fields of economy, technology, culture and international cooperation," the Iranian president said, adding, "Serious efforts by the officials of the two countries can actualize these capacities in line with the interests of the two nations."



Ibrahim, for his part, said Iran and Malaysia have great potential to boost ties in the cultural and commercial fields, adding, "We will do our utmost to elevate our relations as two countries and great Islamic nations as much as possible."

Malaysia's king appointed Ibrahim as Prime Minister on Thursday, ending days of uncertainties after divisive general elections produced a hung parliament.

The newly-appointed premier has yet to announce any cabinet appointments for his coalition government amid the country's slowing economy and budget deficit.

U.S. Involved in All Plots Against Iran



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The U.S. government has played a conspicuous role in every single seditious plot against the Iranian nation, a senior spokesman for the General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces said.

Addressing a meeting of Basij forces in Iran's province of Markazi on Saturday, Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi said the Islamic Revolution that has a special place in the modern world order is by no means afraid of the enemies, who seek to foment division inside Iran by hatching plots.

Pointing to the presence of a few "deceived" people in the recent riots in Iran, the general said the role of the "criminal U.S." has been obvious in all seditions that have been created against the Iranian nation and establishment.

He said the irony is that the global arrogance claims to be advocating human rights, but it has turned a blind eye to the massacre of people in Palestine and Yemen.

The spokesperson also took a swipe at Saudi-funded media outlets for ignoring the cruelties against oppressed nations while they invent stories about the killing of people during the recent riots in Iran.

In remarks in early October, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei blamed the recent unrest in Iran on the US, the Zionist regime and their cohorts, saying they are opposed to a strong, independent and developing Iran.

"I state it clearly that these developments were planned by America, the Zionist regime and their acolytes. Their main problem is with a strong and independent Iran and the country's progress. The Iranian nation proved to be fairly strong during recent events and will bravely come onto the scene wherever necessary in the future," the Leader said.

MP Slams Western Countries Use of Human Rights as Tool

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Chairman of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission says that western countries prove their trustworthiness by using and considering human rights as a tool.

Referring to the United Nations Human Rights Council's anti-Iranian resolution, Abbas Moghtadaei said that Western countries including Germany, England, and France made a lot of efforts for this resolution to be issued.

Saying that it's been a while since the officials of these countries have destroyed the relations between their countries and Iran with their actions, Moghtadaei added that the Islamic Republic of Iran has summoned their ambassadors and provided warnings and recommendations that can benefit the relations of the parties.

He also added that the Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian emphasizes the need for strategic patience and international cooperation.

Moghtadaei also warned the European countries that Iran has many options to act in a way that harms them, but it is still taking the restraint path.

Some Western countries are seeking to increase international pressure on Iran by using international forums, including United Nations Human Rights Council and International Atomic Energy Agency.

"They should note that Iran itself is a victim of terrorism and a significant part of human rights has been ignored by western countries and the sanctions they have imposed have definitely affected the women, children, and people of our country," Moghtadaei stressed, adding that considering such conditions, they cannot claim to support the Iranian people.

"Although we've put resistance at the top of our agenda, the fact is that Western countries, ignoring human rights, use economic and non-economic means to pressure Iran," he added.

Assad Lauds Iran's Support for Damascus

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Syria's President Bashar al-Assad has said that the Islamic Republic of Iran is an influential supporter of the Arab country, and that Lebanon's Hezbollah movement is considered as a strategic ally for Damascus.

Al-Assad made the remarks in a meeting with some Syrian researchers and journalists, when they discussed different issues relating to Syria in a three-hour-long session, Lebanese Al Akhbar daily reported.

As to Syria's allies, the president said that the Islamic republic of Iran has showed effective support for Syria and Tehran continues to back the Arab country in terms of military and economic affairs.

He further pointed to the relationship between Syria and Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement, noting that Damascus has supported Hezbollah and it will continue backing them, because they are strategic allies.

Al-Assad also expressed concern on the future of Lebanon in light of the current situation in the country, arguing that the neighboring state is a main supporter of Syria; so, stability in the country is of great importance for the Syrian government.

Referring to ties between Syria and Turkey, he said that meetings with Turkish officials are limited to information-sharing sessions, but they would help improve the level of relationship.

According to the Syrian chief executive, Turkey has expressed readiness to meet demands asked by Syria; so, Damascus expects Ankara to take practical steps and stop uttering sheer words.

The Syrian president noted that there are contacts with Kurdish forces in northern Syria on their problems, including services and livelihood, and that talks with forces dubbed the Syrian Democratic Forces are more a kind of tribal relationship, which have not brought any development.

On relations with the United States, he said that the Syrian authorities did not have any talk with the American officials, and that Damascus focuses on enhancing popular resistance to put pressure on the Americans to withdraw from occupied territories in Syria.

Russia has helped Syria very much, but the current situation is different as a result of the Russian military operation in Ukraine and the economic and military pressures on them.

Terrorists Arrested Over Attacked on Police Officers

ZAHEDAN (IRNA) - Sistan and Balouchestan Intelligence Office issuing a statement announced that its personnel have arrested the terrorists who had on November 21 attacked patrol police officers of Cheshme Ziarat Police station, martyring a soldier.

In the statement issued on Friday evening by the Intelligence Office it is said that the martyred soldier and wounded police officer were on a patrol mission at the time of the attack.

The arrested terrorists have at the Intelligence Office confessed to their committed crime, which is martyring Soldier Behzad Barahuie and seriously injuring Lieutenant Mehdi Hashemzahi.

Also, the Commander of Sistan and Balouchestan Disciplinary Police Forces IRGC General Mohammad Qanbari said that the terrorists who were riding on a silver color 405 Peugeot passenger car opened fire at the patrolling police forces martyring a soldier and wounding an officer.

Iran, Russia Emphasize Cooperation In Combating Money Laundering

DUSHANBE (IP) - On the sidelines of the 37th meeting of the Eurasian Group (EAG) on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism (November 21-25) in Tajikistan, Iranian Deputy Minister of Economy and Head of the Ministry's Financial Intelligence Center (FIC), and Vice President and Director of the Federal Financial Monitoring Service of Russia discussed the relative affairs.

In the meeting, Iran's Hadi Khani and Russia's Yury Chikhanchin emphasized the need to increase interactions between them with the aim of a more serious fight against money laundering and terrorist financing, especially the fight against the financing of drug traffickers.

The Russian side, who is the head of the Eurasian regional working group in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), appreciated Iran's actions in combating money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism and said that he would announce Iran's successes to FATF and will do the best of his ability to remove Iran from the black list.

Also, in this meeting, the two sides agreed to discuss the formation of an eastern coalition to fight money laundering and terrorist financing.

Kyrgyz Ambassador Hails Iran's Advances in Ceramic Industry

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Kyrgyzstan ambassador to Iran Turdakun Sydykov has hailed the technological advances made in the Iranian ceramic industry in a tour of a ceramic manufacturing machinery plant, eastern Iran.

Sydykov said on Saturday that Iran had changed the way ceramics and tiles are produced in the country thanks to developing new technologies and machinery in its factories.

The envoy hailed the way Iranian technicians and experts had launched a tiles manufacturing machinery plant in Birjand without direct assistance from Italian suppliers.

Founded in 2019, the tiles and ceramics machinery plant in Birjand supplies equipment to manufacturers in Iran. The company has secured its first export order from Oman.

Bandar Imam Invests \$1b to Collect APG Steel Ingot Export Up 18% in 7 Months on Year

TEHRAN (Shana) -- The CEO of Bandar Imam Petrochemical Company considered the nature of the establishment of his company in the past half century as a form of social responsibility and reported on the company's \$1 billion investment for collecting associated petroleum gas (APG) in the Persian Gulf Yadavaran Gas Refinery project.

According to Bandar Imam Petrochemical Company, Sepahdar Ansarinik, in the specialized meeting of social responsibility held at the booth of Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company at the 20th International Environmental Exhibition, considered sustainable development as a basic principle, and stated: "Bandar Imam Petrochemical Company, which was founded around half a century ago, is built with social responsibility as its building block, and in fact, this company was established to collect APG, which was previously flared and produced heat and carbon dioxide, and turn them into valuable items to improve social life."

He further underlined his company's projects in the field of environment and social responsibility, and said: "Another project that Bandar Imam Petrochemical Company has invested in is a plan to reduce its emissions in the environment by putting \$60 million and Rls. 3,000 billion in it and it is planned to come online by the end of the next Iranian calendar year to March 2024."



TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's steel ingots export rose 18 percent in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 22), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA) announced.

According to the data released by the ISPA, Iran exported 4.799 million tons of steel ingots in the seven-month period of this year, while the figure was 4.057 million tons in the same time span of the past year.

As announced by the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), the country's export of steel ingots increased by 25 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), from its preceding year.

The IMIDRO's data put the country's annual steel ingot exports at 7.678 million tons in the past year, and at 6.162 million tons in the previous year.

The Iranian Steel industry has been constantly developing over the past years against all the pressures and obstacles created by outside forces like the U.S. sanctions and the coronavirus outbreak that has severely affected the performance of the world's top producers.

According to the latest report released by the World Steel Association (WSA), the production of crude steel in Iran rose nine percent in the first 10 months of 2022, as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

The WSA data put the country's 10-month crude steel production at 25.1 million tons.

Iran, Iraq Stress Continuation of Security Meetings

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Iranian ambassador to Baghdad Mohammad Kazem Al-e Sadegh met with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani.

During the meeting, the ambassador conveyed to the Iraqi prime minister the invitation of Iranian President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi to visit Iran.

Al-Sudani and Al-e Sadegh also discussed and exchanged views on the bilateral relations between the two countries.

According to the Iraqi Prime Minister's public relations department, the two sides exchanged views on shared files in economic and investment fields.

It was also emphasized that the meetings between Iraq and Iran in the security case will continue until the preservation of the sovereignty of the two countries bears fruit in line with securing the interests of two friendly nations and consolidating regional security and stability.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:52
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:11
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:24
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:52

43. "Go, both of you, to Pharaoh, for he has indeed transgressed all bounds;
44. "But speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear ((Allah))."

Surah 20. Ta-ha (43 - 44)

Talks on Construction of Gas Pipeline to Oman In Technical Stage

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Iranian Gas Engineering and Development Company says talks have begun for construction of gas pipeline for Oman and it is in the early stages and technical and executive stage.

Speaking to ILNA, Reza Noshadi said that countries decide to carry out the TAPI gas pipeline with cooperation of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India with spending billions of dollars but not ready to trade with Iran while Iran can take gas from Turkmenistan and transfer it to Azerbaijan but again they are ready to implement Trans-Caspian project in the depth of Caspian Sea water but not to cooperate with Iran.

He went on to say that the basic engineering studies of the project for construction of gas pipeline for exporting gas to Oman have already been conducted and now both sides are in the stage of beginning technical and executive talks but even Oman is affected by the political equations and if it is resolved, both sides have announced readiness for talks and workgroup can be formed and the project to be implemented.

Noshadi went on to say that the country has put on agenda developing and construction of new gas pipeline for increasing gas exports to Iraq.

On the cooperation of Iran with Iraq on exploiting joint gas fields and export to Europe, he admitted that its materialization is difficult, and first he needs to elaborate why war in Syria broke out, saying because Iran had decided to launch an Islamic gas pipeline and the gas from Iran, Iraq and Syria could reach Europe but the rivals of this line was the Qatar-Saudi Arabia-Iraq-Turkey-Europe line and the West made Syria and Iraq unsafe in order that Iran cannot implement its project for exporting gas



to Europe. Therefore Iran's gas can only be used in Iraq and in other countries the networks for receiving Iran's gas were not created, he stated. He reiterated that the sabotage in Syria and Iraq for making them unsafe has actually sidelined the issue of Iran's gas to Europe.

Noshadi added that Qatar unlikely would welcome the idea of joint cooperation for creating gas pipeline to Europe because major part of oil and gas contract partners of Qatar are Western and they will not welcome this idea.

He went on to say that Iran currently has electricity and gas exchanges with its neighboring countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Nakhchivan and Turkmenistan, and the country has reached a maturation in the field of gas and with considering the current markets it does not need construction of new lines while the country is currently busy with constructing the ninth line for 400 kilometers and it is in the tender holding stage and it will be used for exporting gas to Iraq.

On Cooperation with Kurdistan of Iraq for exporting gas, he said that there is no problem in this regard but before anything else, first the political equations should be resolved between Iran and Kurdistan of Iraq because Iran has enough technology for developing gas and exporting gas to Kurdistan.

Felicitations Message on Setting Fourth Consecutive Slab Protection Record

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Following the fourth consecutive monthly record for slab protection set by Hormozgan Steel Company (HOSCO) in the current year, the CEO of the company Mr. Ataollah Maroufkhani in a message felicitated this achievement.



In the message, Mr. Maroufkhani thanked God for setting another record due to the endeavors of the staff and capabilities of HOSCO group as the company produced 154,678 tons of slab in last Iranian calendar month of Aban and expressed hope that the record-breaking of the company would continue.

He added that without doubt setting consecutive records has happened due to precise strategy, empathy and coordination with the slogan of "We Can" and continuation of this trend will be possible only through endeavors of anyone of the staff of the company.

Maroufkhani then felicitated this achievement and wished prosperity and health for all dear ones.

IME Posts Weekly Trade Over 1.9m Tons

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 1,951,064 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$454m on its physical market.



According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 1,565,000 tons of commodities valued at more than \$244m.

On this floor the IME sold 1,205,515 tons of cement, 110,000 tons of iron ore, 122,161 tons of steel, 89,000 tons of sponge iron, 23,050 tons of zinc, 6,550 tons of aluminum, 6,705 tons of copper, 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 124 kg of gold bars and 1,208 vehicles.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 384,338 tons of commodities worth more than \$141m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 91,727 tons of polymeric products, 113,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 17,100 tons of lube cut, 33,126 tons of chemicals, 12,840 tons of sulfur, 270 tons of argon, 6,664 tons of base oil, 300 tons of insulation and 109,390 tons of bitumen.

The IME also traded within the same week 1,232 tons of commodities on its side market.

Iran, Armenia Discuss Bilateral Ties, Railway Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian and Armenian officials discussed the bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries in the railway field.

The Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia Mher Herberti Grigoryan met and held talks with Iranian Ambassador to Yerevan Abbas Badakhshan Zohouri in Armenian capital of Yerevan on Friday during which the importance of the operationalization of the railway between the two countries and the prospect of expanding the relevant cooperation were emphasized.

During the meeting, Armenia's deputy prime minister emphasized the development of bilateral ties with Iran and thanked Iran's stance regarding the recent military operation of Republic of Azerbaijan against Armenia.

The Iranian ambassador, for his part, emphasized the importance of "Sionik" province in Armenia for Iran and stated, "No country must have a greedy eye on this province."

The Iranian and Armenian officials exchanged their views on bilateral ties especially cooperation of the two countries in the fields of energy and transport.

In this meeting, the importance of the operationalization of the railway between Armenia and Iran was taken into serious consideration as well.

Also, it was agreed that a Supervision Committee should be set up to implement a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) inked between the officials of the two countries of Iran and Armenia.

Iran, Uzbekistan Sign Anti-Money Laundering MoU

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran and Uzbekistan have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to coordinate their anti-money laundering measures.

The MoU was signed on Friday in Tajikistan's capital of Dushanbe on the sidelines of a meeting of the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism (EAG).

Head of Iran's Financial Intelligence Unit Hadi Khani and head of Uzbekistan Department on



Combating Economic Crimes Dilshod Rakhimov signed off on the document.

The two officials also discussed joint measures by Iran and Uzbekistan to fight money laundering and terrorism financing.

EAG was established in 2004 to boost regional cooperation on money laundering issues. The body is an associate member of the international money-laundering watchdog the FATF.

Deputy FM Confer Latest Economic Developments With IORA Member States

TEHRAN (IP) - Deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy meets high-ranking officials at a meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari has held talks with Tanzania's minister of fishery and deputy foreign ministers from Japan, South Africa, and Guinea on the sidelines of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Conference.

Safari and other participants in the meetings examined the latest state of bilateral economic cooperation and ways of developing and strengthening economic relations. They also discussed holding joint commissions and exchanging business delegations.

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) includes 23 countries of South Africa, India, Iran, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Australia, UAE, Oman, Yemen, Bangladesh, Kenya, Mauritius, Tanzania, Madagascar, Mozambique, Seychelles and France that started its activity in 1997 with the initiative of India and Mauritius.

China, Japan, Egypt, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America are also observer countries in the international organization.

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) was formed to improve and accelerate economic cooperation and gather government representatives, businessmen, and universities.

The Islamic Republic of Iran became a member of the Union of Indian Ocean Countries in March 1999 with the approval of Iran's parliament.

Plans for Producing Low-Sulfur Fuel in Ports

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line (IRISL) Mohammad Reza Modarres Khiabani says currently 72% of periodical repairs of vessels of IRISL is done domestically which can be effective in spatial land planning.

Addressing the first National Conference of Spatial Land Planning With Emphasis on Sea, Shores and Ports which was hosted by the IRISL, Modarres Khiabani said that currently 72% of periodical repairs of IRISL group vessels is done inside the group, stipulating that this issue can be effective in spatial land and expressed hope that with creating logical infrastructures, repairs of all vessels are carried out in the country.

He then briefed the participant of the latest development in the seaborne trade and achievements of the IRISL. He noted that the total seaborne trade in the world is around \$12b and it has grown by 1.6m tons per year and each month some one billion tons of goods is transported worldwide.

Modarres Khiabani went on to say that for years transportation of goods is done via containers and some 200m TEU of goods is shipped via containers and it is predicted



the figure to rise by one percent by the yearend and even the seaborne trade would also see small growth by the yearend.

He noted that since IRISL is under sanctions, it does its transportation activities by itself and it functions in the field of container transportation, bulk transportation and activities in the Caspian Sea, transporting personnel in the offshore jack ups and ports services as well as combined transportation.

Modarres Khiabani then highlighted some part of the performance of the group in the past year and said that the group transported some 27m tons of goods last year which was a new record with 41% growth comparing to the preceding year and reiterated that the company earned \$1.6b.

He stressed that 368,000 liters of required fuel of the IRISL is provided domestically while the low-sulfur fuel is not provided in the country and enemies were waiting for Iranian vessels to be grounded but due to efforts of the oil industry and a refinery in the country, low-sulfur fuel was produced and supplied to the vessels and today all low-sulfur fuel required by the vessels is produced in the country.

Modarres Khiabani noted that the group has transported some 13.81m tons of goods in the first half of the current year which shows 4% growth comparing to the same period last year.

LSEZ Hosts Brainstorming Meeting



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Lamerd Special Economic Zone (LSEZ) hosted a brainstorming meeting on research synergy and developing IMIDRO technology as well as selected enterprises from the mining sector and national mining industries with presence of the manager of education, research and technology of Iranian Mines, Mining Industries Development and Renovation (IMIDRO).

According to the public relations of LSEZ, the meeting was held in-person and online and some issues like reporting performance and plans of IMIDRO in the knowledge-based activities and preparing strategy for developing technology in IMIDRO were discussed.

Some other issues and reports on the performance of the IMIDRO in different fields were also raised and discussed in the event which was held by Lamerd Special Economic Zone.

Spanish Right on Warpath Over Changes to Sedition Law

MADRID (Dispatches) - Spain's right-wing opposition is infuriated over government plans to abolish sedition, the charge used against Catalan separatist leaders, decrying the move as a gift to pro-independence parties in exchange for parliamentary support.

Parliament on Thursday approved a bill to reform the criminal code to drop what Spain's left-wing coalition government sees as an antiquated offence, replacing it with one better aligned with modern European norms. And the change should be in place before the year's end, Spanish media reports say. In response, the far-right Vox party has called a protest in Madrid on Sunday, while the right-wing opposition Popular Party (PP) has convened rallies across the country to express its opposition.



Mali PM Meets President After Medical Retreat

BAMAKO (Dispatches) - Mali's transitional Prime Minister Choguel Maiga met interim President Assimi Goita on Friday after more than three months of forced medical leave, the presidency said.

Maiga was ordered by his doctor to rest in August after months of intense exertion.

Paris-based Jeune Afrique magazine reported at the time that Maiga had suffered a stroke, citing sources close to him. But an adviser to Maiga, reached by Reuters, denied this.



Freezing Ukraine Tries to Restore Power After Russian Strikes on Grid



KYIV (Dispatches) - Millions of Ukrainians were still without heat or power after the most devastating Russian air strikes on its energy grid so far, with residents warned to brace for further attacks and stock up on water, food and warm clothing.

Moscow says the attacks on Ukraine's basic infrastructure are militarily legitimate, and that Kyiv can end the suffering of its people if it yields to Russian demands. Ukraine says attacks intended to cause civilian misery are a war crime.

"Together we endured nine months of full-scale war and Russia has not found a way to break us, and will not find one," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a video address overnight.

Russia has been striking Ukrainian energy network far from the frontlines of the nine-month old war with barrages of long-range missiles around once a week since early October.

Attacks on Wednesday caused the worst damage so far, leaving millions of people with no light, water or heat even as temperatures around the country have fallen below zero.

Nearly 48 hours after the strikes, national grid operator Ukrenergo said the power system was still 30% short of meeting demand.

"Priority was given to critical infrastructure facilities in all regions: boiler houses, gas distribution stations, water supply, sewage treatment facilities, public electric transport operates in some regions," it said.

The three nuclear power stations on Ukrainian-held territory were now working, it said, two days after the attacks had forced Ukraine to shut them all down for the first time in 40 years, creating what Kyiv had called a risk of atomic catastrophe.

Zelenskyy also accused Russia of incessantly shelling Kherson, the southern Ukrainian city that it abandoned earlier this month. Seven people were killed and 21 wounded in a Russian attack on Thursday, local authorities said.

Viewed from space, Ukraine has become a dark patch on the globe at night.

Russia insists it does not target civilians in the "special military operation" it launched in late February. International human rights officials say that is difficult to reconcile with the countrywide attacks on civil infrastructure.

"Millions are being plunged into extreme hardship and appalling conditions of life by these strikes," U.N. human rights chief Volker Turk said in a statement.

"Taken as a whole, this raises serious problems under international humanitarian law, which requires a concrete and direct military advantage for each object attacked."

Nigel Povoas, lead prosecutor with a team of international experts assisting Ukrainian war crimes investigators, said the strikes were "focused on eliminating infrastructure crucial to means of civilian survival such as heat, water, power and medical facilities".

"Each wave of attacks tends to reinforce the strength of the allegations of grave criminality being levelled against the Kremlin. That these attacks have very little, if anything, to do with military objectives," he told Reuters.

Azerbaijan Says No to Armenian Peace Talks If Macron Present

BAKU (Dispatches) - Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev said he would not meet the prime minister of arch-foe Armenia as planned in Brussels next month because Yerevan demanded French leader Emmanuel Macron mediate.

Azerbaijan accuses France of backing Armenia in the two countries' decades-long conflict over the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Aliyev said he would not meet Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Brussels on December 7 because the Armenian leader demanded that Macron attend the talks.

Pashinyan "agreed to the meeting only on condition" that Macron take part, Aliyev told an international conference in Baku. "That means the meeting will not take place."

He accused Pashinyan of attempting to "scupper the peace talks."

Last month Macron and European Council President Charles Michel attended a meeting between Aliyev and Pashinyan in Prague. On Friday, the Armenian foreign ministry said the meeting in Brussels should have the "same" format.

With Moscow increasingly isolated on the world stage following its February invasion of Ukraine, the EU and the United States have taken a leading role in mediating the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace talks.

On Friday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov insisted Moscow was "continuing its work on facilitating" talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have fought two wars -- in 2020 and in the 1990s -- over Azerbaijan's Armenian-populated region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The six-week war in 2020 claimed the lives of more than 6,500 troops from both sides and ended with a Russian-brokered ceasefire.

The two countries have recently begun working on a peace treaty under the mediation of the European Union and the United States.

Last month, Aliyev denounced as "unacceptable and biased" a comment from Macron that "Azerbaijan launched a terrible war, with many deaths, (and) atrocious scenes."



Sweden Puts Brothers Charged With Spying for Russia on Trial

STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - A trial has opened in Sweden in the case of two Iranian-born Swedish brothers who have been charged with spying for Russia and its military intelligence service GRU for 10 years.

Peyman Kia, 42, and Payam Kia, 35, appeared before the Stockholm District Court on Friday to face accusations of having worked jointly to pass information to Russia between September 28, 2011, and September 20, 2021.

Between 2014 and 2015, Peyman Kia worked for Sweden's domestic intelligence agency and also for Sweden's armed forces.

Sweden's prosecutors allege that the data they gave the Russians originated from several authorities within the Swedish security and intelligence service, known by its acronym SAPO.

Swedish media said that Peyman Kia worked for the armed forces' foreign defense intelligence agency, whose Swedish acronym is MUST, and reportedly worked with a top-secret unit under MUST, which was dealing with Swedish spies abroad.

Anton Strand, lawyer for the eldest man, said on Thursday his client continues to deny the accusations.

"He has been working in different positions for the Swedish government and has always done his best to do a good job in a very difficult environment," Strand said.

Intelligence expert Joakim von Braun told Swedish broadcaster SVT as the trial opened that even though many details remain unknown, it appeared to be one of most damaging cases of espionage in Sweden's history because the men compiled a list of all the employees within SAPO.

"That alone is a big problem because Russian intelligence focuses on human sources," von Braun said.

Peyman Kia was arrested in September 2021 and his brother in November 2021. Both denied any wrongdoing, their defence lawyers told the court.

Peru's PM Resigns After Confidence Vote Refused

LIMA (Dispatches) - Left-wing Peruvian President Pedro Castillo has accepted the resignation of his prime minister and will reshuffle his cabinet once again, amid a lengthy battle between the executive and legislative branches.

Former Prime Minister Anibal Torres, a staunch ally of Castillo, had challenged the opposition-controlled Congress to a confidence vote last week. But Congress declined to hold such a vote on Thursday, saying conditions for it had not been met.

"Having accepted the resignation of the prime minister, whom I thank for his work on behalf of the country, I will renew the cabinet," Castillo said in a national television broadcast.

The confidence vote challenge was meant to pressure Congress amid tense relations between the two branches of government.

Opposition legislators have twice impeached Castillo but failed to remove him, although they have managed to censure and fire several cabinet members.

"I call on Congress to respect the rule of law, the rights of the people, democracy and the balance of state powers," Castillo said.

His presidency has been marked by a turnover in senior government positions. Castillo is now set to name a fifth prime minister -- his top adviser and

spokesperson -- since taking office in July last year.

Confidence votes are controversial in Peru as they can come with significant consequences. If Congress had issued a vote of no-confidence, Torres and the entire cabinet would have been forced to resign.

But a new cabinet could then call for a second confidence vote which, if also denied, would allow the executive to shut down Congress and call new legislative elections.

Last week, Torres said he would interpret a lack of a vote as the equivalent of a no-confidence vote.

US politics, Canada's multiculturalism, South America's geopolitical rise—we bring you the stories that matter.

Castillo stopped short of saying Congress had issued a vote of no-confidence, although at least one close ally, former Commerce Minister Roberto Sanchez, said the legislature's decision meant confidence had been withheld.

In 2019, then-Peruvian President Martin Vizcarra shut down Congress and called for new elections after two no-confidence votes.

Congress then passed a law limiting the situations that merit confidence votes, which is now being tested for the first time.

Tension between the different branches of Peru's government is common, and Peruvians have lived under five different presidents since 2016.



China Orders Lockdowns, Mass Testing After Record COVID Surge

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China has ordered mass testing in the eastern city of Nanjing in Jiangsu province, the latest measure as the country for a second day in a row reported a record number of COVID-19 infections since the pandemic began.

China reported more than 32,000 infections in the past 24 hours, up from more than 31,000 reported on Thursday. The vast majority of the cases have been asymptomatic.

The numbers on Thursday and Friday surpassed a previous record set in April of just below 30,000 cases. That surge resulted in the commercial hub of Shanghai, home to 25 million people, being put under a two-month lockdown.

The newest wave has been accompanied by restrictions slowly tightening across the country, which has pursued a controversial zero-COVID policy aimed at eradicating the virus completely.

It also comes as the virus continues to evolve to evade immunity, with China remaining "somewhat under-vaccinated, and the vaccines that were used were not as efficacious as the mRNA vaccines that had been used in the Western world", Patrick Fang, the division chief of pathology sciences at Sidra Medicine, told Al Jazeera.

"So their population is more susceptible, plus the virus is highly transmissible," he said.

In Nanjing, authorities ordered mass testing set to begin on Saturday for five consecutive days.

Meanwhile, in Zhengzhou, home to the world's largest iPhone factory, residents in eight districts have been told not to leave the area, despite only a handful of cases reported there.

The lockdown follows protests by hundreds of employees over conditions and pays at Foxconn's vast factory on the outskirts of the city, with images of rallies emerging on Friday.

In the southeastern manufacturing hub of Guangzhou, millions of people have been ordered not to leave their homes without a negative virus test.

Medical developments, troubling variants, the human impact—it's all here.



China, India Easing Away From Russian Crude Oil May Be Temporary



LAUNCESTON (Dispatches) - There are signs that China and India are pulling back from buying Russian crude oil ahead of the Group of Seven nations' proposed price cap and a European Union ban on imports.

However, the more important question for the market is whether any slowing by China and India of purchases from Russia is a temporary factor that will be reversed once participants figure out how to work with, or around, the price cap.

China, the world's largest crude oil importer, and India, the third-biggest, have increasingly turned to Russian crude this year, buying cargoes at steep discounts as Moscow sought to keep up export volumes after Western countries shunned its oil.

The G7 price cap and the EU ban on imports are aimed at cutting the revenue Russia receives from its exports of crude oil and products and are part of efforts to punish Moscow for its Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine. Russia calls its actions there "a special operation".

Chinese refiners have begun slowing their purchases of Russian crude for December arrivals, according to traders and industry players in China.

The reduced volumes from Russia for December come after several months of strong imports. China is forecast to bring in 1.80 million barrels per day (bpd) of Russian crude in November, up from October's 1.69 million bpd and in line with September's 1.82 million bpd, according to data compiled by Refinitiv Oil Research.

It is also likely that Russia will overtake Saudi Arabia as China's biggest supplier of crude in November, with the two leading members of the OPEC+ group having swapped the top spot several times so far this year.

Indian refiners are also wary of buying Russian crude beyond the Dec. 5 date of the EU import ban and the proposed price cap. Leading refiners Reliance Industries and state-controlled Bharat Petroleum are pulling back from placing orders, according to two sources familiar with the purchasing plans.

The lower volumes for December follow strong imports by India of Russian crude in recent months. Refinitiv estimates November arrivals at 1.0 million bpd, which would make Russia the top supplier for the month, ahead of Iraq's 960,000 bpd.

The question is whether China and India will once again turn to Russian oil in the new year, or whether the uncertainty created by the price cap and EU ban will linger.

It's likely that both countries will be keen to buy Russian crude, especially if it comes at a steep discount compared to grades from the Middle East and Africa.

But there are several issues that refiners in both countries will have to work around. Payment and transportation issues such as insurance may become more complex, though it's likely that refiners and traders are smart enough to work out ways to keep doing business.

In fact, the main difficulty may be in sourcing enough vessels to move crude from Russia's western ports through to Asia.

Currently, much of the crude China buys from Russia comes from the eastern ports. Refinitiv data shows that of the 3.42 million tons of seaborne oil arriving in November, all but 705,000 tons came from Pacific and Arctic ports.

China is expected to import 705,000 tons of Russian Urals grade, which was the main grade supplied to European refiners from the country's western ports.

Meloni and the Technocrats - a Difficult Power Balance



ROME (Dispatches) - Having spent much of her career railing against bureaucrats and financial elites, Italy's new right-wing Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni now has to get them on side - and it is not proving easy. Things got off to a bad start after her victory at a Sept. 25 election.

Searching for a finance minister who would reassure markets and Italy's European partners, three political sources told Reuters she was turned down by European Central Bank board member Fabio Panetta and the outgoing minister Daniele Franco, a former Bank of Italy official.

So instead of appointing a 'technocrat' - an unelected official with the technical expertise to implement policy - Meloni ended up picking career politician Giancarlo Giorgetti of the co-ruling League party.

Panetta and Franco were left to vie next year for the role of Bank of Italy governor, an appointment made jointly by the government, the central bank and the head of state.

An ECB spokesperson said Panetta declined to comment. Franco was not available to comment. Meloni's office did not reply to several requests for comment.

Now the Treasury department's influential director general Alessandro Rivera is in the crosshairs of Meloni's inner-circle, three government officials said, declining to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter. But there is a dearth of viable alternatives.

Meloni, a fiery conviction politician, has often spoken out against Italy's reliance on technocrats to solve its economic problems and lambasted alleged interference from "high international finance" and "Brussels bureaucrats".

Yet to manage Europe's second-largest debt pile and ensure the arrival of billions of euros of European Union pandemic recovery funds, it is vital that she finds a constructive way of working with these powerful policymakers, both at home and abroad.

Most Italian civil servants remain in place regardless of election outcomes, but new governments can replace some heads of department soon after taking office. Experienced top officials like Rivera, who has been Treasury director general under three administrations, are usually reappointed.

Unknown to the general public but a point of reference for the financial community and European officials, Rivera is considered too independent by Meloni's aides, who are unhappy with his handling of some of Italy's main financial dossiers.

These include the privatisation of national airline ITA Airways - the successor to Alitalia - and efforts to relaunch the country's fifth largest bank Monte dei Paschi di Siena (MPS), which is 64%-owned by the Treasury.

"Rivera has influential supporters, especially among bankers, but he also seems to have powerful enemies in Meloni's Brothers of Italy party," said Francesco Galietti, head of political risk consultancy Policy Sonar and a former Treasury official.

Rivera was not available to comment. A Treasury spokesperson said his future would be decided "at the right time."

During the election campaign Meloni called in vain for her predecessor Mario Draghi to freeze the sale of a majority stake in ITA.

Less than a month before the election, the Treasury picked a consortium for exclusive talks led by U.S. private equity fund Certares, but the transaction has not been completed.

Now German carrier Lufthansa has renewed an interest, which would reverse the path laid out by Rivera's top team.



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Turkish Manufacturing Capacity Down to 75.9% in November

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The capacity utilization rate in the Turkish manufacturing industry fell slowly in November, the country's central bank announced.

Local manufacturing industry units are operating at 75.9% of their capacity this month, down one percentage point from October, according to a survey by the bank. Capacity utilization rate figures are based on the responses of local units operating in the manufacturing industry to a business tendency survey. A report by the Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye (CBRT) said 1,734 companies responded to the survey this month and the data did not reflect the bank's views or predictions.



Russians, Ukrainians Met in UAE To Discuss Ammonia Exports

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Representatives from Russia and Ukraine met in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) last week to discuss the possibility of a prisoner-of-war swap that would be linked to a resumption of Russian ammonia exports, which go to Asia and Africa, via a Ukrainian pipeline, three sources with knowledge of the meeting said.

The sources said the talks were being mediated by the Persian Gulf Arab state and did not include the United Nations despite the U.N.'s central role in negotiating the ongoing initiative to export agricultural products from three Ukrainian Black Sea ports. Ammonia is used to make fertilizer.

However, the talks aim to remove remaining obstacles in the initiative extended last week and ease global food shortages by unblocking Ukrainian and Russian exports, they added.

The sources asked not to be named in order to freely discuss sensitive matters.

The Russian and Ukrainian representatives traveled to the UAE capital Abu Dhabi on Nov. 17 where they discussed allowing Russia to resume ammonia exports in exchange for a prisoner swap that would release a large number of Ukrainian and Russian prisoners, the sources said.

Reuters could not immediately establish what progress was made at the talks.

The Ukrainian ambassador to Turkey, Vasyl Bodnar, told Reuters that "releasing our prisoners of war is part of negotiations over opening Russian ammonia exports," adding "Of course, we look for ways to do that at any opportunity." Bodnar said he was unaware if a meeting took place in the UAE.

Putin said on Wednesday that Russian officials would work to unblock Russian fertilizers stuck in European ports and to resume ammonia exports.

The UAE's foreign ministry did not respond to Reuters' request for comment.

Lana Nusseibeh, UAE's Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation said Abu Dhabi remains firmly committed to help keep channels of communication open, encourage dialogue, and support diplomacy to end the war in Ukraine. "In times of conflict, our collective responsibility is to leave no stone unturned towards identifying and pursuing paths that bring about a peaceful and swift resolution of crises," Nusseibeh said in a statement carried by state news agency WAM.

Russia and Ukraine's defense and foreign ministries did not respond to Reuters' requests for comment.

Asked if the United Nations were involved in the talks, a spokesperson for the organization declined to comment. The export of Russian ammonia would be via an existing pipeline to the Black Sea.

The pipeline was designed to pump up to 2.5 million tons of ammonia gas per year from Russia's Volga region to Ukraine's Black Sea port of Pivdennyi, known as Yuzhny in Russian, near Odesa for onward shipment to international buyers. It was shut down after Russia sent its troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24.

Struggling Ghana Plans Tax Rise, Debt Swap to Secure IMF Aid

ACCRA (Dispatches) - Ghana's finance minister, Kenneth Ofori-Atta, presented the 2023 budget to parliament, hiking tax and planning a debt swap as the country's negotiates an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan.

Ofori-Atta is facing calls for his dismissal as the West African state battles an economic crisis, with inflation at more than 40 percent and the cedi currency falling sharply.

Ghana hopes to secure up to \$3 billion in IMF credit this year to shore up public finances after the government initially said it would not need to go to the multilateral lender.

"The challenges we face are daunting," the minister said in a statement to lawmakers. "I, therefore, ask all of us to play a constructive role in getting our nation back on track."

To increase revenues, the 2023 budget will raise value-added tax by 2.5 percent to 15 percent. The so-called E-levy on electronic transactions will be reduced from 1.5 percent to 1.0 percent in a bid to encourage more transactions.

The government will also freeze hiring of public workers for next year.

Ghana, a top cocoa and gold producer, also has oil and gas reserves but its debt service payments are high and its revenues low. Like the rest of Africa, it has been hit hard by economic fallout from the global pandemic and the Ukraine war.

Since the start of the year, the cedi currency has depreciated more than 53 percent. That compared to an average seven percent average annual depreciation between 2017 and 2021, the finance minister said.



India Seeks to Use Global Energy Challenge

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India, the world's third biggest oil import, hopes to convert the current global oil challenges from the Ukraine crisis into an opportunity to secure affordable energy, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Thursday, a day after the European Union failed to agree on a Russian oil price cap.

India, which rarely used to buy Russian oil because of costly logistics, has emerged as Russia's second biggest oil client after China as some Western entities shunned Moscow purchases following its February invasion of Ukraine.

"At this time, the worry is not about from where we will get energy," Puri said at a broadcaster Times Now summit. "It is a global challenge but we have and we will convert this into an opportunity. And I don't foresee any difficulty in procuring energy and securing at affordable prices."

The United States has stopped buying Russian energy and European nations will halt Russian crude and refined product imports from Dec. 5 and Feb. 5, respectively.

The Group of Seven nations, including the United States, as well as the European Union and Australia, are planning to implement a likely price cap of \$65 to \$70 a barrel on sea-borne Russian oil exports from Dec. 5. Some Indian refiners are already getting Russian oil at below or near the prices cap levels.

The West has exempted Russian oil supplies via pipelines to Hungary and China, and exports from Sakhalin-2 projects to Japan. "So the question arises that on whom this price cap will be imposed, if these three large exemptions are there," Puri said, indicating that the mechanism is aimed at supplies to India.

Turkish Central Bank Cuts Rate to 9% and Ends Easing Cycle

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's central bank said it is ending its monetary easing cycle after bowing to a call by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to take interest rates into single digits by the end of the year.

The Monetary Policy Committee led by Governor Sahap Kavcioglu on Thursday lowered the benchmark to 9% from 10.5%, matching the forecasts of all analysts surveyed by Bloomberg. The lira was little changed after the decision, trading 0.1% lower at

18.6309 per dollar as of 2:08 p.m. in Istanbul.

The MPC said in a statement that "the current policy rate is adequate and decided to end the rate-cut cycle that started in August."

The fourth straight cut underscores Turkey's extreme outlier status during a year that's seen the world's most aggressive and synchronized monetary policy tightening in 40 years in response to inflation shocks.

Turkey has done the opposite, guided by Erdogan's unconventional belief that lower rates have the power to cool inflation. Before the latest decision, the central bank had slashed its benchmark by 350 basis points since August despite price growth that's exceeded 85% and will likely end the year as the second-highest in the Group of 20 after Argentina.

Erdogan has wielded greater power over the central bank since 2018, firing all three of Kavcioglu's predecessors for taking a line he deemed insufficiently dovish. But his sway became even more evident this year as he pressed for lower rates to turbocharge the economy ahead of elections by promoting cheap loans.

The president hasn't backed down even with annual inflation now 17 times higher than the official target and the fastest since he took power two decades ago.

The central bank expects price growth to end the year at about 65%, a more upbeat assessment than the view of many economists. Last month, Kavcioglu conceded that "we cannot count ourselves as successful in lowering inflation."

"Despite the loose policy stance, inflation will likely start decelerating from November onwards due to high base effects. But we expect inflation to remain elevated, as the central bank's rate cuts will feed back into higher prices. Expansionary fiscal policies ahead of elections will further fuel price gains."

To spare the economy and the currency further damage, authorities are encouraging targeted lending that tilts the allocation of cheap capital toward exporters and investment-oriented firms.

EU Fails to Agree Gas Price Cap Amid Deep Divisions

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - EU energy ministers failed Thursday to agree a cap on gas prices to mitigate the energy crunch in Europe amid deep divisions over an initial proposal slammed by many as a "joke".

The ministers will now meet in the first half of December to try to bridge differences, said Czech Industry Minister Jozef Sikela, whose country holds the current presidency of the EU.

He added that the ministers did manage to adopt a couple of other "important measures", including joint gas purchases to avoid intra-EU competition driving up prices, supply solidarity in times of need, and hastening authorization of renewable energy sources.

Several ministers going into Thursday's meeting complained that the gas price cap proposal on the table, unveiled by the European Commission just two days earlier, was clearly designed to never be used.

The Polish and Spanish energy ministers called the proposal a "joke".

Greek Energy Minister Kostas Skrekas said the cap "is not actually a ceiling" on gas prices, and "we are losing valuable time without results".

The price cap plan -- which the commission was never keen on -- sets a maximum threshold of 275 euros per megawatt hour.

But it comes with so many conditions attached that it would not even have been activated back in August, when the gas price briefly soared above 300 euros, alarming Europe used to historic prices around 10 percent of that.

The cap proposal would only be triggered if the 275-euro limit was breached continuously for at least two weeks, and then only if the price for liquefied natural gas (LNG) rose above 58 euros for 10 days within that same two-week period.

The price of wholesale gas in Europe on Thursday was around 124 euros, according to the main TTF benchmark.



The commission's proposed price cap was seen as neutered under pressure from members including Germany and the Netherlands, which feared a cap could divert gas supplies to more lucrative markets, especially Asia.

Yet at least 15 EU countries -- more than half the bloc -- want some form of workable ceiling on wholesale gas prices to tackle a crunch in supply forced by Russia's war in Ukraine.

While the European Union hasn't banned Russian gas, the Kremlin has been turning off the taps in retaliation for sanctions imposed by Brussels in the wake of Moscow's invasion.

Before the war, Russian gas supplies accounted for more than 40 percent of all imported gas into the European Union, with export powerhouse Germany particularly needy.

That has now dropped to less than 10 percent.

Japan Economy Picking Up Moderately



TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's government left the overall assessment of the nation's economy unchanged in its monthly report for November, noting a moderate recovery but remaining cautious over risks from a global economic slowdown and financial market fluctuations.

The economic report from Japan's Cabinet Office comes after data showed last week the economy unexpectedly shrank for the first time in a year in the third quarter, as sluggish global growth and import costs hurt consumption and business activity.

It also follows data showing that manufacturing activity in Japan contracted at the fastest pace in two years in November because of strong inflationary pressures.

"The economy is picking up moderately," the government said on Thursday, using the same description it has in every monthly report since July.

The government would stay vigilant to the risks ahead, saying the global slowdown from monetary tightening could hurt Japan's economy. It said again it needed to "pay full attention" to any economic impact from inflation, supply restrictions, and financial and capital market volatility.

The nation spent a record 6.35 trillion yen (\$45.6 billion) on currency intervention last month as its currency plummeted to a 32-year low to the dollar, likely triggering authorities to step into the market.

Tokyo also kept its view unchanged on private consumption, which accounts for more than half of Japan's economy, saying it was "picking up moderately".

The report said spending on services such as restaurant dining and accommodations was recovering, although rising prices were weighing on consumer sentiment.

The government left its view unchanged that capital spending was recovering thanks to solid corporate earnings, while it said exports and imports were "almost flat".

Iran's Sadoughi House, Zarch Qanat Win UNESCO Awards

TEHRAN (MNA) – UNESCO announces Yazd's Sadoughi House and Zarch Qanat as the winner of awards in Cultural Heritage Conservation. This award, under the title of Award of Merit, was handed over to Yazd's Sedoughi House in a ceremony in Thailand due to the repair and restoration of this house which dates back to the Qajar era. Sadoughi historical house which ages more than 300 years was mended

a while back and now is called the cultural house of Shahid Sadoughi. Zarch Qanat also located in Yazd was another winner in the section of awards of distinction. Dating back to the pre-Islamic Era of ~3,000 years ago in Iran, the Zarch Qanat is the oldest one in the world. The Zarch Qanat is the life-giving artery of Zarch City in Yazd. It was this qanat that made the area habitable by providing the desert-crucial element of water to the people and farmers.



Weapons Industry Booms as Eastern Europe Arms Ukraine

PRAGUE (Dispatches) - Eastern Europe's arms industry is churning out guns, artillery shells and other military supplies at a pace not seen since the Cold War as governments in the region lead efforts to aid Ukraine in its fight against Russia.

Allies have been supplying Kyiv with weapons and military equipment since Russia invaded its neighbor on Feb. 24, depleting their own inventories along the way.

The United States and Britain committed the most direct military aid to Ukraine between Jan. 24 and Oct. 3, a Kiel Institute for the World Economy tracker shows, with Poland in third place and the Czech Republic ninth.

Still wary of Russia, their Soviet-era master, some former Warsaw Pact countries see helping Ukraine as a matter of regional security.

But nearly a dozen government and company officials and analysts who spoke to Reuters said the conflict also presented new opportunities for the region's arms industry.

"Taking into account the realities of the ongoing war in Ukraine and the visible attitude of many countries aimed at increased spending in the field of defense budgets, there is a real chance to enter new markets and increase export revenues in the coming years," said Sebastian Chwalek, CEO of Poland's PGZ.

State-owned PGZ controls more than 50 companies making weapons and ammunition - from armored transporters to unmanned air systems - and holds stakes in dozens more.

It now plans to invest up to 8 billion zlotys (\$1.8 billion) over the next decade, more than double its pre-war target, Chwalek told Reuters. That includes new facilities located further from the border with Russia's ally Belarus for security reasons, he said.

Other manufacturers too are increasing production capacity and racing to hire workers, companies and government officials from Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic said.

Immediately after Russia's attack some eastern European militaries and manufacturers began emptying their warehouses of Soviet-era weapons and ammunition that Ukrainians were familiar with, as Kyiv waited for NATO-standard equipment from the West.

As those stocks have dwindled, arms makers have cranked up production of both older and modern equipment to keep supplies flowing. The stream of weapons has helped Ukraine push back Russian forces and reclaim swathes of territory.

Chwalek said PGZ would now produce 1,000 portable Piorun manpad air-defense systems in 2023 - not all for Ukraine - compared to 600 in 2022 and 300 to 350 in previous years.

The company, which he said has also delivered artillery and mortar systems, howitzers, bulletproof vests, small arms and ammunition to Ukraine, is likely to surpass a pre-war 2022 revenue target of 6.74 billion zlotys.

Companies and officials who spoke to Reuters declined to give specific details of military supplies to Ukraine, and some did not want to be identified, citing security and commercial sensitivities.

Eastern Europe's arms industry dates back to the 19th Century, when Czech Emil Skoda began manufacturing weapons for the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Under Communism, huge factories in Czechoslovakia, the Warsaw Pact's second-largest weapons producer, Poland and elsewhere in the region kept people employed, turning out weapons for Cold War conflicts Moscow stoked around the world.

"The Czech Republic was one of the powerhouses of weapons exporters and we have the personnel, material base and production lines needed to increase capacity," its NATO Ambassador Jakub Landovsky told Reuters.

"This is a great chance for the Czechs to increase what we need after giving the Ukrainians the old Soviet-era stocks. This can show other countries we can be a reliable partner in the arms industry."

The 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union and NATO's expansion into the region pushed companies to modernise, but "they can still quickly produce things like



ammunition that fits the Soviet systems", said Siemon Wezeman, a researcher at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Deliveries to Ukraine have included artillery rounds of "Eastern" calibres, such as 152mm howitzer rounds and 122mm rockets not produced by Western companies, officials and companies said.

They said Ukraine had acquired weapons and equipment via donations from governments and direct commercial contracts between Kyiv and the manufacturers. "Eastern European countries support Ukraine substantially," Christoph Trebesch, a professor at the Kiel Institute, said. "At the same time it's an opportunity for them to build up their military production industry."

Ukraine has received nearly 50 billion crowns (\$2.1 billion) of weapons and equipment from Czech companies, about 95% of which were commercial deliveries, Czech Deputy Defence Minister Tomas Kopecky told Reuters. Czech arms exports this year will be the highest since 1989, he said, with many companies in the sector adding jobs and capacity.

"For the Czech defence industry, the conflict in Ukraine, and the assistance it provides is clearly a boost that we have not seen in the last 30 years," Kopecky said.

David Hac, chief executive of Czech STV Group, outlined to Reuters plans to add new production lines for small-calibre ammunition and said it is considering expanding its large-calibre capability. In a tight labour market, the company is trying to poach workers from a slowing car industry, he said.

Defense sales helped the Czechoslovak Group, which owns companies including Excalibur Army, Tatra Trucks and Tatra Defence, nearly double its first-half revenues from a year earlier, to 13.8 billion crowns.

The company is increasing production of both 155mm NATO and 152mm Eastern calibre rounds and refurbishing infantry fighting vehicles and Soviet-era T-72 tanks, spokesman Andrej Cirtek told Reuters.

He said supplying Ukraine was more than just good business. "After the Russian aggression started, our deliveries for Ukrainian army multiplied," Cirtek said.

"The majority of the Czech population still remember times of a Russian occupation of our country before 1990 and we don't want to have Russian troops closer to our borders."

Measles an Imminent Threat as Children Miss Vaccination

LONDON (Dispatches) - Measles is at "imminent threat" of spreading in various parts of the world after the COVID-19 pandemic led to many children missing their routine vaccinations, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have warned.



Millions of children are now susceptible to measles, among the world's most contagious diseases, the public health agencies said in a joint report on Wednesday.

The disease is almost entirely preventable through vaccination, but at least 95 percent vaccine coverage is necessary to prevent outbreaks.

A record high of nearly 40 million children missed a measles vaccine dose in 2021 due to difficulties created by the COVID pandemic, the report said.

Continued drops in vaccination, weak disease surveillance and delayed response plans due to COVID-19, in addition to ongoing outbreaks in more than 20 countries, mean that "measles is an imminent threat in every region of the world", it warned.

Officials said there were about 9 million measles infections and 128,000 deaths worldwide in 2021.

The WHO and CDC reported that only about 81 percent of children had received their first dose of the measles vaccine, while 71 percent got their second dose, marking the lowest global coverage rates of the first measles dose since 2008.

"The record number of children under-immunized and susceptible to measles shows the profound damage immunization systems have sustained during the COVID-19 pandemic," CDC director Dr Rochelle Walensky said in a statement.

Fear Grows on Saudi Death Row as Executions Ramp Up

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Relatives of death-row inmates in Saudi Arabia fear each day could be the last for their loved ones as the Persian Gulf kingdom picks up the pace of executions.

After a nearly five-month lull in which no one was put to death, 24 people have been executed since early October, 18 of them in the past two weeks, according to an AFP tally based on state media reports.

They include 16 people convicted of drug-related offences, ending a moratorium on administering capital punishment for such crimes that was announced in January 2021.

For Zeinab Abo al-Kheir, whose brother Hussein has been on death row since 2015, the uptick has ushered in a period of anxious waiting.

"We cannot contact him. We always wait for his contact. Sometimes we wait for six months or more, which of course puts us under psychological pressure and extreme terror," the Jordanian national told AFP from Canada, where she lives.

Saudi officials often give advance notice of executions in murder cases, primarily for the benefit of murder victims' families, said Duaa Dhainy, researcher for the European-Saudi Organization for Human Rights (ESOHR).

In most other cases, though, executions are announced only after the fact.

That means relatives of death row inmates often learn about executions like everyone else: from state media reports that omit the names of those executed, Dhainy said.

It sometimes falls to other inmates to contact families and deliver the bad news.

Families "don't have this chance to say goodbye to their beloved one," she said.

The United Nations on Tuesday condemned the uptick in executions, specifically for drug crimes, describing them as "a deeply regrettable step" that was "incompatible with international norms and standards".

Human rights groups say Hussein Abo al-Kheir's case highlights flaws in the Saudi justice system that make it imperative to end capital punishment entirely.

The 57-year-old from Jordan was arrested in 2014 while crossing into Saudi Arabia, where he worked as a driver for a family in the city of Tabuk, Zeinab said.

Iran's Jewish Community...

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Mamousta Fayeq-Rostami, the Friday prayer leader of the Kurdish city of Sanandaj, said Islam opposes any form of bloodshed, and the killings and acts of sabotage seen during the nationwide riots are not acceptable according to the teachings of the divine religion.

In the past two months, and using the protests as a cover, rioters, and thugs — many of whom were later found to have links with foreign parties — have been on a rampage, engaging in savage attacks on security officers, vandalism, desecration of sanctities, and false-flag killings of civilians to incriminate the Iranian police. The riots also set the scene for terrorist attacks across the country.

U.S. Base in Syria...

FROM PAGE 1

The Arabic-language Radio Souryana station also reported that several explosions were heard inside the US-run base, and attack helicopters flew overhead at a low altitude in the aftermath of the attack.

The US military has for long stationed its forces and equipment in northeastern Syria, with the Pentagon claiming that the deployment is aimed at preventing the oilfields in the area from falling into the hands of the Daesh terrorists.

Damascus, however, maintains the deployment is meant to plunder the country's natural resources. Former US president Donald Trump admitted on several occasions that American forces were in the Arab country for its oil wealth.

The British Happy...

FROM PAGE 1

Instead of making unfounded and repeated claims about Iran's role in the region, he said, it would be better for London to stop sowing discord among regional countries and contributing to crimes against humanity through the sale of lethal weapons to



some of its regional customers, and hand over regional peace and stability to the countries in the region.

Kanaani reiterated the "completely transparent and peaceful" nature of Iran's nuclear program, saying Britain, which has not complied with the JCPOA because of accompanying the United States, "is not in a position to question the nature of Iran's nuclear program."

The Iranian spokesman once again rejected Britain's claims about the dispatch of Iran-made drones to Russia to be used against Ukraine and said it is the Western states that are making constant attempts to narrow down the opportunity to resolve the conflict via political and peaceful means by sending massive weapons to parties engaged in the crisis.

Of course Mr. Kanaani gave a diplomatic response to this British official and people's response is very stronger than Mr. Kanaani's because Iranians know well the nature of the colonialist nature of the British Empire whose era has ended and it is struggling nowadays either inside or outside.

The British forces in the past had tried to make Iran as one of its colonies but they had faced strong resistance and been pushed away, and for this reason this colonialist country still covets Iran and dominance over this country but brave Iranians are not the ones to give in.

So Iranians are right to distrust the British in any era because the British nature is the same like five centuries ago, and actually the form has changed and the content is the same. We have not yet forgotten the 2009 presidential election unrests in Iran and meddling of the British and the London-based media and this style of meddling continues in recent riots as London-based media fan the flame of riots in Iran.

Of course young generation in Iran should learn lessons from the past by reading history books to know the real nature of the British which follow the divide and rule policy in countries and among nations, and the British are strongly determined to continue this policy in Iran through bipolarization in the country.

But one point that the British should know is that Iranians may have different views but they are united in one point and it is their anti-British and anti-West view and London is better to stop meddling in Iran's affairs because the Islamic Republic of Iran will not bow down to London's pressure or plots and the flag of the Islamic Revolution will remain hoisted and nobody can unhoist it.

Integrated Governance of...

FROM PAGE 1

He then stated that the suggested scenarios for the establishment of an integrated energy governance system for the country are being pursued by the Parliament Energy Committee, and reminded that this committee is also ready to consult with the private sector.

He also informed about the approval of the law on removing obstacles to the development of the country's electricity industry by the Guardian Council and reminded that this law will be directed to the government in the coming days for implementation.

According to Shariati-Niyasar, the government has paid 25 trillion rials (about \$70.6 million) of its dues to private renewable energy contractors.

The official finally said that the reform of financial relations in the country's oil and gas sector is also on the agenda of the parliament.

Iranians Pack...

FROM PAGE 1

Yuksel further stressed that they had a very good summer season as hoteliers, adding: "The occupancy rate of our hotels had dropped very low at the beginning of November, but now tourists have started to come for a three-day holiday and shopping for the 'wonderful Friday.'"

"Van is not a city that receives seasonal tourists, but a city that receives tourists for 12 months," he noted.

Turkey is expected to host more than 2 million Iranian tourists this year while according to the earlier statements of Turkish tourism officials, the Iranian tourist record of 2.5 million in 2017 could be exceeded in 2023.

Located near the Iranian border, Van is a tourist attraction for its natural wonders and historic monuments. Most Iranian tourists arrive in March and April for their 13-day Nouruz (New Year) holiday, which is the Persian New Year and celebrates the coming of spring.

The city also hosts a major shopping fest that coincides with the Nouruz holiday. The fest lasts up to 15 days and is a major source of income for local businesses and accommodation facilities.

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Saudi Gov't Would Support Any Saudi Bid for Man United, Liverpool

RYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia's sports minister said his country's government would support any Saudi private sector bids to buy Premier League sides Manchester United and Liverpool. Manchester United's owners, the Glazer family, are considering selling the club as they consider "strategic alternatives". "It's the most-watched league in Saudi and the region, and you have a lot of fans of the Premier League," Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Faisal told the BBC.

Kenya Scrambles to Stave Off Athletics Ban

NAIROBI (Dispatches) - Kenya's government is urging World Athletics not to ban the country from the sport, promising to step up its fight against the use of banned substances after a series of its athletes were suspended for doping. The East African country is world renowned for its middle and long-distance runners, who have won numerous gold medals at Olympics and World Championships and clocked up record times. Kenya ranked third in the athletics medal haul at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

U.S., England Settle for Goalless Draw After Sluggish Game

DOHA (Dispatches) - England missed a chance to book their place in the World Cup last 16 as Gareth Southgate's side produced a limp display in their 0-0 draw against the United States.

Southgate's men would have been guaranteed to advance from Group B with a victory in their second game of the tournament, but they rarely troubled a determined US team.

Having thrashed Iran 6-2 on Monday, England lacked the urgency they showed in their opening game and were booed off at full-time.

They managed just one shot on target and could easily have conceded in the first half when the US were in control for long periods at the Al Bayt Stadium.

For the third time in three World Cup meetings with the US, England failed to live up to their status as favorites.

After a shocking defeat in the 1950 tournament and a 1-1 draw in 2010, this was another defiant American effort against England, cooling some of the hype around the Three Lions following the Iran rout.

Although it was an extremely underwhelming performance from England, they are still in control of their own destiny.

A draw in their final group game against Wales on November 29 would ensure England progress to the knockout stages, while a victory would seal first place.

The U.S., who have drawn their first two games, play Iran on the same day knowing a win would send them into last 16.

Gregg Berhalter's group are the second youngest team at the World Cup, but a day after America celebrated Thanksgiving they left sluggish England looking like they were the ones who had indulged in too much turkey.

With Harry Kane and Harry Maguire recovered from an ankle injury and illness respectively, England named an unchanged team for the first time since the 2018 World Cup semi-final defeat against Croatia.



But, whereas England dominated possession against timid Iran from the opening moments, they found the U.S. far more willing to press higher up the pitch.

The U.S. desire to engage England briefly left space in behind them and Jude Bellingham's buccaneering run and pass freed Bukayo Saka down the right side of the U.S. area.

England remained stuck in first gear yet Kane nearly snatched an undeserved winner in stoppage time when he headed wide from Luke Shaw's free-kick.

Meanwhile Ecuador skipper Enner Valencia made an early impression on the World Cup on opening day and continued his dream performance at the tournament in Qatar, leading his side to a 1-1 draw with the Netherlands that also knocked out the hosts.

Valencia scored an early second half equalizer, after Cody Gakpo put the Dutch into a sixth minute lead, and the result now sees Ecuador within a point of an unexpected second-round place.

The 33-year old handed the South Americans a perfect start when they beat Qatar 2-0 in Sunday's opening game and his tap-in from close range at the Khalifa International Stadium on Friday ensured a deserved point for his side against the more fancied Dutch.

Ecuador and the Netherlands share top place in Group A on four points -- a tally that means the hosts are out of contention.

Qatar had, earlier on Friday, lost a second successive game when they went down 3-1 to Senegal and can no longer finish in the top two places and will play only for pride in their last game against the Dutch on Tuesday.

At the same time, Ecuador will meet Senegal in a decisive encounter, where a point will be enough to see them advance but where a win for the Africans could yet see them usurp Valencia and his team mates and send them home.

De Bruyne Admits Belgium Frustrations

DOHA (Dispatches) - Kevin De Bruyne called on his Belgium team-mates to be braver, insisting he also needs improve ahead of Sunday's World Cup clash with Morocco.

The Red Devils scraped a narrow 1-0 win over Canada in their opening Group F game on Wednesday despite an unimpressive performance in which De Bruyne won a man-of-the-match award he then said he didn't deserve.

During the game he was visibly annoyed with Belgium's performance and only a Thibaut Courtois save from Alphonso Davies' penalty stopped spirited Canada from taking an early lead.

"We can show more bravery, be better on the ball, and overall improve our performance, and individually it's the same," De Bruyne told reporters at the team's beach-side training camp in the south-west of Qatar.

"I was on the level that the team was playing at, I was below average, I expect myself to be way better than that. That's what I'm going to try and do in the next game."

A victory over Morocco would secure them a place in the last 16, with striker Romelu Lukaku potentially an option from the bench after training with his teammates on Friday following a thigh injury.

"Romelu's return will not change the way we play, but of course he is a top striker," said De Bruyne.

"Romelu has not played for a long time now, but even if he can only have a few minutes, defensively they will be more scared.

Canada Set Up

Davis Cup Semi With Italy

LONDON (Dispatches) - Canada beat Germany 2-1 to reach the Davis Cup semi-finals where they will face an Italy who advanced with a stunning upset of the United States in Malaga, Spain.

Vasek Pospisil and Denis Shapovalov clinched the winning point for Canada with a 2-6 6-3 6-3 triumph over Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz in the decisive doubles match.

The victory in front of a crowd that included plenty of Canada supporters, was all the more impressive considering the German duo had entered the match 8-0 when paired together at the Davis Cup and clinched the winning point seven times.

"Having this kind of crowd support really helps kind of carry the momentum all the way to the end and I felt like Denis and I were playing better and better," Pospisil said in his on-court interview.

"It's really tough because we don't play too much doubles throughout the year so it's a challenge to be sharp out there but given the circumstances I thought we played extremely well, especially as the match went on."

After dropping the first set, Pospisil and Shapovalov found their footing and consolidated early breaks in the second and third sets before sealing the win on their second match point when Shapovalov ripped a crosscourt forehand winner.

Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime had forced the decider when he brushed aside Oscar Otto 7-6(1) 6-4 after Jan-Lennard Struff gave Germany an early lead with a 6-3 4-6 7-6(2) win over Shapovalov.

Ricciardo Returns to Red Bull As F1 Test and Third Driver

LONDON (Dispatches) - Australian Daniel Ricciardo will be Red Bull's test and third driver next season, the championship-winning Formula One team said.

Ricciardo raced for Red Bull from 2014 to the end of 2018 after two years at sister team Toro Rosso (now AlphaTauri) and returns from McLaren, where he struggled to match team mate Lando Norris.

Brazil Expect Neymar to Carry on in World Cup



DOHA (Dispatches) - Brazilian striker Neymar should be fine to continue in the World Cup despite limping off with a swollen ankle during his team's 2-0 victory over Serbia, coach Tite said.

"We are confident that Neymar will continue playing, he will continue playing in the World Cup," Tite told reporters, confessing that he was initially unaware of his striker's injury.

"I didn't see Neymar was hurt. And he had the capacity to overcome this, he even tricked me." Team doctor Rodrigo Lasmar said Brazil would wait 24-48 hours before assessing Neymar's injury.

The Paris St Germain striker, the most expensive player in the world following his record €222 million transfer from Barcelona, played a pivotal role in Brazil's win in their first game in Group G in Qatar.

He wriggled into the box to pass to Vinicius Jr. to set up Richarlison for Brazil's opening goal in the second half.

Later, however, he appeared to be in tears as he left the pitch with a visibly swollen ankle.

That was reminiscent of the back injury which put Neymar out of the World Cup on home soil in 2014.

Match winner Richarlison, who scored a spectacular swiveling overhead volley for Brazil's second goal, said he had spoken to his team mate to check on his injury.

"It seems he has a hurt ankle and I told him to put a lot of ice on it to recover as soon as possible to have him 100 per cent at the next match. When I get to the hotel, I'm going to go and see how he's doing," he said.

Richarlison has now scored nine goals in his last seven games for Brazil and is oozing confidence.

"As our professor Tite has said 'I am smelling goals!'" he said. "At half time, I told my colleagues I needed a ball and if I got it, I would score. And that's what happened."

"We had a beautiful victory and now we have another six games to reach our goal."

Argentina Pay Tribute To Maradona on Anniversary of His Death

Anniversary of His Death

DOHA (Dispatches) - Former team mates of Diego Maradona gathered at the World Cup in Qatar on Friday to pay tribute to the icon on the second anniversary of his death, reminiscing about brighter days as Argentina recover from their stinging upset by Saudi Arabia.

Considered one of the greatest soccer players in history, Maradona died aged 60 on Nov. 25, 2020, after battling drug and alcohol abuse for years.

Despite his passing, Maradona remains very much present in the minds of Argentina fans. Scores still wear his jersey, sing about his "Hand of God" goal against England in the quarter-finals of the 1986 World Cup and furiously debate whether comparisons to Lionel Messi are even appropriate.

At the CONMEBOL Tree of Dreams in central Doha, an area celebrating South American soccer, FIFA president Gianni Infantino greeted former team mates of Maradona, who took turns describing his greatness on and off the pitch.

"We don't only need to pay tribute but to celebrate Diego," Infantino said. "I would like there to be a day to celebrate Diego Armando Maradona at every World Cup in the future."



Son to Need Time To Re-Adapt

AL RAYYAN (Dispatches) - South Korea captain Son Heung-min will need time to re-adapt following his return from surgery to stabilize a fracture around his left eye, head coach Paulo Bento said after they held Uruguay to a 0-0 draw in their World Cup opener.

Son, playing in a black protective mask, spearheaded the South Korean attack but did not have much impact as they had six attempts at goal but none on target.

Bento said the 30-year-old, who was injured midway through Tottenham Hotspur's Champions League match at Olympique de Marseille this month, joined the squad only in recent days.

"Son is a player who, up until his, injury, had continuous rhythm and good performance," Bento said of Son, who had five goals and two assists for Spurs this season before the World Cup.

"He had a serious injury, he was inactive for a considerable time. He joined the team only in the last few days.

"After an injury and being exposed to more aggressive games, it is natural it will take him some step to re-adapt."

Son said the game was tough and intense but felt South Korea fought hard and could have taken all three points.

