

Health Ministry Announced on Saturday That the Number of Deaths From the COVID-19 Pandemic in Iran Stayed Unchanged at **144,673** With Another **Zero** Death Day Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Deputy Minister of Defense Said on Saturday That Following Ratification Of a New Law on Recruitment of Female Personnel in the Ministry of Defense, Percentage of Women in This Ministry Will Increase

VOL. XXVIII, No. 7670 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SUNDAY DECEMBER 25, 2022 - DEY 4, 1401

2 DOMESTIC

Tehran, Dhaka Agree To Enhance Political, Economic Ties



> SEE PAGE 2

3 DOMESTIC

Germany's Sanctions to Affect Iran Oil Equipment



> SEE PAGE 3

4 INTERNATIONAL

Zelenskyy Back in Kyiv, Russia Keeps Up Attacks



> SEE PAGE 4

8 SPORTS

Beasley, Clarkson Lead Jazz to 120-112 Victory Over Wizards



> SEE PAGE 8

No Alternative to Iran Nuclear Deal

TEHRAN (MNA) – The European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell says there is no alternative to the 2015 nuclear deal, which was unilaterally abandoned by the United States three years after its conclusion.

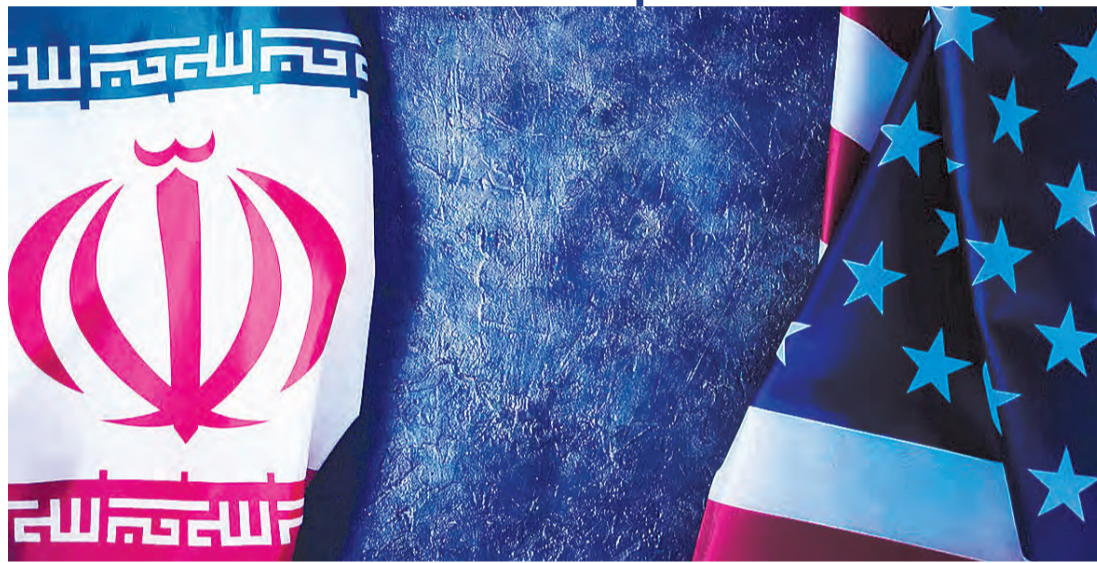
"I still believe that when it comes to nuclear non-proliferation, there is no alternative to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Those who think otherwise simply fool themselves," Borrell said in a blog post on Friday. He said he would "continue working towards restoring the JCPOA based on the results of the Vienna negotiations."

The top EU diplomat said he held "long" talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on the sidelines of the Baghdad Conference II in the Jordanian capital of Amman on Tuesday. "I also stressed that bringing the JCPOA back to life does not happen in a strategic vacuum. It is part, a key part, of a broader picture."

In the Tuesday meeting, Borrell told the Iranian foreign minister the JCPOA and relevant negotiations were separate from other issues on the agenda of both sides.

See Page 7

Window for JCPOA Agreement Not to Remain Open for Ever



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian warned international powers that a window for reviving a 2015 international deal on Iran's nuclear program, known as the JCPOA, remains open but not forever.

In a post on Twitter late on Friday, Amirabdollahian said that his meeting with European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell in Jordan earlier this week had focused on taking the final steps required to revive the JCPOA. But he said that the window for reaching such an agreement would not remain open forever.

The top diplomat also said that he had highlighted the need for a political solution to the conflict in Ukraine in his meeting with Borrell.

He added in his tweet that the United States is not entitled to lecture other countries about human rights given crimes it has committed in Cuba's Guantanamo detention camp and in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, and considering the crimes committed by US forces against women and children in Afghanistan and Yemen in recent years.

On December 20, Amirabdollahian flew to Amman at the head of a delegation to take part in the second edition of the Baghdad Conference.

The Iranian foreign minister held talks with officials from governments and international organizations on the sidelines of the conference, including with EU foreign policy chief.

Meanwhile the U.S. Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley says that the nuclear deal with Iran is not dead.

In an interview with RFE/RL's Radio Farda on Friday, the Biden administration's special envoy for Iran claimed that negotiations on reviving the deal reached a point in September where "we even thought for a day or two that Iran was on board" until Tehran tacked on new demands at the last minute that scuppered the chances of moving forward.

Robert Malley's claim came as a few days ago American media broadcast a video of US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of a Nov. 4 election rally that he said the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran is "dead," but stressed the U.S. won't formally announce it.

The remarks come as negotiations, which started in April last year in Vienna, remain stalled since August as Washington refuses to remove sanctions that were slapped on the Islamic Republic by the previous U.S. administration of Donald Trump.

Despite notable progress, the U.S. indecisiveness and procrastination caused multiple interruptions in the marathon talks.

Iranian officials have, time and again, asserted that upon potentially lifting the sanctions, Washington should be able to guarantee that it would not return the bans again.

Iran, Russia Discuss Two-Match Friendly Series

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazim Jalali told RIA Novosti that the issue of organizing a friendly match between the Iranian and Russian national teams is currently being worked on – perhaps the teams will play a two-match series with home and away games.

A friendly match between the national teams of Russia and Iran was planned to be held in Qatar or Iran in November, but the meeting did not take place. Then the President of the Russian Football Union (RFU), Alexander Dyukov, noted that the Iranian side confirmed its readiness to play with the Russian national team in 2023.

"We are working to ensure that a friendly match will be played between the Iranian and Russian teams in the very near future. This game will be another tool for the development of public diplomacy and rapprochement between our countries," Celali said. Eastern Culture Center of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

"At the moment it is difficult to say when the matches of the national teams of our states will be played. But yes, we have such a desire to organize and make it happen. It would be good and logical to play a match." your country, and one will take place in Iran," he added.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Long Live the Snake That Doesn't Bite Me!

We Iranians are rich in literature and having good proverbs and one of them is "Death Is Good for the Neighbor" which is equivalent to "Long Live the Snake That Doesn't Bite Me!" in English language and the West and predominantly the U.S. is the main follower and practitioner of this proverb which is called double standard in politics.

In recent years the Westerners have always in any event or case have brought forward the issue of human rights and freedom of expression but when it comes to them, they easily ignore all of their own claims related to the mentioned issues.

Freedom of expression is one of the debatable issues that the West every time jumps to defend it but Western countries even do not respect what they claim themselves regarding the freedom of expression and they practice the proverb of "Death Is Good for Neighbor".

Of course this double standard approach is getting more apparent when the West comes to deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran and whenever any riot or unrest happens in Iran, the West makes the issue of freedom of expression more much bolder and noisy than ever.

In recent years the U.S. has resorted to any sanctions against Iran and some of them have been slapped on Iran's media outlets like its national broadcasting IRIB's TV channels and now European Union has followed its lord's path by imposing such bans and sanctioning media outlets of Iran while they always claim of freedom of expression.

In recent months some of Iran's international TV channels have faced problems in airing their programs because those sanctions and some satellite operators have stopped airing IRIB's TV channels.

Now French satellite operator Eutelsat confirmed that it has suspended all broadcasting services to the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) as well as three Russian channels.

In a statement on Thursday, Eutelsat said, "Pursuant to the Council of the EU Regulation 2022/2428 dated 12 December 2022, Eutelsat has ceased all Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB)-related broadcasting activity."

The statement added that the satellite operator as of Wednesday "ended all involvement in the broadcasting of three [Russian] channels Rossiya One, Perviy Kanal and NTV, within the prescribed 7-day compliance period."

"Pursuant to the Council of the European Union Regulation 2022/2474 of 16 December 2022, these three channels as well as a fourth, RenTV, will be subject to sanctions if so confirmed by the Council by 1 February 2023, in accordance with the notice 2022/C 481 I/04 released by the Council on 19 December 2022," Eutelsat said.

According to the statement, the satellite operator has also ensured that it is not involved in the broadcasting of RT News in Russia in line with the process of implementing or preparing for the implementation of the aforementioned measures.

As a result of the suspensions, Eutelsat said it will take a bottom-line hit of around 10 to 15 million euros (\$16 million) to its full-year revenues.

Eutelsat on December 7 notified Press TV of a plan to take the English-language news network off air, weeks after the European Union imposed sanctions on the Tehran-based broadcaster.

On November 14, the European Union imposed sanctions on a number of Iranian institutions and individuals, including Press TV, over alleged "rights violations" following the recent foreign-backed riots in the country.

Eutelsat is a French satellite operator providing coverage over the entire European continent, the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Americas. It is the world's third-largest satellite operator in terms of revenues.

See Page 7

Iran, Pakistan Target \$5b Bilateral Trade Volume

KARACHI (Dispatches) - Consul General of Iran Hassan Nourian has said the trade volume between Iran and Pakistan was not satisfactory at around \$1.5 billion per annum, and both governments were targeting \$5 billion, which can be achieved easily.

Speaking of the signing of two memorandums of understanding, Nourian said the first MoU was signed for setting up a Joint Business Council between Iran and Pakistan, while the second one was inked in connection with arbitration of commercial disputes.

At the same time, the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) and Isfahan Chamber signed a MoU for improving cooperation between the business communities of the two countries.

Exchanging views at a meeting during his visit to the KCCI, the Iranian CG said that the most important development was the removal of banned commodities from the list of items to be imported from Pakistan under Iran-Pakistan PTA.

Trade Development Authority Pakistan Chief Executive Zubair Motiwala, KCCI President Mohammed Tariq Yousuf, Senior Vice President Touseef Ahmed, Vice President Muhammad Haris Agar, Chairman Diplomatic Missions and Embassies Liaison Subcommittee Zia ul Arfeen, Former Presidents Majid Aziz and Ifthikhar Vohra along with others attended the meeting.

Nourian said that the shared 1,000kms border put the countries in the perfect position to meet each other's demand for necessities, including supply of Iranian natural gas, crude oil and petrochemical products, and Pakistani agricultural products.

Identifying the lack of a banking channel as the main obstacle in smooth trade, the CG said that to deal with this issue, Iran has suggested the Pakistani government and the State Bank to allow trade via national currencies of both countries or opening of an Iranian bank in Karachi in addition to devising a barter trade mechanism.

See Page 7

Sokhan Gostar Institute

IRAN NEWS

PRIVATE ENGLISH NEWSPAPER IN IRAN



Advertisement Department
021-44253335-39

www.irannewsdaily.com
info@irannewsdaily.com

@irannewsdaily @irannewsdaily

Air Quality in Tehran Back to Healthy Level

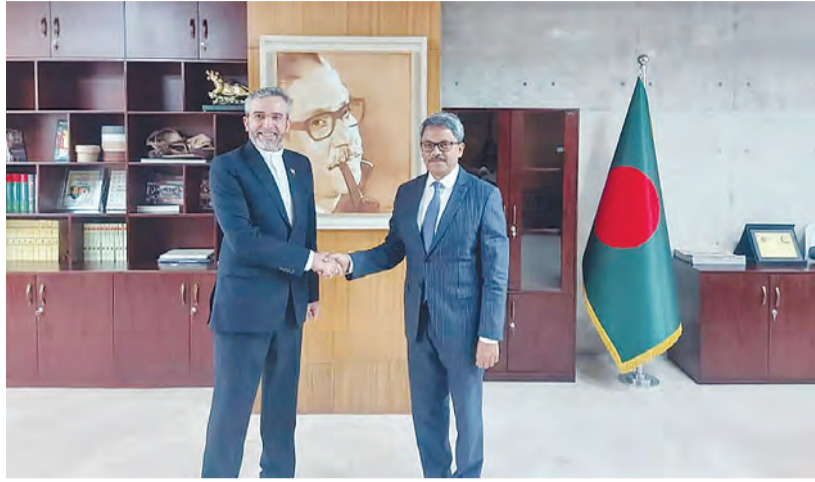
TEHRAN (IFP) - After days of severe pollution, the air quality in the Iranian capital of Tehran returns to a healthy level thanks to a windy weather and downpours of rain and snow.

Tehran's air quality index (AQI) for Saturday morning was reported to be 64, which means an "acceptable" quality, after snow, rain and wind cleared the city of over 8.5 million of hazardous airborne pollutants. Air pollution forced the closure of in-person classes at schools and universities for days.

Annually, with a drop in temperatures, a phenomenon known as temperature inversion occurs during which cold air underpins warm air at higher altitude, leading to the entrapment of air pollutants in Tehran and other metropolises, causing heavy smog.

Tehran, Dhaka Agree To Enhance Political, Economic Ties

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



Bangladesh and the Islamic Republic of Iran held in the Dhaka city where first deputy minister (political affairs) of Bagheri Kani and Bangladesh foreign secretary Momen led their respective delegations.

'Bangladesh side requested a deeper engagement of Iran for a sustainable return of the forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals to Myanmar,' said a foreign ministry release.

Two sides discussed ways to enhance further cooperation and partnership in the field of commerce and trade, investment in the economic zones, human resource development, people-to-people ties, food security, energy, connectivity, blue economy and climate change cooperation, among others, said the release.

Meanwhile, during a Thursday meeting between Bagheri Kani and Bangladeshi State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam, the two sides underscored the importance of boosting bilateral cooperation in regional and international circles, including in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Parliaments of OIC Member Countries.

They said Tehran-Dhaka's close cooperation in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) would play a leading role in improving economic cooperation among regional states.

Also, on the first day of his official visit to Bangladesh, Bagheri met with Muhammad Faruk Khan, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Parliament, and discussed the exchange of parliamentary delegations, including the heads of the two parliaments, foreign policy commissions and parliamentary friendship groups to promote interactions between the two parliaments of Iran and Bangladesh emphasized.

2.6m Tons of Commodities Traded Last Week on IME

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 2,667,264 tons of commodities with a total trading value of nearly \$731m 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 2,175,456 tons of commodities valued at more than \$478m.

On this floor the IME sold 1,080,565 tons of cement, 740,000 tons of iron ore, 248,093 tons of steel, 55,000 tons of sponge iron, 42,575 tons of zinc, 8,250 tons of aluminum, 6,042 tons of copper, 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 10 kg of gold bars and 6,728 vehicles.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 431,282 tons of commodities worth nearly \$247m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 201,820 tons of bitumen, 115,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 91,480 tons of polymeric products, 31,735 tons of chemicals, 17,000 tons of lube cut, 15,600 tons of sulfur, 8,381 tons of base oil, 3,100 tons of petroleum products and 300 tons of insulation.

The IME also traded within the same week 8,691 tons of commodities on its side market.

Iran Ready to Share Experiences With Mali

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - An Iranian deputy foreign minister expressed the country's readiness to strengthen economic and industrial cooperation and share its experiences in various fields with Mali.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mahdi Safari is visiting Bamako on a tour of Africa that took him earlier to Guinea.

In a meeting with acting Prime Minister of Mali Choguel Kokalla Maiga, the Iranian diplomat highlighted Tehran's resolve to develop and promote relations with the African countries and the brotherly and Muslim state of Mali in various fields.

"Fortunately, during a visit by Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian to Mali, the Joint Economic Commission was held successfully, and it has well drawn up the road map for the expansion of relations between us," he said.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to share its experiences and achievements with Mali in various fields for the development of the country," Safari added.

For his part, the Malian prime minister hailed the achievements of Iran in different areas.

The premier said the Joint Commission has fortunately set the duties and tasks of different ministries, while the path of cooperation with Iran has been determined.

In a separate meeting, the Iranian deputy foreign minister held talks with Mali's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Abdoulaye Diop.

The two sides discussed the latest situation of commercial, economic and industrial cooperation between the two countries.

In the gathering, the top Malian diplomat appreciated Iran's commitment to developing cooperation with the African countries, saying Mali is determined to expand economic relations with Iran.

Iran, Guinea Officials Discuss Expansion of Bilateral Ties

TEHRAN (MNA) - In a meeting with the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for the Economic Diplomacy, the foreign minister of Guinea Morissanda Kouyaté stressed his country's willingness to develop ties with Tehran.

Senior Iranian diplomat Mehdi Safari also in the meeting expressed Iran's readiness to expand bilateral ties with Guinea in different fields including energy, electricity, construction, hospital equipment, and industrial products.

Safari also called for resuming the joint commissions of cooperation between the two countries to improve the level of relations.

The top Guinean diplomat, for his part, emphasized Guinea's desire to utilize the advanced knowledge and experiences of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Safari also held meetings with several other Guinean officials including the Guinean minister of Agriculture and Livestock Mamadou Nagnalen Barry and several members of the Guinean chamber of commerce.

Developing Iran-Guinea relations and cooperation was also stressed during these meetings.

Ways for Strengthening Iran-Pakistan Trade Cooperation Surveyed

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Pakistan's finance minister emphasizing the high significance of his country's relations with Iran, said Islamabad is ready for eliminating obstacles in way of boosting trade cooperation with Iran.

Ishaq Dar, who is meanwhile a senator of his country, on Friday night was the host of Iran Ambassador to Pakistan Seyyed Mohamad-Ali Hosseini said that the two countries' relations are deep-rooted, intimate, and with lots of old mutual commonalities.

"Pakistan has always attached great importance to its relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, but the level of our bilateral trade is unfortunately not satisfactory at



all, and therefore, Pakistan is ready for taking any necessary step to eliminate the obstacles in the way of strengthening of trade cooperation," said the senator.

The Iranian ambassador, too, appreciating the Pakistani government's economic policies, said, "The historical relations of these two neighbors and their cultural and political interactions necessitate having an economic bilateral cooperation to match that level, which means a much better and stronger annual trade volume."

Ambassador Hosseini added that the two countries have great potential for broadening and deepening economic cooperation, especially in energy, commerce, and other fields.

Iran's Ambassador in Moscow Meets With Putin's Representative

MOSCOW (IP) - The Iranian ambassador in Moscow and the representative of the Russian president in West Asian affairs met and discussed the topics of interest.

Iran and Russia share strategic interests in bilateral fields, mainly economic, military, and security relations, as well as regional and international issues such as confronting the U.S. unilateralism, which has been one of the main factors of close cooperation between the two sides in recent years.

Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Moscow, met with Mikhail Bogdanov, the Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for the Middle East and African countries.

In the meeting, issues related to bilateral relations between Tehran and Moscow, as well as regional developments, was discussed.

Also, last night, the Iranian ambassador met with Igor Levitin, the Russian president's aide.

According to the ambassador, the focus of his talks with this Russian official was the North-South Corridor.

Iran, Syria Confer on Boosting Joint Film Production

TEHRAN (IP) - The Deputy Minister of Information of Syria and the head of the Cinema Foundation, and the Secretary General of the Iranian Resistance Film Festival met and discussed joint film productions.

Syria's Assistant Minister of Information met with Mohammed Hosseini, the head of the Resistance Film Foundation, Jalal Ghafari, the Secretary General of the Resistance Film Festival, and a number of Iranian directors and producers.

In this meeting, the two sides discussed cooperation in the field of cinema, documentaries, short films, serials, and dramas that reflect the common issues of the two countries.

According to the Iran Press news agency, Mohammed Hosseini, Iran's head of the Resistance Film Foundation, emphasizing the need to strengthen cooperation between Iranian and Syrian cultural institutions that work in the field of joint cinema and drama production, called on Syrian artists to participate in the Resistance Film Festival that will be held next year in Tehran.

Also, Probable areas of cooperation in film production were discussed, and several proposals were presented in this field to be implemented as soon as possible.

Hosseini further emphasized the terrorist war in this country and said: "The aim of this war was to erase the identity and destroy the Syrian civilization."

Ahmed Dhawa added: "The film industry plays a major role in conveying the real picture of what is happening in Syria and the various consequences of the actions of the West against the Syrian people. The Syrian media delegation also visited the Cinema town of Iran, where many Iranian films and series have been filmed and produced, as well as the Documentary Research Center."



Notice of tender for export sale No. 19/1401/Z

Hereby Golgohar Mining & Industrial Co. announces selling and export 60,000 metric tons of Iron Ore Pellet (%Fe:65.00) on basis of F.O.B at Rajaei Jetty Bandar Abbas - Iran. Interested bidders should find tender documents at Golgohar website: www.geg.ir. All bids on conformity to tender instructions must be submitted no later than 14:00 P.M. on 9th Jan. 2022 to the Golgohar complex in Sirjan. (50 km in Shiraz road) Bidders are invited to the transactions commission department of the seller with an introduction letter of interested buyer and personal identification of the representative. Tender results shall be announced at 10:00 A.M. on 10th Jan. 2022 at the office of the Seller.

Analysis %		
Min	65.00	Fe
Ave	1.00	FeO
Max	0.05	P
Max	0.01	S
Max	3.5	SiO2
Max	0.7	Al2O3
Max	0.9	CaO
Max	2.5	MgO
Ave 250		CCS(kg/p)
Min 90		8-16 mm%
-6mm		Ave 5
Max 4.0		A.1%
Min 94		T.1%
19-24		Prosity%
Min 90		Reducibility%



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:04
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:17
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:42
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:12

88. "Then he brought out (of the fire) before the (people) the image of a calf:
It seemed to low: so they said:
This is your god, and the god of Moses, but (Moses) has forgotten!"
89. Could they not see that it could not return them a word (for answer), and that it had
no power either to harm them or to do them good?
Surah 20. Ta-ha (88 - 89)

Germany's Sanctions to Affect Iran Oil Equipment

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Deputy Head of Commission for Facilitating Trade and Promoting Export of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture Mr. Mehrad Ebad believes the new sanctions of Germany will affect Iran's oil equipment and the country may face problem.

Germany's government on Friday suspended state measures designed to foster business with Iran. The suspension will affect export credits and investment guarantees as well as Germany's manager training and trade fair programs in Iran.

Reacting to this decision and in an interview with ILNA, Ebad said that experience of these years has shown us that sanctions have created problems for the people and the private sector, adding that those who see sanctions as blessing should answer the problems.

He pointed to the high potentials of the government sector in the sanctions era and stipulated that the possibility of transfer of money and goods is more for the government sector than the private sector in the sanctions era while the private sector is considered as the driving force of the national economy.

He noted that relation with other countries is one of the main requirements of development and constructive relation with most countries can put Iran on the course of development, adding that in recent years and due to sanctions there have been several problems for providing modern technology and modern machineries and these technologies have been unable to be imported because of sanctions and



it has had its impact on all dimensions of the national economy.

Ebad further said that machineries and tools in the field of extraction in the oil and gas industries are very old and therefore the productivity has lowered, noting that Iran could gain self-sufficiency in some technologies and for import of modern knowhow in the field of technology, the country needs Germany.

He stated that countries like China, Iraq and Russia cannot help Iran to upgrade its technology, adding that Germany has helped Iran a great deal in transfer of technology, and several equipment in Assalouyeh and Mahshahr Oil and gas installations are provided by Linde of Germany, and exit of Germany will have its impact on this industry.

Ebad went on to say that if other European countries follow the policy of Germany, the condition will become worse for Iran. He reiterated that Iran's economy has been politicized and 88% of the economy is in the monopoly of government or state-organizations and its separation is impossible and in the foreign interactions and exchanges the political issues have direct impact and any hostile policy against the West or the East has inflicted loss on the country than putting it on the course of independence.

He added that attracting foreign investment is one of the principles of development while the foreign investment growth in Iran has become negative and today we see the flight of capitals from the country while Iran needs investment and capital for progress.

Iranian Trade Delegation to Be Dispatched to Spain, Italy

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Bojnourd Chamber of Commerce is to dispatch a trade delegation to Italy and Spain on January 28-February 4.

According to the public relations of Bojnourd Chamber of Commerce, in the framework of broadening trade cooperation based on the production capacities proportionate to the exporting market targets, the chamber is to send a team of economic activists in a trade delegation to Italy and Spain.

The delegation will be comprised of economic activists of the North Province.

HOSCO Hailed for Monthly Record For Slab Production

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Hormozgan Steel Company in a message felicitated and hailed the performance of the staff of the company for setting another record for monthly slab production.

According to reports, HOSCO produced 155,622 tons of slabs in the last Iranian calendar month of Azar which is another monthly record for the company.

Reacting to this success, the CEO of the company Mr. Ataollah Maroufkhani in a message felicitated this success and hailed the tireless and hardworking personnel of the company for setting the new record with producing 155,622 tons of steel slabs.

In his notice Mr. Maroufkhani hailed the performance of the personnel despite restrictions and problems in materializing the slogan of the year, namely, knowledge-based production and showed the capabilities of Hormozgan Steel Company.

He concluded his message with expressing gratitude for setting the fifth record for monthly production in 19 months and felicitated it to the share-holders of the company.



Car Production Hits Four-Year High



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade says the production of different types of cars has been 748,000 in 8 months which is the highest in recent four years.

Reacting to an interview published in ILNA, the ministry in a statement refuted the allegations published in the interview and claimed the car production in 8 months has been the highest in recent four years.

The ministry said that 748,000 cars have been manufactured in 8 months which is the highest in recent four years and the car production has witnessed 15% growth comparing to the same period in 2 years ago and 53% more than three years ago.

The ministry also criticized some statistics in that interview and called them baseless and contradictory.

It also refuted the news that imported cars will soon arrive in the national countries because imports of cars are still under process.

The ministry also rejected the claims that auto-makers are to increase the prices of their products by 100%, noting that the prices of products have not even increased by 4% and it is not to increase more.

According to the ministry, in the first 8 months of the year, car production and delivery to the market has increased by 32% and even in the Iranian calendar month of Aban, the production of different types of light and heavy vehicles boke the five-year record of production.

The ministry has also reiterated that car production will accelerate and the number of production will increase by the end of the year in mid-March.

Tehran, Moscow Call for Boosting Cooperation on Transport, Transit

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - During a meeting between the head of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) and the Russian ambassador to Iran at the place of TCCIMA on Saturday, the two sides stressed the need to expand cooperation between the two countries to facilitate relations in transport and transit sectors.

TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari and the Russian envoy, Alexey Dedov, also emphasized the expansion of economic relations between the two countries and the strengthening of the cooperation between the Russian Embassy and the Tehran Chamber to facilitate business relations between the private sector companies of Iran and Russia.

The Russian ambassador pointed out the history and forward-looking activity of the Tehran Chamber in the development of Iran's trade relations with other countries, including Russia, and by stating that the level of trade relations between the two countries has reached more than 4 billion dollars, with a significant leap compared to last year, he mentioned the measures and economic policies of the Russian government in line with the expansion of relations with Iran, and in this regard, he announced the planning of the Russian government to create a sea corridor from the Russian port in the Baltic Sea to Bandar Abbas in the south of Iran.

Emphasizing the importance of expanding the economic relations between the enterprises of the two countries, the envoy stated that the cooperation and consensus of the Russian Embassy with the Tehran Chamber in the direction of advancing the relations between the private sectors of Iran and Russia and unraveling the existing obstacles and



problems will develop in the coming period.

In this meeting, the TCCIMA head referred to the reception of 12 trade delegations from the Russian Federation in the Tehran Chamber in the last few months and the sending of various trade delegations to some provinces of Russia, and clarified that with the exchange of the trade delegations, the knowledge and awareness of the enterprises of the two countries from each other will increase, and in this way, the capacity of economic cooperation will be identified and exploited by enterprises.

Khansari, in this regard, announced the readiness of the TCCIMA to develop relations between this chamber and the Russian Embassy in Tehran and to use the tools and facilities of both sides with the aim of facilitating trade and economic relations between Iran and Russia and emphasized taking measures to launch the North-South Corridor and the proper use of existing capacities to facilitate the transit of goods between the two countries.

Iranian capital Tehran hosted a grand Iran-Russia business forum at Espinas Palace Hotel on November 15 in which the Iranian and Russian traders and officials exchanged views on the expansion of economic cooperation.

Organized by the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), the event was participated by the 120-member Russian delegation as well as businesspeople and officials from Iran.

Iran and Russia traded as much as \$4.63 billion worth of commodities over the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), according to an April report by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Qeshm Air Launches Regular Flights to Uzbekistan

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iranian Qeshm Air airline launched regular flights on the Tehran-Tashkent-Almaty-Tehran route, Trend reports via Uzbek media outlets.

A plane from Qeshm Air landed at Tashkent International Airport on December 22. It is planned that regular flights will be carried out once a week - on Thursdays.

The operation of these flights is the result of agreements between the leadership of Uzbekistan and Iran, reached during the official visit of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, to Uzbekistan in September this year.

In particular, during the visit, a program of cooperation in the field of tourism was adopted, aimed at simplifying a number of visa procedures and enhancing tourist flows between Iran and Uzbekistan.

Qeshm Air is an Iranian airline headquartered in Tehran, founded in 1993, which operates scheduled domestic and international passenger flights, as well as charter flights.



4th Ship Carrying Iranian Goods Sent to Venezuela



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line Group (IRISL) has sent the first ship carrying Iran-made export goods to Venezuela, which is also the fourth ship from the Islamic Republic to the destination of the Latin American country.

According to the IRISL Group, the second ship carrying consignments produced by the Iranian producers is scheduled to be sent to Venezuela in February if anticipated capacities are being completed.

The IRISL wrote letters to the Iranian authorities and the chambers of commerce, expressing readiness to create regular shipping line to export Iranian commodities to Venezuela.

The IRISL sees no limit in improving the shipping line if the Iranian merchants and exporters welcome the export plan, the group noted.

Economic assessments indicate that the shipment of goods play a key role in exporting Iran-made goods, while a combination of road and railway transportation to Venezuela will lead to the increase of other costs.

The IRISL is also prepared to utilize heavy vessels in order to expand the capabilities in exporting significant amount of shipment to Venezuela.

Pakistan Suicide Car Bombing Kills One Police Official



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Suspected militants sped through a checkpoint in Pakistan's capital of Islamabad and blew themselves up as police gave pursuit, killing one officer and injuring several others.

"Our initial information says that there was a man and a woman in the car," Islamabad operations police chief, Sohail Zafar, told reporters. The car did not stop at the checkpoint when police tried to halt it, he said. "As they chased it, the people inside the car blew it up. It was a suicide blast."

Four police and two civilians were injured, he said. The car was packed with explosives and headed for a high-value target in the capital, the interior ministry said in a statement, giving no further details.

Burkina Faso Gov't Expels Senior UN Official



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Burkina Faso's military government in a statement on Friday ordered senior United Nations official Barbara Manzi to leave the country immediately, without giving a reason.

When contacted, a government spokesperson did not immediately say why it had labelled Manzi, the UN's resident coordinator in Burkina Faso, as "persona non grata" and demanded that she leave.

A spokesperson at the UN headquarters did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Burkina Faso, one of the world's poorest countries, has been in the grip of a conflict in which armed groups linked to al-Qaeda and the ISIL (ISIS) group have killed thousands of civilians and created one of the continent's fastest-growing humanitarian crises.

Zelenskyy Back in Kyiv, Russia Keeps Up Attacks



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy sounded another defiant note on his return to his nation's capital following his wartime visit to the United States, saying his forces are "working toward victory" even as Russia warned that there would be no end to the war until it achieved its military aims.

Zelenskyy posted on his Telegram account that he's in his Kyiv office following his U.S. trip that secured a new \$1.8 billion military aid package, and pledged that "we'll overcome everything." The Ukrainian president also thanked the Netherlands for pledging up to 2.5 billion euros (\$2.65 billion) for 2023, to help pay for military equipment and rebuild critical infrastructure.

Zelenskyy's return comes amid relentless Russian artillery, rocket and mortar fire as well as airstrikes on the eastern and southern fronts and elsewhere in Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the war would end at the negotiating table once the "special military operation" achieves "the goals that the Russian Federation has set," adding that "a significant headway has been made on demilitarization of Ukraine."

The Kremlin spokesman said no reported Ukrainian peace plan can succeed without taking into account "the realities of today that can't be ignored" — a reference to Moscow's demand that Ukraine recognize Russia's sovereignty over the Crimean Peninsula, which was annexed in 2014, as well as other territorial gains.

At least six civilians were killed and 18 others were wounded in Russian attacks on eight regions in Ukraine's south and east in the past 24 hours, according to Ukrainian officials.

In a regular Telegram update, the deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office Kyrylo Tymoshenko said Russian missiles destroyed a boarding school in the eastern city of Kramatorsk, home of the Ukrainian army's local headquarters.

The Ukrainian military said Russian forces fired multiple rocket launchers "more than 70 times" across Ukrainian territory overnight, while fierce battles raged around the city of Bakhmut in the eastern Donetsk region.

The General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces said Bakhmut and Lyman in the neighboring Luhansk region as well as the front line between the Luhansk and Kharkiv regions bore the brunt of the Russian strikes, but didn't specify to what degree.

As many as 61 Russian rocket, artillery and mortar fire attacks were launched in the Kherson region over the past 24 hours. Kherson regional Gov. Yaroslav Yanushevych posted on Telegram that Russian forces attacked from dug-in positions on the right bank of the Dnieper river, hitting educational institutions, apartment blocks and private homes. Tymoshenko said renewed Russian shelling on Kherson city Friday killed another person.

In the eastern Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk regions, Ukraine's military said Russia launched six missile strikes and as many air attacks on civilian targets, while Ukrainian forces repelled Russian ground attacks on or near 19 settlements in the north and east.

Russian shelling overnight also struck a district hospital in the northeastern city of Volchansk, Kharkiv region, wounding five people, according to local Gov. Oleh Syniehubov. Syniehubov posted on Telegram that the four men and one woman were all in "moderate condition."

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian military said several blasts tore through factory buildings housing Russian troops in the occupied city of Tokmak in the southern Zaporizhzhia region late on Thursday, sparking a fire. The Center for Strategic Communications of the Armed Forces of Ukraine didn't immediately report on casualties or who was behind the blasts.

North Korea Fires Two Ballistic Missiles



SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles, Seoul's military said, the latest in a flurry of sanctions-busting weapons tests.

The launch comes at the end of a year that has seen Pyongyang conduct an unprecedented number of tests, including last month's launch of its most advanced intercontinental ballistic missile yet, with a range capable of hitting the US mainland.

Earlier this week, Pyongyang also claimed to have developed new capabilities to take images from space. "Our military spotted two short-range ballistic missiles launched by North Korea into the East Sea from the Sunan area of Pyongyang at around 16:32 (0732 GMT) today," South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said, referring to the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

The two missiles flew around 250 kilometres (155 miles) and 350 kilometres (217 miles) respectively, before splashing down into the East Sea, it added.

Tokyo also confirmed Pyongyang's launch, with its top government spokesman Hirokazu Matsuno calling the North's latest provocations "absolutely unacceptable".

Paris Gunman Kills Three in Attack on Kurdish Cultural Center

PARIS (Dispatches) - A gunman opened fire on a Kurdish cultural center and nearby Kurdish cafe in central Paris on Friday, killing three people and wounding three others, and prosecutors said they were looking into a possible racist motive for the attack.

Multiple gunshots were fired on Rue d'Enghien, sowing panic on a street lined with small shops and cafes in the capital's busy central 10th arrondissement, or district.

Authorities said they had arrested a 69-year-old man. Paris prosecutor Laure Beccuau said the suspect had recently been freed from detention while awaiting trial for a separate sabre attack on a migrant camp in Paris a year ago. Authorities could not exclude a possible racist motive, she said.

Juan-Golan Eliberg, an artist who works at the Kurdish centre, told Reuters the shooter had targeted Kurds.

Eyewitness Mehmet Dilek told Reuters he first heard gunshots and then cries coming from inside a barber's shop opposite the cultural centre. Bystanders subdued the gunman when he had to reload his firearm, Dilek added.

"It might be shocking for someone who has never had a worry in their life. But we grew up under the threat of arms and bombs, this is how life is for us Kurds," he continued.

The incident was a "terrible drama", district mayor Alexandra Cordebar told reporters. One of those wounded had suffered life-threatening injuries, she said.

Julien Verplancke who works at another local restaurant, Chez Minna, said staff from the Kurdish restaurant emerged from the premise in tears after the shooting. Reuters was not immediately able to contact the suspect's representatives. BFM TV reported the suspect was a French national.

Images broadcast on French news networks on Friday showed a white man wearing a grey top and scruffy white trainers being led away from the scene, his hands cuffed behind his back.

Iraq Seeks Closer Economic Ties With Italy

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraq's prime minister appealed to visiting Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni for closer economic ties with his oil-rich country suffering from power cuts and decaying infrastructure.

Meloni, who leads the eurozone's third-largest economy, is on her first bilateral trip outside Europe. She is on a pre-Christmas visit to Italian troops posted in Iraq in support of an anti-jihadist mission.

"We expressed our disposition to develop economic cooperation in all fields, especially agriculture, water and health," Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said at a joint press conference.

He invited to Iraq "companies specialized in infrastructure but also in the exploitation of gas."

A government priority is to eliminate the highly polluting practice of gas flaring, a precursor to oil extraction, which contributes to global warming. The United Nations says Iraq is one of five countries most exposed to some impacts of climate change.

Italian oil firm Eni has been involved in exploration and production in Iraq for more than a decade. Part of its program "includes the use of associated gas for electricity generation," the firm says on its website.

Captured and treated flared gas could help address Iraq's chronic power shortages.

The country is rich in oil but beset by infrastructure in disrepair, endemic corruption and widespread unemployment nearly two decades after a US-led invasion toppled the dictator Saddam Hussein.

Nearly one-third of the population lives in poverty, the UN says.

Sudani said Iraq "is prepared to supply Italy with what it needs in terms of oil and gas."

With output of more than 3.3 million barrels per day, Iraq is the second largest crude producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

Meloni's far-right Brothers of Italy party swept to power in September elections, forming a coalition government with the anti-immigration League and Silvio Berlusconi's right-wing Forza Italia.

She is the first woman to become Italian prime minister and heads Italy's most far-right government since World War II.

Italy is a NATO member with up to 650 personnel deployed to Iraq and Kuwait, according to the defence ministry website.

Under operation Prima Parthica, those personnel help staff multinational commands in Kuwait, Baghdad and Arbil. They also train the armed forces and police, and provide administrative support.

U.S. Urged to Stop Bullying, Suppressing China's Development



BEIJING (Dispatches) - The United States must stop suppressing China's development and should not continue the "old routine of unilateral bullying", Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

In the latest phone correspondence between the two leaders, Wang said the United States must pay attention to China's legitimate concerns, stop curbing and suppressing its development, and not constantly challenge China's red line in a "salami-slicing" way. He was referring to the tactic of using a series of small actions to achieve a much larger result that would be difficult to achieve with a single large action.

The remarks by Wang underscored President Xi Jinping's meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden at the G20 summit in Bali last month where they discussed a number of hot-button issues, including Taiwan. It was their first in-person talks since 2017.

China considers Taiwan its own territory and believes the United States is slowly chipping away at its core interests and challenging its bottom line, while being careful to avoid a single drastic action that could give China a clear reason to react with full force.

Biden had raised objections to China's "coercive and increasingly aggressive actions toward Taiwan," which he said undermined peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and in the broader region, and jeopardised global prosperity.

Xi called it the "first red line" that must not be crossed in China-U.S. relations. In the phone call with Blinken, Wang stressed that the two sides should focus on translating the Bali consensus of the two heads of state into practical policies and concrete actions, according to a statement from the Chinese foreign ministry on Friday.

"It is necessary to step up consultations on the guiding principles of China-U.S. relations, promote dialogue at all levels, and resolve specific issues between the two countries through joint working groups," Wang said.



Antibiotics Shortages as Surging Illnesses Spur Demand



BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Europe and North America have seen shortages of the key antibiotic amoxicillin and other medications as surging illnesses particularly among children have increased demand for the drugs.

Hospitals in many countries have come under pressure from a rising number of illnesses including what has been dubbed a "triple-demic" of Covid-19, influenza and the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) which causes bronchiolitis.

But ramping up production of antibiotics has proved difficult for drug makers, particularly for cheap generic medicines that offer a slender profit margin.

Here are some answers to key questions about the shortages.

Amoxicillin is a member of the penicillins antibiotic family and is used to treat a range of bacterial illnesses, including chest and ear infections, often in children.

In France, the medicines regulator ANSM said last month that there are "strong supply tensions" for the version of amoxicillin most used by children, warning the situation could last until March.

Spain's medicines agency also warned last month of potential amoxicillin shortages.

Germany, too, has sounded the alarm about shortages of a range of drugs including amoxicillin and other antibiotics.

Last week, the UK government issued "serious shortage protocols" for three penicillin-based antibiotics.

The move came after at least 19 children died from Group A Streptococcus (Strep A), amid reports that doctors and parents are struggling to find antibiotics to treat the illness.

Outside of Europe, amoxicillin has been on the US Food and Drug Administration drug shortage database since October.

The FDA told AFP that it "is currently working with the approved manufacturers and others in the supply chain".

Other countries including Canada and Australia have also recently put amoxicillin on their list of drugs for which pharmacists are authorised to find substitute treatments.

Winter in the northern hemisphere has brought a particularly nasty influenza season as well as spikes in other viruses such as RSV. The surge comes after two years in which Covid measures such as quarantines, self-isolation and mask-wearing significantly decreased the rate of such illnesses.

Pharmaceutical companies who had cut back production because of the previously falling demand are now scrambling to meet skyrocketing orders, causing delays.

The producers of the drugs' active ingredients have also struggled with shortages.

Sandoz, the generic drug division of Swiss pharmaceutical giant Novartis, told AFP that the "stock shortages at our competitors also contribute to the unexpectedly high sales of our drugs, and therefore to additional supply difficulties".

Antibiotics are old drugs whose patents have often fallen into the public domain, meaning that generic versions can be sold cheaply.

Drug makers therefore have little monetary incentive to produce such antibiotics. Indeed, even generics producers can struggle to maintain a significant profit.

Thomas Borel, the scientific director at LEEM which represents French drugs firms, said there had been insufficient investment from the industry "in view of the growing demand for this type of medicine".

He added that the economic model makes it difficult for drug makers "to recover their costs" when it comes to antibiotics.

In Hangover of World Cup Fiesta, Argentina's Economic Reality Bites



BUENOS AIRES (Reuters) - Gregorina Victorica, 86, a retiree in Buenos Aires has been cheering Argentina's victory in the soccer World Cup, which has lifted spirits in the South American nation and brought joy to people hard hit by rising prices and economic malaise.

But despite the glow of victory from a dramatic and topsy-turvy final against France, reality is biting with inflation heading towards 100%, tight capital controls, near 40% poverty and fears of more debt defaults on the horizon.

"The World Cup is an immense joy that revives us after suffering economic crisis for so long," Victorica said. "But soon we will have to fall back into reality and face the situations that weigh us down every day."

Argentina's stirring victory, their first since Diego Maradona lifted the trophy in 1986, brought millions on to the streets on Tuesday to cheer the team led by star Lionel Messi, a release valve for frustrations at leaders failing to right the economy for years.

The crowds were so huge and delirious - with some estimates of 4-5 million people on the streets - that the open-top bus parade had to be cut short and the players transferred to helicopters to fly over the city.

But in the hazy hangover of the victory party, Argentines are coming back to earth. The major grains producing country, once one of the wealthiest nations in the world, posted annual inflation of 92.4% in November. The benchmark interest rate is 75%.

Issues of money printing, an artificially over-valued peso and low foreign reserves are sharpening. Investors worry economy Minister Sergio Massa, brought in to fix things in August, is not making enough policy reforms, with an eye on a general election late next year the government fears losing.

"Massa is just trying to play whack-a-mole, he's desperate to not make any degree of meaningful adjustment ahead of the 2023 elections," said Ted Mann, a senior emerging markets equities analyst at AllianceBernstein.

"Under Massa, Argentines are can-kickers extraordinaire. They are better at kicking cans than Messi is at kicking footballs."

Some Argentines are more optimistic.

"The World Cup gives us hope and the desire to believe," said Osvaldo Hassan, a 62-year-old merchant in Buenos Aires. "It might be the kick we needed to build consensus and move the economy forward."

Camila Gotelli, 25, who works in marketing said the "historic" win could boost Argentina by attracting more tourism, creating jobs and raising the country's global profile.

World Cup wins can give a small boost to a country's economy in the months following, an academic paper from Britain's University of Surrey found, helping raise exports.

In the short-term it may also give leftist President Alberto Fernandez a lift. His popularity has sunk due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic woes, despite clinching a new \$44 billion deal with the International Monetary Fund this year.

"For me this is going to favor the government for a few days, because people are distracted," said Carlos Zarate, a 63-year-old tradesman in the city, adding though that once the southern hemisphere summer was over "reality was going to hit".

Last month ratings agency Moody's rapped the country, citing rising central bank debt as a risk to financial stability. S&P cut the rating on Argentina's already distressed local currency bonds further into "junk" territory.



Don't Waste Your Time

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www.DeltaHOME.ir

The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

HOME
Real Estate

Member of **DELTA** Real Estate Group
(021) 88888865



Suez Canal Open to Foreign Investment, Sovereignty Protected

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Egypt's Suez Canal welcomes foreign investment but foreigners would have no control over the waterway or over a proposed fund that would help to manage its resources, the head of the Suez Canal Authority (SCA) said.

SCA Chairman Osama Rabie was speaking to reporters after legal amendments providing for the fund were discussed in parliament this week, triggering speculation they would open the door to selling

stakes in the canal to foreigners.

The fund, under discussion for several years, was designed to guard the canal's resources for reinvestment, as well as to help it face unexpected challenges or crises, Rabie told a press conference.

"We cannot sell the canal or rent it. It is the property of Egypt and the Egyptians," Rabie said, referring to lives lost during the construction of the canal in the 1860s.



Japan Inflation at 3.7%

In November, Highest Since 1981

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Prices in Japan rose at their fastest pace since 1981 in November, data showed Friday, fuelled in part by higher energy costs. Core consumer prices, which exclude volatile fresh food costs, climbed 3.7 percent last month compared to a year earlier, data released by the internal affairs ministry showed.

Prices jumped the most for processed food items and were also higher for electricity and durable goods like air conditioners.

The November figure is well below the sky-high levels that have sparked concern in the United States, Britain and elsewhere, but far exceeds the Bank of Japan's long-term goal of 2.0 percent. Even excluding fresh food and energy, the index was up 2.8 percent.

"Although low by international standards, Japanese consumer price inflation at three percent to four percent is high enough to feel uncomfortable with stagnant wage growth," wrote Sarah Tan, economist at Moody's Analytics, in a note.

The headline core consumer price index (CPI) has risen consistently since the beginning of the year, putting pressure on the Bank of Japan to tweak its longstanding monetary easing policies.

The US Federal Reserve and other central banks have sharply hiked interest rates this year to tackle inflation.

But Japan, which since the 1990s has swung between periods of sluggish inflation and deflation, has gone against the grain and continues to keep interest rates at ultra-low levels as it tries to kickstart its economy.

The Bank of Japan says it sees the recent price increases as temporary and that there is no reason to change course yet.

The starkly different approaches taken by the BoJ and the Fed have driven down the value of the yen against the dollar this year from about 115 yen per dollar in March to as low as 151 yen.

The currency has recovered somewhat, helped by government interventions.

This week, the Japanese central bank delivered a shock tweak to its ultra-easy monetary policy, prompting the yen to strengthen rapidly.

While the adjustment falls short of a rate hike, analysts said it could help arrest the yen's declining value.

Koya Miyamae, senior economist at SMBC Nikko Securities, said prices were likely to continue rising in the short term.

"The core CPI rose in November due to rises in food prices and gas. The index will likely rise further, nearing or potentially rising above four percent in December," he told AFP. "But core CPI will remain above two percent next year, while the pace of the rise in wages is not catching up with inflation," he added.

Most analysts expect price rises in Japan to peak around the end of the year or early 2023.

"Inflation will likely average four percent in December given delayed pass-through of higher producer prices," Tan said.

"It is expected to decline in 2023 as policy support kicks in," with global inflation also moderating as commodity prices temper and supply chain disruptions are fixed.

U.S. Ban on "Made in Hong Kong" Label Breaches Trade Rules

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States is flouting international trade rules by labeling imports from Hong Kong as those from China, the World Trade Organization ruled, an outcome that Washington rejects.

The WTO ruling addressed a decision under former president Donald Trump's administration after Beijing imposed a sweeping security law on the financial hub in 2020 to stamp out dissent.

Trump retaliated by removing special trading privileges for the city and U.S. customs authorities later said goods produced there could no longer be stamped "Made in Hong Kong", sparking the complaint.

Hong Kong argued that such a move ignored its status as a separate member of the WTO, violating trade rules.

On Wednesday, a panel set up by the WTO's dispute settlement body said that the origin marking requirement was "not justified" under global trade rules.

It added that the U.S. "has not demonstrated that the situation at issue constitutes an emergency in international relations".

The U.S.'s labeling requirement also gives Hong Kong products "less favorable" treatment than others, the panel said, adding that goods of other countries bear their own name rather than that of another WTO member.

The outcome drew a sharp rebuke from Washington Wednesday, with U.S. Trade Representative spokesperson Adam Hodge saying the country "strongly rejects the flawed interpretation and conclusions" of the panel report.

The U.S. was responding to China's "highly concerning actions", threatening U.S. national security interests, Hodge said.

World Bank to Lend \$500m to Help Brazil Meet Climate Goals

SAO PAULO (Dispatches) - The World Bank's board of directors approved late on Thursday a \$500 million project in Brazil to expand sustainability-linked finance and strengthen the private sector's capacity to access carbon credit markets and help the country curb deforestation.

The initiative, in collaboration with Brazilian state-controlled lender Banco do Brasil, adopts an approach to lending linked to sustainability to help Brazil meet its climate goals and deliver "robust" mitigation benefits, a bank statement said.

Sustainability-linked financing (SLF) allows for lower financing costs when certain environmental,

social and governance (ESG) requirements are met by a company but does not require the funds to be used for climate-friendly purposes.

At the start of December, the World Bank and its partners launched a global tracking system to clean up the opaque market for carbon credits and help developing countries raise much-needed climate finance quickly and more cheaply.

Carbon credits - generated through activities such as planting forests or pulling climate-damaging carbon dioxide from the air - are sold to polluters to offset their emissions as a way of helping them reach net-zero emissions to limit global warming.

"Up to 90 million tCO₂e in emission reductions are expected by 2030, the equivalent to about 4.5% of what Brazil needs to stay on track with its net-zero commitments," the World Bank said.

The project is also expected to mobilize up to \$1.4 billion in private capital through the scale-up of financing by Banco do Brasil and private investors.

"Brazil has significant potential to become a global leader in the transition to a low-carbon economy", said Johannes Zutt, World Bank country director for Brazil. "To do so, urgent action is required to complement public interventions with private solutions and financing."

The project adopts an "innovative, outcome-based financing approach" that encourages firms to adopt and implement credible GHG emission reduction plans to reduce their company-wide carbon footprint, as well as linking these firms to high quality carbon markets, the World Bank said.

Banco do Brasil will be able to offer its clients packages that integrate financing with support to access carbon markets through a "one-stop shop", as the World Bank explained it.

"This will provide Brazilian firms - small- and medium-sized companies in particular - with an accessible end-to-end service starting from measuring their carbon footprint to generating returns from high-integrity carbon credits," it said.

Russia Likely To Buy Yuan on FX Market in 2023

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia will start buying yuan on the currency market next year if oil and gas revenues

meet expectations, two sources said, opening a new front in an accelerating dedollarisation drive designed to reduce its dependency on Western finance.

Western sanctions on Moscow over its actions in Ukraine have curbed its use of and access to dollars and euros, and the Chinese currency's role in Russia's economy is growing fast.

Daily yuan-rouble trading volumes on the Moscow Exchange are already exceeding dollar-rouble trades on some days, according to Refinitiv data, a trend set to be accentuated in 2023 as an oil embargo and price cap squeeze Russia's traditional export routes.

Russia stopped intervening on the FX market in February due to restrictions imposed on its use of foreign exchange reserves after it sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine.

Interventions will resume next year in yuan, the two sources told Reuters, provided that revenues from oil and gas exports exceed 8 trillion roubles as set out in budget plans.

"The central bank can currently now buy yuan," a banking source close to monetary authorities told Reuters. But the bank would not do so while the government continued, as now, to spend its oil and gas revenues.

"(However), if next year budget revenues from the export of oil and gas exceed 8 trillion roubles, then the central bank will buy yuan," that source added.

Under the budget rule, designed to replenish state reserves, oil and gas revenues above that

figure are currently directed to the National Wealth Fund (NWF), which Finance Minister Anton Siluanov has said is equivalent to oil prices of \$62-63 a barrel.

The central bank and finance ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

Russia has for years adopted conservative fiscal policies and sought to run budget surpluses, but is on course for a deficit of 2% of GDP this year as Moscow ramps up spending to finance its military campaign in Ukraine.

Siluanov's ministry expects 900 billion roubles in additional hydrocarbon revenues next year, though analysts, wary of the impact of export restrictions, are sceptical.

A senior government source confirmed that FX interventions next year would be in yuan.

"We have a lot of friendly currencies. On the exchange, the Chinese yuan is the most traded currency, it is the friendliest currency so far," the source said.

Russia considers countries that have not joined in with Western sanctions as "friendly".

The banking source said the central bank's operations with yuan would be protected from sanctions and freezing. Russian government assets worth around \$300 billion have been frozen since the conflict in Ukraine began.

The government source said a decision about interventions within the framework of the budget rule was needed in order to start accumulating reserves, and as soon as authorities adopted the plan, it would be announced.

Turkey Raises Monthly Minimum Wage by 55% for 2023



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's monthly minimum wage will be 8,506.80 lira (\$455) in 2023, the presidency said on Thursday - a 55% increase from the level determined in July and a 100% hike from January.

Speaking at a news conference earlier, President Tayyip Erdogan said the minimum wage may be hiked again throughout the year if necessary. Annual inflation soared above 85% in recent months but has begun to ease slightly.

Erdogan said the employer and employee unions could not reach an agreement and the government stepped in to determine the number. Representatives of the employee union did not attend the announcement at the presidential palace.

The latest hike to the minimum wage has caused concern among businesses in Turkey since it would increase the cost for employers, according to Ramazan Kaya, president of the Turkish Clothing Manufacturers' Association (TGSD).

"After the latest increase, the minimum wage's cost for employers is now 11,758 lira (\$630). Before the latest increase, it was \$410. So with this cost increase, it is impossible for us to keep prices the same as before," Kaya said.

Global customers of Turkish businesses will prefer Turkey's rivals for production due to rising costs in Turkey, he said.

"We don't have the chance to compete with our rivals such as Bangladesh, Vietnam, India or Cambodia. We will lose customers. And this will result in job cuts," Kaya said, adding the textile sector was expected to lose 10% of its jobs.

UK Lags Behind G-7 as Economy Contracts More Than Expected in Q3

LONDON (Dispatches) - The U.K. economy contracted more than first thought in the third quarter of this year, putting it bottom among the G-7 major advanced nations, revised data showed.

Economic output fell by 0.3% in the third quarter, compared to the previous estimate of a 0.2% decline, data by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) revealed.

Darren Morgan, director of economic statistics at the ONS, said: "Our revised figures show the economy performed slightly less well over the last year than we previously estimated," with manufacturing "notably weaker."

Household expenditure fell 1.1%, namely tourism, transport, household goods and services, and food and drinks.

Business investment went down 2.5% and inventories fell by 5.2 billion pounds (\$6.3 billion), mainly due to reductions for retail and manufacturing industries. On the other hand, government expenditure went up 0.5% and government investment surged 17.3%.

Commenting on the country's growth figure, James Smith, research director at Resolution Foundation, said on Twitter that "all this leaves the U.K. with the weakest growth in the G-7 in Q3 and the only country where the level of GDP remains below its pre-pandemic level."

The figure is worse than Japan's 0.2% fall in growth, whereas Canada and the U.S. both post rises in GDP, by nearly 0.7%.

France (+0.2%), Germany (+0.4%) and Italy (+0.5%) all expanded in July-September too.

The Bank of England (BoE) previously said the country was "expected to be in recession for a prolonged period and CPI (consumer) inflation would remain elevated at over 10% in the near term."

It predicted that the economy had entered a recession in the third quarter and that the downturn would last until mid-2024.

The bank also forecast GDP being down in 2023 and into the first half of 2024 "as high energy prices and materially tighter financial conditions weigh on spending."



Iran Voices Readiness to Solve Afghan Girls Education Problem

TEHRAN (MNA) – An Iranian foreign ministry official has conveyed Iran's stance on the suspension of women's education in Afghanistan in a meeting with the caretaker head of the Afghan mission in Tehran. "Today, by inviting the head of the Afghan embassy [to Iran's foreign ministry], in addition to explaining the stance of the spokesman of the Iranian Foreign Ministry toward the suspension of the education of

women in Afghan universities, I voiced the Islamic Republic of Iran's readiness to help solve the problem of the education of Afghan women in different ways, including online education and using the existing infrastructure in Iran," Seyyed Rasool Mousavi, the Iranian foreign minister's assistant for the West-Asia region wrote on his Twitter account about the suspension of women's education in Afghanistan.



Off-Budget Spending Stirs Doubts About Poland's Finances

WARSAW (Reuters) - As Poland heads for an election year grappling with stagflation, government moves to shift large chunks of its spending off-budget risk damaging its reputation for rock-solid state finances.

Off-budget spending, where the cost of activities deemed to have special characteristics is not included in the official budget, is widely used across the world. In Poland, it was initially deployed for spending to weather the pandemic but now encompasses a surge in military and other expenditures.

The International Monetary Fund and credit rating agencies say the practice, while currently contained in scope, weakens oversight and could harm A-rated Poland's institutional strength if it becomes entrenched or widens further.

"Budget funds are becoming less and less transparent," Supreme Audit Office President Marian Banas told Reuters.

"Confidence in Poland is unfortunately slowly declining. We are being watched by all financial and business institutions in the world, and if we do not improve the situation, do not stop this disturbing trend, capital will move away from Poland."

Neither the IMF, nor rating agencies see risks to the sustainability of Poland's debt, which at 52% of national output is well below levels on the euro zone periphery. Importantly, they note that the off-budget spending still gets captured under European accounting rules.

But with eastern Europe's largest economy facing a cost-of-living crisis that has dented support for its ruling nationalists, economists see emerging fiscal risks if spending is increased.

"I think the question is about the scale of these activities and the timeline," said Karen Vartapetov, Director, Sovereign Ratings at S&P Global (NYSE:SPGI) Ratings.

"If they are relatively limited in scope and time, fiscal risks are contained. But if they turn into (a) more permanent quasi-fiscal channel, risks could build over time."

Asked for comment on such worries, Poland's finance ministry said it met rating agencies on a regular basis and answered any questions or concerns they had.

"Poland - despite the external turmoil associated first with the pandemic and then with the Russian invasion of Ukraine - maintains a high investment rating with a stable outlook," it said in an emailed reply to questions.

Poland has seen the second-steepest rise in bond yields in the European Union since November 2021 based on European Central Bank data, with long-term yields rising over 400 basis points.

On Wednesday, Polish five-year bonds traded at yields of around 6.8%, off peaks above 9% hit in late October but still near their highest since the 2008 global financial crisis.

In recent years, Poland's off-budget spending has gone from insubstantial amounts to several percentage points' worth of GDP, based on spending tracked by economists and rating agencies.

The concerns are centred around off-budget financing done via entities such as the Polish Development Fund (PFR) and state development bank BGK amid general pressure on state finances from slowing growth and higher spending needs.

"The (government) 2023 deficit target of 4.4% of GDP understates the full picture of Poland's public finances next year," economists at Bank of America said in a note.

They estimated the two entities, plus a fund set up to provide compensation for energy price shocks, would cover fiscal pledges worth about 2 percentage points of GDP next year, with spending equivalent to another 1.6 points of GDP earmarked for a new army fund and largely financed through BGK.

S&P sees the 2023 budget deficit at 5.8% of GDP, betting on a strong 2024 consolidation effort after the election due in October or November. The European Commission sees a 5.5% shortfall next year - one of the highest in the EU - with hardly any improvement in 2024.



BGK, which had debt worth just 3.85 billion zloty at the end of last year, plans to ramp up borrowing through funds under its management by 134 billion zloty by the end of 2023, with some 40% earmarked for military spending, largely via foreign loans, the finance ministry told Reuters.

Geoff Gottlieb, IMF senior resident representative in Poland, told Reuters spending outside the budget process "complicates a clear discussion of the policy trade-offs and can undermine credibility".

"The best practice is for the formal budget process to include all budgetary and extra-budgetary activities in order to facilitate policy analysis and promote accountability," he said.

Poland is heading into 2023 with double-digit price growth, a stalling economy, decade-high borrowing costs and - crucially - EU grants worth 23.9 billion euros still in limbo amid a row over the Polish judiciary and other issues.

PFR, which is pre-financing projects under Poland's plan to receive EU post-pandemic recovery funds, sees outlays at 15 billion to 20 billion zloty next year, using liquidity from repaid pandemic support loans. PFR's borrowing was nearly 3% of GDP at the end of 2021.

"Overall, the lack of (EU recovery) funds would impact investment and growth over the medium term, and could also affect confidence in the short term," said Federico Barriga Salazar, director, primary rating analyst at Fitch Ratings.

"If you stop receiving EU funds, because there is no agreement on the reforms, then that might send a bad message to the outside world and that would lead to a further weakening of the zloty and make this monetary/inflation challenge harder."

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki last week took the unusual step of pleading with opposition lawmakers to pass judicial reforms needed to get EU funds flowing amid resistance from an ultra-conservative coalition partner.

"The PiS leadership is aware that the absence of this sum would be felt acutely by the economy during the crisis, impacting the party's prospects of retaining power," Mai Doan at Bank of America said. The finance ministry said it saw no risk to the budget even in case of more delays to recovery funds.

The IMF says if Warsaw proceeds with EU-related spending in hopes of an eventual agreement, that could put upward pressure on near-term borrowing needs, which should be "monitored carefully" in light of higher-than-normal financing costs.

Long Live the Snake...

FROM PAGE 1

Of course this is not the first time that Iranian TV channels face such behavior by the Western satellite operators but interesting thing is that the West always defends freedom of expression but it is not ready to tolerate airing of Iranian TV channels which expose their crimes but they are ready to provide any means of communications and TV channels for rioters in Iran and this is the exact proof for the West's double standard policy when it comes to the freedom of expression.

Of course this kind of double standard is not limited to the Islamic Republic of Iran because any independent country and person in the world and people in the Western states also suffer from this kind of double standard approach.

So the Islamic Republic should minimize its dependence on any Westerner no matter it is a satellite operator, country or company, and it should rely on its own power, and making satellite and launching it into the orbit will be the best solution for confronting with such a double standard action regarding the freedom of expression and as long as Iran is dependent on the Western satellite operators, it will face such a vicious act to silence Iran's voice in defending the independence-seeking nations in the world and the West any moment will resort to any pretext to silence its voice.

In the very near future the Islamic Republic of Iran will show the West its real power in science and technology by putting its home-made satellites in the orbit to cut its reliance on the West and Tehran will gradually will become a fully independent country in all fields and it will not let the West follow the proverb of "Death Is Good for Neighbor" and continue its vicious plots against Iran and against any other independent nation.



Iran, Pakistan...

FROM PAGE 1

A barter trade agreement was signed between the Ministry of Commerce in Iran and Pakistan, and Quetta and Zahedan Chambers were allowed to begin barter trade. However, due to some technical issues, barter trade had yet not commenced.

He also said that on Motiwala's invitation, the Chairman of Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Iran would visit Karachi on January 16 to sign a MoU with TDAP focusing on removing trade barriers and exploring ways to enhance trade relations.

TPO chairman would also participate in Iran's Single Country Exhibition at Karachi Expo Center beginning on January 16.

Motiwala, while warmly welcoming Iran's initiative to hold an exhibition in Karachi, he assured of TDAP's full support and cooperation along with the KCCI's assistance in organising this important event. "KCCI, which has been regularly holding My Karachi Exhibition since many years and has the required expertise for staging such events, is ready to fully assist Iran so that its Single Country Exhibition could be organised in an impressive manner."

Confectionary items, petroleum products and its raw materials, plastics and many other products in which Iran holds expertise can be imported to Pakistan, whereas tea, rice, fabrics, garments and several other products can be exported to Iran, he added.

KCCI President Tariq Yousuf said it was heartening that KCCI and Isfahan Chamber recently signed a landmark MoU to establish a practical framework for the development of business relations.

The MoU would set forth the procedures of cooperation, which could enhance implementation of mutual economic objectives between the two chambers.

Referring to negotiations on free trade agreement (FTA), he said that if this materialises, it would revive Pak-Iran bilateral trade to the next level and develop deep financial and economic cooperation.

He also stressed the need to expand the barter trade basket by adding more products to capitalise and facilitate importers and exporters of both countries, which would certainly deepen Pak-Iran economic integration.

Yousuf noted that Pakistan-Iran Joint Trade Committee agreed to ensure phase-wise implementation of border markets and investors' access to the special economic zones. This would enhance trade between the two countries, strengthen cross-border economic cooperation and discourage illegal border trade by improving formal trade between the two countries.

Kuroda's Abrupt Policy Tweak Opens Door for Bigger Shift Next Year

TOKYO (Dispatches) - The Bank of Japan's surprise decision to loosen the grip on its yield cap marks the beginning of an end to Governor Haruhiko Kuroda's controversial policy, sources say, and may pave the way for massive monetary stimulus to be phased out next year.

The central bank on Tuesday tweaked its bond yield control in a way that effectively allows long-term interest rates to rise more, shocking investors who weren't expecting any such changes until Kuroda steps down in April next year.

The pressure for the BOJ to act now, rather than later, came from the government's desire for more flexible monetary policy, prospects for higher wage growth and inflation and risks of a U.S. recession next year, say five government officials and sources familiar with the bank's thinking.

How far the BOJ now goes depends on whether Japan's economy can withstand headwinds from slowing global growth and if wages will perk up enough to support consumption, they say.

"The government's view is that the BOJ should move nimbly and flexibly," said an official with direct knowledge of the administration's thinking, referring to how the BOJ's consistent dovish tone had caused sharp yen falls that hit households via higher import costs.

While Kuroda explained the move as extending the



lifespan of yield curve control (YCC), it underscored the BOJ's resolve to gradually shift away from his radical policy ahead of a leadership transition when the governor's term ends in April.

"Under a new governor, the BOJ could move further toward normalizing policy and making its monetary framework more flexible," said former BOJ board member Takahide Kiuchi, who is now an economist at Nomura Research Institute.

"Whether it can actually abandon negative rates or yield curve control next year will depend much on economic and financial conditions at the time," he said.

The BOJ's relentless defense of its 0.25% cap on the 10-year bond yield had forced the central bank to ramp up bond buying, dwindled market liquidity and distorted market pricing - strains that had become hard to ignore, the sources say.

By lifting the cap to 0.50% this month, the BOJ dealt with the immediate market stress and bought itself time to work out when it should step toward phasing out YCC, they say.

Waiting until next year would have forced the BOJ to combat intensifying market speculation of a near-term policy shift, or act when a deep U.S. recession could hit Japan's economy, they say.

"The BOJ cleared one threshold toward phasing out stimulus," said one of the sources. "When uncertainty is so high over the outlook for U.S. monetary policy, it probably wants to have a free hand on when next to act."

The abrupt timing of Tuesday's move also reflects growing political pressure for the BOJ to shift away from a policy narrowly focused on its 2% inflation target, the sources say.

The groundwork was laid in a meeting between Kuroda and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Nov. 10, when the two agreed on the need to "guide policy flexibly" for sustained wage growth.

No Alternative to...

FROM PAGE 1

Borrell also underlined the bloc's resolve to advance the Vienna talks and bring them to a conclusion.

The talks to salvage the JCPOA kicked off in the Austrian capital of Vienna in April 2021, with the intention of examining Washington's seriousness in rejoining the deal and removing anti-Iran sanctions. The negotiations have been at a standstill since August due to Washington's insistence on its hard-nosed position of not removing all the sanctions that were slapped on the Islamic Republic by the previous US administration. Iran maintains it is necessary for the other side to offer some guarantees that it will remain committed to any agreement that is reached. Elsewhere in his post, Borrell claimed that Iran supports the "illegal war of

aggression against Ukraine" by delivering drones and improving military cooperation with Russia, urging Tehran to "immediately stop its military support" for Moscow. The top EU diplomat also claimed that Iran is making a "huge strategic mistake" and is choosing the "wrong path and is destroying its credibility when it pretends not to take sides in that war."

He said the Iranian foreign minister "forcefully" denied Tehran is providing drones to Russia and said such deliveries had only happened before the war in Ukraine.

"In that regard, I urged the Foreign Minister [Amirabdollahian] to continue the direct conversation with his Ukrainian counterpart on the transfer of military equipment to Russia," Borrell said.

Switchboard:
(+98) (21) 44253448
Public Relations Tel:
(+98)(21) 44253450
Editorial Board: 44253449
Public Relations Fax:
(+98)(21) 44253395
Advertising Department:
Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234
Website:
http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:
info@irannewsdaily.com
ISSN 1024-6053
P.O. Box: 15875-8551
Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St.,
Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzadaran
Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Printed by:Honar Sarzmin Sabz
Distributed by:
Cities of Iran Cultural and
Artistic Institute
Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

Onana Ends Career With Cameroon

MILAN (Dispatches) - Cameroon goalkeeper André Onana ended his career with the national team on Friday, one month after the 26-year-old player was sent home from the World Cup in a dispute with coach Rigobert Song. The Inter Milan player posted a statement on his Twitter account saying "my story with the Cameroonian national team has come to an end." "Players come and go, names are fleeting, but Cameroon comes before any person or player," Onana wrote, without citing reasons for his decision. "Cameroon remains eternal and so does my love for the national team."

Davies Named Canada Player of The Year for Fourth Time

Dispatches) - Alphonso Davies, who helped Canada get back to the World Cup for the first time in 36 years and scored the country's first goal at the global showcase tournament, was named Canada Soccer player of the year on Thursday. It was the fourth time in five years that Davies has claimed the honour. In Qatar, Davies was the lone Canadian attacker to play every minute, scoring the Canada men's team's first ever World Cup goal in the second group match against Croatia. The 22-year-old also helped his club Bayern Munich win the Bundesliga and DFL Supercup in 2022.

Beasley, Clarkson Lead Jazz to 120-112 Victory Over Wizards

SALT LAKE CITY (Dispatches) - Malik Beasley scored 25 points and Jordan Clarkson added 23 to power the Utah Jazz past the reeling Washington Wizards 120-112.

"I was attacking the hole and not settling for 3s," Beasley said. "I think there are some times where I get complacent so I got to keep attacking downhill."

Beasley made six shots from inside the arc. He usually gets most of his points from beyond it.

Lauri Markkanen had 21 points and Collin Sexton returned from missing seven games with a right hamstring injury to finish with 18 while playing just 17 minutes due to a medical minutes restriction.

"We knew the kind of energy he would bring and he's going to fire up everybody else up as well," Markkanen said of Sexton's return.

Bradley Beal scored 30 points and Kyle Kuzma had 21, but the Wizards lost for the 14th time in their last 16 games.

Beal scored Washington's first 12 points of the fourth quarter but the Wizards couldn't stop the Jazz. The Wizards fell to 2-8 when Beal, who didn't have a 3-pointer, is their leading scorer.

"They were geared to get into Brad and make him play inside the line, tried to pressure his dribble," Washington coach Wes Unseld Jr. said.

The Jazz scored 13 consecutive points bridging the third and fourth quarters, highlighted by a buzzer-beating 3-pointer by Sexton and capped by Nickeil Walker-Alexander's 3 off an offensive rebound.

"It was all about pushing the ball and getting stops. When we are running, we are at our best. When we have numbers, anybody can knock the shot down," Sexton said.



The surge resulted in the first double-digit lead by either team after 23 lead changes and 11 ties. The span was bolstered by tight defense and increased effort after three quarters of little resistance by the Jazz.

"The guys buckled down and really committed to that end," Utah coach Will Hardy said. The Wizards had lost 10 straight games before winning at Phoenix on Tuesday. Their defensive deficiencies returned as they allowed the Jazz to make 16-of-35 3-pointers, many of which were wide open due to slow rotations and weak closeouts.

Second-leading scorer Kristaps Porzingis missed his second game with a non-COVID illness but the Wizards still shot 56% from the field.

"Even when we were healthy, we were .500," Kuzma said, not making excuses for the Wizards' poor health.

Corey Kispert made a halfcourt shot at the last second to put the Wizards up 66-60. Due to a clock malfunction — the time kept running — the teams had to replay 0.4 seconds of the second quarter after halftime. Even with Beasley's 25 points as a reserve, the team was talking about his work on the defensive end.

"Malik did a great job of recognizing the times to fan back out to the shooters and it ended getting him some steals. It's something we work on a lot," Hardy said.

Beasley had four steals and forced some poor shots by the Wizards. "It was about being in the right spots ... and keeping my hands active, knowing which guys are going to pass the ball and which guys won't," Beasley said.



BUENOS AIRES (Dispatches) - After winning the World Cup and enjoying the celebrations back home in Argentina, Lionel Messi headed to his native Rosario to spend the Christmas holidays with his family and friends, including Uruguay striker Luis Suarez.

Argentine media reported that Suarez arrived on a private flight from Montevideo, accompanied by his partner Sofia Balbi and their children. He and Messi became close friends when they played together for Spanish club Barcelona.

More than five million people took to the streets of Buenos Aires to congratulate "la Scaloneta" on Tuesday but with the city overflowing, the players had to be air-lifted out by helicopter before Messi and Angel Di Maria travelled to Rosario.

The Argentina captain is staying in his home at the Kentucky Country Club and local media reported that many international sports stars are due to join the celebrations, including former Spain midfielder Andres Iniesta and former Argentina striker Sergio Aguero.

Man City Face Southampton in League Cup Quarters

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City will travel to Southampton in the League Cup quarter-finals after knocking out holders Liverpool and Manchester United were handed a home tie against third-tier Charlton Athletic in the draw on Thursday.

Nottingham Forest will host Wolverhampton Wanderers and Newcastle United will entertain Leicester City.

Champions Manchester City, who have won the League Cup six times in the last nine years, overcame Liverpool 3-2 in an enthralling fourth-round match.

Charlton, who were last in the Premier League in 2007, overcame Brighton & Hove Albion on penalties after a 0-0 draw and were rewarded with a trip to 20-times English champions Manchester United, who beat Burnley 2-0 to reach the last eight.

The matches will be played in the week beginning Jan. 9.

De Jong Is One of Barcelona's Mainstays

Dispatches) - Frenkie de Jong is one of Barcelona's most important players and the club never wanted to sell him, President Joan Laporta said.

The 25-year-old Netherlands midfielder has been strongly linked with a move to Manchester United, who are coached by Dutchman Erik ten Hag.

"He is one of the mainstays we have, he is one of the great young talents and called to be one of the leaders of the team," Laporta told Barca TV. "I never wanted to sell Frenkie."

De Jong joined Barcelona from Ajax Amsterdam in 2019.

Spanish media reported that Barcelona captain Sergio Busquets, who has spent 15 seasons with the club and helped them win 33 major trophies, could join Major League Soccer's Inter Miami in the next transfer window.

"I don't know if he will leave this winter or continue until the end of the season, we want him to continue, Xavi counts with Sergio," Laporta added.



Top Four the Minimum Goal for Juventus

ROME (Dispatches) - Juventus will work hard to maintain their position in Serie A's top four, coach Massimiliano Allegri said, adding that it was their minimum ambition for the season.

Juventus were third in the standings before the World Cup break, two points behind AC Milan and 10 adrift of leaders Napoli, but only one point ahead of fourth-placed Lazio and Inter Milan in fifth.

"The team must be aware that they have five important months ahead of them," Allegri told Sky Sport after their 1-0 friendly win over Croatian side Rijeka.

"The minimum objective is to stay in the top four, but also try to get as close as possible

to Napoli who (continue taking a strong lead). "Then there will be the Europa League, the Coppa Italia... It would be nice to go all the way and play 36 games."

Despite crashing out of Champions League group stage and a disappointing league start, Allegri will retain his post as head coach even though the club's board is being replaced, Juve's holding company Exor said in November.

Before competitive action returns in Italy on Jan. 4, the coach will hope to recover some injured players ahead of a friendly on Dec. 30 against Belgium's Standard Liege.

"I think (Federico) Chiesa (can be recovered), let's see about (Mattia) De Sciglio," Allegri said.

"(Leonardo) Bonucci not, (Dusan) Vlahovic unlikely. Then (Brazil internationals) Alex Sandro and Danilo will return, and many (others) will be in better condition."

Juve resume their Serie A campaign at relegation-threatened Cremonese.

Arteta Considers Transfer Market Move After Jesus Injury

LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta has said the "significant injury" suffered by Gabriel Jesus will bolster the Gunners' efforts in the January transfer window.

Arsenal's marquee pre-season signing was sent home early from the World Cup with a knee problem sustained in Brazil's shock defeat by Cameroon.

Jesus underwent surgery and Arteta, while uncertain of when he will return, said Thursday his injury was severe enough to prompt the current Premier League leaders to look for a new signing next month.

"I never gave a date. I said that we don't know. It's going to take some time for sure," Arteta said of Jesus.

"He's gone through surgery and that tells you the extent of the injury, so we will be in the market and we will assess the biggest opportunities that we have."

"We are going to be active and active means we are looking to strengthen the team."

"This squad still doesn't have the luxury of not maximising every single window. We have to do that because it's really important but then we have to get the right profile. It has to be the right player to take us to the next level."

Following the break for the World Cup, Arsenal return to English top-flight action on December 26 at home to London rivals West Ham with the Gunners five points clear of reigning champions Manchester City.

Jesus has been a central figure in their Premier League progress since his arrival from Manchester City with five goals and six assists, even though he has not scored in his last 10 club games.

"Obviously a huge blow with Gabriel Jesus and his injury," Arteta added yesterday.

"We'll miss him for a period of time. The season has challenges, that's a challenge we have to overcome, but if you're going to be at the top there's going to be those challenges."

While Jesus faces a prolonged spell on the sidelines, the majority of Arsenal's World Cup players are set to be involved against the Hammers.



Lawrence, Jaguars Continue Playoff Push, Outclass Jets 19-3

EAST RUTHERFORD (Dispatches) - Trevor Lawrence was in a celebratory mood, decked out in an ugly Christmas sweater while acknowledging it wasn't exactly the prettiest performance he and his Jacksonville Jaguars have had during their playoff surge.

It was plenty good enough, though. The Jags' 19-3 victory over an embarrassed Zach Wilson and the slumping New York Jets on a rainy, windy Thursday night has them in control of their postseason destiny.

"It's just a big win," Lawrence said. "It shows this team is growing. We don't have to have 40 points to win. We don't have to have all these yards. Whatever it takes to win, we're able to do. To be able to adjust was really good for us."

Lawrence finished 20 of 31 for 229 yards and ran for 51 yards, including a leaping touchdown, on seven carries for the Jaguars (7-8), who moved within one-half game of skidding Tennessee in the AFC South. Jacksonville would win the division title with victories in its final two games — including the season finale against the Titans.

"We understand the task in front of us," Lawrence said. "Every game is a must win for us. That's how we're treating it. We understand it and we love it."

The second matchup between last year's first two draft picks — Lawrence at No. 1 and Wilson No. 2 — wasn't even close.

While Lawrence sliced through the Jets' normally strong defense, Wilson couldn't get anything going and was booed frequently — all the way to the bench. Chris Streveler, elevated from the practice squad before the game, replaced Wilson late in the third quarter.

Wilson went 9 of 18 for 92 yards with an interception and a dismal 41.9 rating for the Jets (7-8), whose playoff hopes took a devastating hit with their fourth straight loss. That's the worst skid under second-year coach Robert Saleh.

And it came in their regular-season home finale — in front of a national audience on Amazon Prime Video.

