

**Iran's Consulate General in Pakistan's City of Quetta Issued a Statement on Monday, Condemning A Spate of Terrorist Attacks That Hit Different Areas in Baluchistan Province the Previous Day**

# IRAN NEWS

**IRGC in the Central Iranian Province Of Kerman Said It Dismantled an Organized Network With Connections to the UK, Arresting Seven People who Were Leaders In the Recent Protests in Kerman**

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## West Admits Miscalculation After Gamble on Riots Falls Flat

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani says Western countries bet on a losing horse when they put all their weight behind the recent riots across Iran, noting that they have now admitted their miscalculation concerning the violent unrest.

Kanaani told a news conference on Monday that, "The governments that bet on Iran's internal developments bet on a losing horse. We had warned them not to sacrifice their interests to no avail."

Even though Western governments claim that they were not pursuing regime change in Iran, Tehran will never forget their roles in the riots, he added.

Kanaani also pointed to the issue of foreign nationals detained over their involvement in the riots, saying Tehran has already notified their countries, and some were even allowed to contact their families, in a humanitarian gesture, on Christmas.

Kanaani once again dismissed the unfounded allegations that Tehran provided Moscow with a fleet of drones to be used in the Ukraine war, saying that Iranian officials and the country's Foreign Ministry have repeatedly rejected the claims.

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## Iranian Messaging Services Hit by DDoS Attacks From U.S., Europe

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Online messaging services based in Iran were hit by attacks strating late on Sunday that mostly originated from the United States and Europe, according to an Iranian deputy telecoms minister who says the attacks were the largest of their kind since the country imposed bans on US-based messaging services in late September.

Amir Mohammadzadeh said that distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks on Iranian messaging services had been launched from 4,399 IP addresses in the US, Germany, the Netherlands, Britain and some other countries.

Mohammadzadeh said some 30% of the IP addresses used for the attacks were in the US and 26% were from Germany, adding that the attacks started at 22:00 PM local time on Sunday and lasted for six hours.

"This was not the largest attack on us in the past month but it was significant because messengers were the target," he was quoted as saying by the Fars news agency.

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## Iranians Will Not Show Mercy to Enemies



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi mentions freedom in history and says "Where have you seen arrogant tell other nations that they want to rob other countries' resources? They come with slogans of freedom and bring misery to the nations."

Delivering a speech at the farewell ceremony for the bodies of 400 unknown martyrs of holy defense in Tehran, President Raisi said: "Wherever they went, they usually claimed freedom and equal rights for humans." He added: "Modern Ignorance is the same as the old one, but 'isms' have been added to it. This modern ignorance has power components such as media and technology."

While praising the leadership of the late Imam Khomeini (R) and Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, Raisi said: "If there is a shortage today, it is related to the way executive bodies, not the leadership run the country. If you see success in any part of the country, it is where the words of the imam and the Leader have been followed, and wherever there is a shortage, it is related to those who did not believe in the jobs and the responsibilities they have accepted or the ability to carry out the duties assigned to them."

"Today, we are strong in many areas, we have made a lot of progress, and the enemy's anger is also due to these advances. I must say that all the pressures against Iran have failed shamefully", he underscored,

"If the enemies think they can achieve their goals by making rumors, they are wrong. Why do you send us a message after the riots finish? You say, in your messages, that you are ready to talk, and you claimed that you were not looking for a regime change," the president highlighted. "We welcome everyone, but we will not show mercy to those who oppose us," The president said, referring to those who were involved in the recent unrest in the country."

Coinciding with the days of martyrdom of Hazrat Fatemeh Zahra (PBUH), a funeral ceremony for the body of 200 unknown martyrs of the Holy Defense was held on Monday in the Museum of Islamic Revolution and Holy Defense.

Most of the bodies of these 400 martyrs are related to the operations "Badr," "Ramadan," "Karbala 5", "Karbala 6", "Wal Fajr 1", "Beit al-Moghadas" in 1988 in the areas of "East Tigris," "East Basra," "Shalamcheh" and "Somar." They have been investigated by the Search Committee of the General Headquarters of the Armed Forces.

Among these martyrs, there are 200 unknown martyrs. According to Brigadier General "Bahman Kargar," the head of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Artifacts and Publication of the Values of the Holy Defense, to identify the pure bodies of the unknown martyrs, their DNA is taken. After notifying the family and making arrangements, if the family agrees, the martyr remains in the same place of burial, otherwise, depending on the request, the body of the martyr is moved to the place where the family lives.

Another ceremony for 400 unknown martyrs was held early on Tuesday in front of the Main Entrance of the University of Tehran and with presence of President Raisi.

## Russia to Export Gas to Pakistan Via Iran or Central Asia

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - While broadly commenting on the future of fuel imports to Europe, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak told the state-owned TASS news agency that in the long term, Moscow can send LNG to Afghanistan and Pakistan either using the infrastructure of Central Asia or in a swap from the territory of Iran.

The Russian maintained that his country had already supplemented LNG supplies to Europe in the previous year and further expressed Moscow's intention to increase gas supplies to the global market following the establishment of an energy hub in Turkey.

Recently, Pakistan's ambassador to Russia, Shafqat Ali Khan, met with the Russian Minister of Energy to discuss a potential deal for acquiring LNG from Russia on October 11, 2022. However, in November, Moscow refused to sell LNG, saying that LNG contracts were more of a long-term thing and that arranging them on short notice for Pakistan was difficult at the time.

Russia is unlikely to send any gas to the South Asian block until the long-term prospect of sending LNG becomes feasible. Meanwhile, Pakistan will get relief elsewhere in the shape of crude oil and petroleum products at discounted rates.

Federal Minister of State for Energy (Petroleum Division) Musadik Malik said after visiting Moscow that Russia will provide Pakistan with crude oil and petrol and diesel at discounted rates. He said the Russian side arranged meetings of the Pakistani delegation with some private companies and talks have now begun with them.

The minister added at the time that Russia was constructing new LNG production facilities and had invited Pakistan to begin discussions on long-term LNG contracts for 2025 and 2026.

## Iran Among World's Top Five Drone Powers

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top general has commended the joint efforts made by the armed forces, universities, and knowledge-based companies to improve the country's drone power, saying the Islamic Republic is currently among the world's top five powers in the unmanned aerial vehicles industry.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday, Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri said Iran's drones can carry out various missions with great accuracy and flight endurance.

Baqeri, Iran's highest-ranking military commander, said the Islamic Republic will proceed with its plans to promote its drone capabilities and will cooperate with other countries in the drone industry to meet the country's needs.

He once again dismissed allegations that Iran has sent drones to Russia to be used in the war in Ukraine, saying such claims are just a part of the enemy's "psychological warfare."

He said apart from the fact that many of these reports contain falsehoods, they rightly demonstrate Iran's powerful position in the drone industry.

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## Iran, EEU to Sign Free Trade Deal Soon

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union will sign a free trade agreement on Jan. 18, 2023, the spokesman of the Ministry of Industries, Mining and Trade announced.

Noting that the two sides currently exchange goods based on a preferential trade agreement, Omid Qalibaf added that EEU has granted tariff concessions to 500 types of Iranian commodities while Iran has listed 400 types.

Asked about the impact of Iran's import bans on EEU trade deal, he said the ban will not be applied to imports from the Eurasian bloc.

"Prohibition on import of certain types of goods like historical relics, pig's meat, etc. continue to be enforced but restrictions on imports implemented to maintain foreign exchange reserves will not be applied," he added, according to Financial Tribune.

There is a long list of products in Iran whose imports have been banned for many years. According to Pour-Kazem Shayesteh, the deputy head of Iran's Headquarters to Combat Smuggling of Goods and Foreign Exchange, the import of more than 2,000 types of goods are prohibited.

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## Germany Set to Suffer From Restrictions on Iran Business Ties

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Germany's new measures to restrict business ties with Iran will mostly harm companies and exporters in the European country, according to analyses and expert opinions published in Iranian media reports.

Figures by Iran's official IRNA news agency published on Sunday showed that Germany's exports to Iran had accounted for nearly a half of all exports to the country by European Union members in the 10 months to October.

The report said Germany had maintained a positive trade balance of 1.130 billion euros (\$1.2 billion) with Iran in January-October, adding that trade between the two countries had increased by 15% over the period compared with the same period in 2021.

"Rather than harming Iran, Berlin's recent decisions to impose restrictions on trade ties with Iran will end in more losses for this country's economy," said the report.

That comes as German-Iranian trade reached a total of 1.76 billion euros (\$1.87 billion) in 2021.

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## Leader Attends Mourning Ceremony Of Hazrat Fatemeh (AS)

TEHRAN (IP) – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei attended the mourning ceremony for Lady Fatemeh's martyrdom on Monday night.

Groups of people also attended the ceremony ahead of the martyrdom anniversary of Hazrat Zahra (SA) on Tuesday. The mourning for the anniversary martyrdom of Hazrat Zahra (SA) was also participated by a number of senior Iranian officials and ordinary people.

Hazrat Zahra (SA), also known as Fatemeh, is the daughter of Islam's Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and the wife of Imam Ali (AS), the first Shia imam.

Lady Fatemeh, the mother of the second and third Shia Imams, is regarded as a role model by Muslim women for her moral and religious virtues.

## Doha Poised to Promote Bilateral Cooperation With Tehran

**TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Conveying the message of the Qatari foreign minister to his Iranian counterpart, the Qatari Assistant Foreign Minister for Regional Affairs expressed the readiness of Doha to develop and promote cooperation with Tehran.**

The visiting Qatari Assistant Foreign Minister for Regional Affairs Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi met and held talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian.

During the meeting, Amirabdollahian evaluated the Iran-Qatar bilateral relations in various political, economic, and consular fields as excellent.

The Iranian diplomat also emphasized the necessity of implementing the agreements reached between the two countries during the previous meetings.



The Qatari side also expressed the Qatari government's readiness to develop and promote cooperation with Iran, conveying the message of Qatar's Minister of Foreign Affairs to his Iranian counterpart.

## Iran Can Become Regional Hub of Medicine

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran's capacity to produce 95 percent of its needed medicines domestically could turn the country into the region's hub of pharmaceuticals, President Ebrahim Raisi said.

During a visit to the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade, Raisi described the transportation, energy, maritime and pharmaceutical industries as Iran's big advantages.

He said while the domestic pharmaceutical industries fulfill the country's need for 95% of medicines, such a homegrown capacity can turn Iran into the regional hub of production and distribution of pharmaceuticals.

Hailing his administration's export activities, Raisi said closer relations have been established with many regional countries whose market capacities had been ignored.

"Many markets in the region belong to us, so rapid planning and action are needed to conquer them," the president stated.

Raisi also lauded the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade for opening 12 foreign trade offices in regional countries with the task of presenting Iran's huge capacities to the state-run and private sectors and the business people of the region.

In remarks in February, Raisi said his administration's foreign policy is focused on engaging in maximum interaction with neighbors and allies, paying attention to the capacities of regional and international organizations and developing economic diplomacy.

## Iran, Taliban Discuss Afghanistan Political, Economic Issues

TEHRAN (MNA) – Hassan Kazemi Qomi, the caretaker of the Iranian embassy in Kabul, in a meeting with Taliban's Acting First Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Abdul Ghani Baradar discussed Afghanistan's political and economic issues.

The two sides also discussed and exchanged views on the situation of Afghan refugees residing in Iran.

Saying that the current situation in Afghanistan is a favorable opportunity to increase the cooperation between Tehran and Kabul, Abdul Ghani Baradar added that the Taliban is ready for any kind of cooperation in the fields of mining, energy, and agriculture to attract Iran's investment in Afghanistan.

Appreciating the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting Afghan refugees, the Taliban official called for the development of Iran-Afghanistan bilateral relations.

Kazemi Qomi, for his part, stressed that Iran is ready to cooperate with Kabul in the field of economy.

Iran has valuable experience in the field of mining and agriculture and is ready to provide its practical experience to Afghans and invest in this field, he added.

Strengthening relations and economic development between the two countries were also emphasized during the meeting.

## Iran Blasts Europe's Double Standards on Human Rights

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top human rights official has censured France's double standards vis-à-vis human rights, slamming the French government's crackdown on protesters as it is "violently silencing" the voice of dissent. "France's heavy-handed crackdown on peaceful protesters proves the extent of its disregard for human rights," Secretary General of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi said in a post on his Twitter account. He said the French government violently silences the voice of dissent, asking, "Double standards vis-à-vis human rights have taken a new turn or what?"

Widespread protests started in the French capital on Friday in the wake of a deadly shooting in Paris by a "racist" gunman. The shooting attack claimed three lives at a Kurdish cultural center and a nearby café.

It also drew Kurdish groups and their supporters onto the streets of Paris, with some of the protesters waving flags of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is viewed as a terrorist organization by Turkey and its Western allies.

The French police arrested a 69-year-old suspect who the authorities said had recently been freed from detention while awaiting trial for a saber attack on a migrant camp in the capital last year.

Iran has urged the French government to respect the rights of protesters.

## China Urges Boosting Friendly Ties at All Levels With Iran

TEHRAN (IP) - Chinese ambassador to Tehran stressed that China and Iran should improve their friendly and good relations at all levels, and the two countries have many common interests.

"Chang Hua," the Chinese ambassador to Tehran, in an interview said: "The strategic partnership agreement between the two countries has entered the implementation stage, and we want more progress in the form of the agreement as mentioned above."

The Chinese diplomat also said about the North Atlantic Treaty Organization "NATO" provocations against China that; "NATO has become an entity that plans threats against other countries and carries out extensive actions against China in the Southeast Asian region."

He noted: China strongly condemns these measures and demands that all international actors respect peace and stability.

"Talking about the security movements of Western powers and NATO in East Asia, Chang Hua also said: China has always been committed to being a good neighbor to Southeast Asian countries, but Western powers, especially the United States, do not seek to establish peace and stability in East Asia."

The Chinese ambassador to Tehran said about the idea of transferring gas from Iran to China through Pakistan, as well as building a railway between the three countries that Iran, China, and Pakistan have great capacities to develop relations.

## New Strain of Covid Not Detected in Iran Yet

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's health ministry says no cases of the new strain of Covid-19 have been detected in the country yet. A spokesman for the ministry said the BQ1 variant has killed people in the US, France and Germany but the death toll from the strain was zero in Iran for 13 days last month.

Pedram Pak Aein added that the number of fatalities from BQ1 and BA5 in the three Western countries became 3-digit. He noted the number of cases has been on the rise in Afghanistan, South Africa, Azerbaijan Republic, Argentina and Brazil.

The health ministry spokesman however warned that Covid has not ended in Iran and anywhere in the world but the Islamic Republic has witnessed a downward trend thanks to people's cooperation with authorities and their observance of health protocols.

Pak Aein said Iran's vaccination campaign that saw 156 million doses of vaccine given to citizens helped bring the Covid pandemic under control.

He reiterated the health ministry's demand that people get vaccinated twice a year.

Pak Aein expressed regret over the low number of people showing up at vaccination places, saying the number of citizens who do so is less than 5 thousand countrywide per day, which is not enough.

He urged people with cold or respiratory disease symptoms to wear masks in public places to avoid spreading their possible disease.

Covid killed over 145 thousand people in Iran since its onset in 2019. The US is the worst hit country with over a million deaths.

## Tehran Univ Science & Tech Park Ready to Cooperate With Venezuela

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of University of Tehran Science and Technology Park Ali Assadi said that the well-known Iranian university and its Science and Technology Park are ready to have cooperation with Venezuela, given the numerous capacities the two sides have.

Assadi made the comment in a meeting with Venezuelan Ambassador to Tehran José Rafael Silva Aponte.

Referring to political and cultural cooperation between Iran and Venezuela, Assadi said that the two sides need to expand cooperation in other fields as well, including technology.

He said that University of Tehran Science and Technology Park is the oldest of its kind in Iran, and is in charge of developing the technology sector at the university.

Also, he added, 300 knowledge-based companies and technology units are member of the University of Tehran Science and Technology Park, which are active in a variety of specialized fields.

Given that, he said, the complex is ready to have cooperation with Venezuela, adding that companies active in sectors such as petrochemical, oil and gas, as well as agriculture and natural resources, could be the first entities to begin the cooperation.

The Venezuelan ambassador, for his part, said that his country aims to shift from an oil-based economy, and as part of efforts to achieve that goal, it seeks development in the technology sector, adding that Iran serves as a good model in this regard.

The diplomat said that Venezuela is making efforts to enjoy Iran's experiences in other sectors as well.

## VP Rejects Western Media Reports On Imprisoned Women

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran's vice president for women's affairs has rejected the claims made by the Western media about the situation of the female detainees held in prisons as totally fabricated.

Ensieh Khazali said on Monday that she had visited the women's wards in prisons in Tehran recently and sat down for talks with the detained women held there.

"I talked to each and every woman there for quite a while and the women officials who were accompanying me also talked to all the women and we received their letters and we are still pursuing their cases," Khazali said.

"Such allegations regarding the sexually harassing women are not true at all," the vice president stressed.

Khazali went on to further stress, "The officials of the vice presidency office for women's affairs talked to the women inmates in private meetings."

## UN-Habitat Willing to Develop Roadmap For Cooperation With Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Maimunah Mohd Sharif says that the UN-Habitat is willing to develop the roadmap for a long-term partnership with Iran.

In a message sent to Iran's new Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpush, Mohd Sharif announced the willingness of UN-Habitat to expand the roadmap for long-term cooperation with Iran through the Ministry as National Habitat Committee (NHC).

She also emphasized strengthening the current cooperation and using technical and financial resources.

She considered the implementation of 'Emergency Support to Safer Hospitals and Settlement' (BEHTAB II) necessary which aims to establish the foundations toward disaster preparedness and enhanced response capacity associated with natural hazards.

Regarding the approval of two joint projects in Iran, Mohd Sharif expressed willingness to further cooperation.

Previously in November, the second phase of the Project for Improving the Resilience of Hospitals came into the implementation phase. Following the successful completion of the first phase, BEHTAB II will be implemented to retrofit a public hospital as a pilot case.

## Tehran, Bishkek Reach Customs Agreement on Exchange of Data

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran and Kyrgyzstan have discussed cooperation between their customs administrations at a meeting in Bishkek.

Prospects of commercial and economic cooperation were reviewed among other issues, AKIpress reported.

The two sides discussed the signing of memorandums of understanding between the State Customs Service of Kyrgyzstan and the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration on the preliminary electronic exchange of data and international movement of vehicles and goods, as well as the electronic exchange of data on e-TIR procedures.

Iran and Kyrgyzstan underlined the importance of implementing joint measures to boost bilateral trade and intensify cooperation between the training centers of customs administrations.

## Tehran, Moscow Stress Boosting Parliamentary Relations

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian in a meeting with the heads of the Russian parliamentary friendship group stressed the need for developing Tehran-Moscow parliamentary ties and cooperation.

Referring to the role of parliaments in promoting relations, the top Iranian diplomat considered the High Commission for Parliamentary Cooperation to be an important mechanism to help the development of Tehran-Moscow relations.

Expressing satisfaction with the increase in commercial exchanges between Iran and Russia, Amirabdollahian emphasized the need to increase the participation of the private sector in economic cooperation. He also announced the readiness of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in this regard.

The coordinator of the Russian parliamentary friendship group, for his part, called for developing Iran-Russia parliamentary relations and exchanging delegations between the parliaments of the two countries.

Iran's head of the Russia-Iran Parliamentary Friendship Group in the Iranian parliament was also present at the meeting.



## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:05
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:18
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:43
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:13

92. (Moses) said:

"O Aaron! what kept thee back, when thou sawest them going wrong,

93. "From following me?"

Didst thou then disobey my order?"

Surah 20. Ta-ha (92 - 93)

## Tehran, Hanoi Urged To Boost Barter Trade

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN – Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafei in meeting with Ambassador of Vietnam to Tehran Mr. Luong Quoc Huy said with having serious talks, Iran and Vietnam can develop their barter trade which can make ineffective banking hurdles and reinforce bilateral trade.**

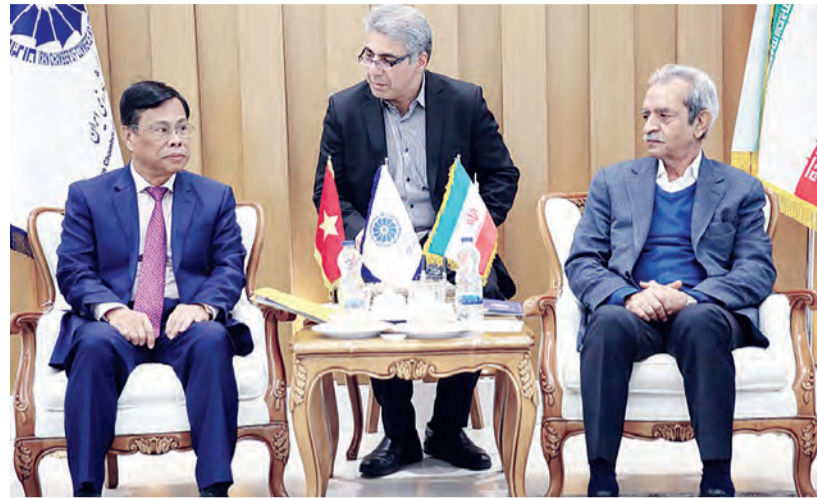
In the meeting, both sides emphasized necessity for removing hurdles in way of reinforcing economic co-operation between Tehran and Hanoi especially in solving banking problems.

Shafei pointed to Vietnam's \$550b trade volume in 2022 and said that economic relation between Iran and Vietnam is in a favorable level and there are high capacities and good diversity for cooperation between the two countries but at the same time there are serious problems and these problems are big hurdles in materializing the existing capacities.

He further said that banking and monetary and transportation are two major hurdles in way of broadening economic ties between the two countries, adding that fortunately there are high capacities for barter trade between the two states especially in agriculture. He noted that Iran needs Vietnam's tropical fruits and rice and Vietnam also needs Iran's products like apple, pomegranate and other agro products, and therefore both sides through serious talks can boost their barter exchanges to overcome banking problem.

Shafei then pointed to the free trade agreement between Vietnam and EAEU states and said that Iran has also entered this bloc and cooperation between Iran and Vietnam in this framework will be considerable. He stressed that by the way Vietnam is one of the active countries of ASEAN and Iran is also an active member of ECO and these capacities can be taken into consideration in line with broadening multilateral relations.

He reiterated that ICCIMA will support any action for reinforcing ties between Iran and Vietnam and is ready to increase talks between the private sectors of the two states and ready to exchange trade delegation between the two countries.



He noted that easing the trade exchange between the two states and visa process for economic activists can deepen impact on these programs.

Then Ambassador of Vietnam Mr. Huy, for his part, emphasized readiness for taking required actions for deepening ties between the two countries and said that Iran is one of major trade partners of Vietnam in the Middle East and Hanoi looks at Iran as a gateway for entering this region. He noted that Vietnam is also considered an important trade partner Iran in Southeast Asia but their trade volume is around \$100m per year.

He also called for resolving monetary and banking problems between the two countries and said that for barter trade they need more studies because Vietnam does not have enough experience in barter trade and expressed hope they can gain information on this field through the assistance of Iran.

Huy also called for signing a MoU by the chambers of commerce of both countries for defining roadmap and policy for the ties between the private sectors of Iran and Vietnam. He stressed that he can provide the ground for holding B2B meeting between the economic activists and business owners of Iran and Vietnam in 2023. He urged ICCIMA to introduce Iranian companies to the embassy which like to trade with Vietnam in the fields of agro and foodstuff like rice and pepper and the Vietnam Embassy will introduce the companies to their Vietnamese counterparts.

He added that the embassy is working to facilitate visa issuance for Iranian traders, adding that if the traders have letters of introduction from the ICCIMA, the visa issuance processes will be accelerated.

Then Head of Iran-Vietnam Joint Chamber of Commerce who was present in the meeting raised some suggestions for improving trade ties between Tehran and Hanoi.

Mostafa Mousavi said that launching the direct flight will help both countries to broaden their economic ties and his suggestions were welcomed by the Vietnamese diplomat.

## Cooperation to Combat Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing

TEHRAN (IP) - The ceremony for tripartite cooperation of the judiciary, the financial intelligence center, and the officials of the Justice Ministry is underway in Tehran for the implementation of laws to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

The ceremony is underway with the presence of the Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, Ehsan Khandouzi, on Monday.

Iran's anti-money laundering (AML) law (2008) and bylaw (2010) criminalized money laundering, established a ministerial coordination council and Financial Intelligence Unit, and instituted preventive measures for financial institutions and certain nonfinancial businesses and professions.

Iran also adopted a law on combating the financing of terrorism (CFT) in 2016.

## 4 Gas Condensate Tankers Berthed Simultaneously in South Pars

TEHRAN (Shana) -- The CEO of the Iranian Oil Terminals Company (IOTC) announced the docking of four oil tankers in South Pars at the same time, and said: "This operation was successfully carried out for the first time in order to prevent the disruption of gas flow to the country, especially in the cold season of the year."

According to IOTC, the company's CEO, Abbas Esadrooz, referring to the importance of sustainable production of gas condensates from joint fields in South Pars, said: "IOTC, in order to prevent disruptions in the country's sustainable gas production, especially in the cold season of the year, as well as to fulfill the obligations of selling gas condensates with the aim of customer orientation, has berthed four oil tankers at the same time."

He stated that this operation was carried out for the first time in the South Pars region, and clarified: "In this operation, four SBMs were used on sites 1 and 2 of South Pars simultaneously."

## Iran Seeks Global Hub For Deuterium Drugs

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami says the country aims to become a global hub for manufacturing deuterium drugs.

"In a not too distant future we will turn into a hub for manufacturing drugs based on deuterium which are good alternatives to chemical drugs and have lower side effects in comparison (to those drugs)," said Eslami.

Researchers believe deuterium, which is a heavy isotope of hydrogen, can substantially improve the metabolic properties of medicines and make them more effective by forming a stronger chemical bond to a carbon atom of a molecule used in drugs.

The AEOI launched a second phase of its deuterium production unit in Arak Heavy Water Reactor Facility in central Iran in April 2021.

Officials said at the time that the unit was a first in the West Asia region and its isotope products were among the best in the world.

Eslami's statement about Iran's plans to become a global hub in deuterium drugs came as he was attending a ceremony to inaugurate a modern gamma knife radiosurgery facility in Tehran.

Eslami, an Iranian deputy president, said the AEOI will continue to provide technologies and equipment to domestic suppliers to help them in their efforts to manufacture sophisticated drugs and medical appliances.

## PUT, BSTU To Sign MoU

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's Petroleum University of Technology (PUT) and the Belarusian State Technological University (BSTU) will sign a memorandum of understanding for cooperation through video conference in the presence of the chancellors of the two universities.



The document will be aimed at starting scientific activities and meeting the needs of the oil industry, and establishing a close relationship between the two parties.

According to PUT, following the official invitation of the President of BSTU to PUT authorities to visit and draw up a memorandum of cooperation between the two universities, Mohammadreza Khosravini, vice president of education and graduate studies of PUT, and Sadegh Safarzadeh, the head of Mahmoud Abad Oil Faculty, visited BSTU.

BSTU was established in 1930 and is one of Belarus's largest industrial universities in the downstream sector of the oil, gas, refining, and petrochemical industry.

During the visit, meetings were held with the vice-chancellor of BSTU and its educational and research assistants, and after visiting the infrastructure and educational and research facilities, including laboratories and research centers, the terms of the memorandum were agreed upon between the two universities, in a way that the provisions of this memorandum will be implemented within a certain period of time.

## Iran Plans to Install 10,000 MW of New Power Capacity

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The government plans to install 10,000 megawatts of new power generating capacity with the help of private investors, an official with Iran's Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH) says.

"Based on the planning, it has been decided that up to 5,000 megawatts of F-class combined cycle power plants will be built by the state in eight different areas. In the first phase, the program to build four power plants is on the agenda," Alireza Nasrollahi said.

"Also, it was decided that 5,000 megawatts of projects for F-class power plants will be implemented by the private sector on the recommendation of the government. Therefore, we are facing the prospect of building 10,000 megawatts of F-class power plants in the country."

The first government-owned F-class power plant has already entered operation, part of Iran's continuing plan to add more natural gas-fired power generation.

The plant is located in Hengam in Iran's southern Hormozgan province. It is part of a larger project led by MAPNA Group, which is Iran's largest power plant engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) contractor.

The power plant has two 307 MW F-class gas turbines - which, Nasrollahi said, have gone operational - and a 292 MW steam unit, with a total capacity of 906 MW and



an efficiency of 58 percent.

The second project is underway in Dukohe, Andimeshk, whose gas unit will be put into operation this winter.

The third combined cycle project is being implemented in Bonab in northwest Iran, where the plant's gas unit is projected to become operational next year.

Another combined cycle power plant project is built in Ahvaz, said Nasrollahi who is the executor of combined cycle power plants.

According to Nasrollahi, water consumption has been greatly reduced in F-class power plants.

Previously, the efficiency of E-class combined cycle plants was around 50%, where an upgraded gas turbine produced between 160 and 200 megawatts of power.

With the induction of F-class turbines, the efficiency has increased by 58 percent, and the production capacity of each gas turbine has reached 300 megawatts.

MAPNA is the largest contractor for steam, gas and combined cycle and renewable power plants in Iran, which has carried out major projects in the Middle East and beyond.

According to MAPNA Group CEO Abbas Aliabadi, the company has built more than 5,000 megawatts of thermal power plants across the world and begun manufacturing hydrogen-fueled turbines.

## Iran Resumes Exports to Qatar Through Kangan Port

BUSHEHR (IRNA) - Head of Port and Maritime Organization in Kangan County in Southern Iran said that Islamic Republic of Iran resumes exports to Qatar through Kangan Port after nearly five years.

Abdolmohammad Naderi said here on Monday that Iran has activated its foreign trade through Kangan Port in Bushehr Province in southern Iran by constructing two dock ramps for the mooring of metal vessels.

He added that the first export shipment from Kangan Port containing 200 tons of fodder exported to Qatar recently.

Naderi added that to facilitate products unloading and loading process, all customs and port formalities of commercial goods will be done in the shortest possible time.

According to official statistics, Iran's exports to Qatar have seen 30% growth in one month compared with the same period last year.

The spokesman for the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade, Omid Qalibaf, said that Iran-Qatar trade is progressive, adding that exports of products like steel, glass, shrimp, fish, tomato, white cement, confectionary, and chocolate have experienced 100% growth in the first seven months of the Iranian calendar.

## Trade Via Iran's Parvizkhan Border With Iraq Tops \$2.17b

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Managing Director of Iran's Parvizkhan border crossing on the frontier with Iraq Motalebi said that foreign trade through the crossing reached a total of \$2.178 billion in the nine months to December 21.

Speaking to the IRNA on Monday, Qasem Motalebi said that some 2.567 metric tons (mt) of goods and products worth \$1.641 billion had been exported via the Parvizkhan border crossing over the March-December period.

He added that the export shipments from Parvizkhan mostly included fruits and vegetables, dairy products, cakes and cookies, metal products, plastic products, stones, tiles, and construction materials.

The Kermanshah province in western Iran has two official border crossings and five border markets along its 371-kilometer frontier with Iraq. More than \$3 billion dollar worth of goods are exported from Kermanshah's borders every year.

## 60 New Medicines Unveiled

TEHRAN (IP) - Sixty new drugs produced by the Tehran University of Medical Science were unveiled in Tehran.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony, Iran's Health Minister Bahram Einollahi said that from the beginning of Raisi's administration, 135 hospital equipment had been distributed throughout the country's health centers.

Einollahi noted that the enemies tried to hinder Iran's scientific growth, but the country's health system proved that the speed of Iran's scientific development was increasing daily.

Despite the sanctions and political pressures of the world's powers, the Islamic Republic of Iran has overcome obstacles and reached exemplary achievements while relying on the people, especially the elite and active young scientists. The Spokesman of the Iranian Administration, Ali Bahadori, said in a press conference on November 1 that the country reached self-sufficiency in producing 500 medical products.

## Philippines Floods Force Tens Of Thousands to Flee Homes

MANILA (Dispatches) - Christmas Day floods in the Philippines forced the evacuation of nearly 46,000 people from their homes, civil defense officials said.

Two people were killed and nine others were missing after heavy seasonal rain inundated parts of the southern region of Mindanao, the officials added. The disaster dampened celebrations on the mainly Catholic nation's most important holiday.

"The waters rose above the chest in some areas, but today the rains have ceased," civil defence worker Robinson Lacre told AFP by phone from Gingoog city, which accounted for 33,000 of the 45,700 people evacuated from their homes.



## Qatar Expresses Concern Over Taliban Bar on Female Staff

DOHA (Dispatches) - Qatar expressed "extreme concern" over the order by Afghanistan's Taliban-run administration to stop female employees from working, calling on the administration to review its decision, a foreign ministry statement said.

The ministry "stresses the need to respect women's right to work, given that the freedom to choose and accept work is a human right", it said. Qatar hosted a representative office for the Taliban during the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, and served as a venue for peace talks before the group took power in 2021.



## Ukrainian Drone Hits Bomber Base Inside Russia



KYIV (Dispatches) - Moscow said its forces had shot down a Ukrainian drone close to a long-range bomber base deep inside Russia, while Ukraine said the Russians had unleashed heavy artillery barrages on its cities in the past 24 hours.

The drone was allegedly flying near Russia's Engels air base, where long-range strategic bombers that may have been used to target Ukrainian cities and infrastructure are based.

The Russian defense ministry said in a statement three air force personnel had been killed in the incident but no planes were damaged.

However, Russian and Ukrainian social media accounts said a number of planes had been destroyed. Reuters was not able to independently verify those reports.

As the war entered its 11th month, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Sunday he was open to negotiations, and he blamed Ukraine and its Western allies for failing to engage in talks. But his forces kept up their relentless attacks, with the Ukrainian military saying early on Monday dozens of towns in the Luhansk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions had been shelled.

"In the Kherson direction, the enemy continues artillery shelling of populated areas along the right bank of the Dnipro River," the Ukrainian military said.

Ukrainian forces launched attacks on almost 20 Russian targets, it added.

Ukraine's energy grid operator said power was still significantly lacking on Monday, with emergency restrictions for electricity consumption introduced in five Ukrainian regions and the capital Kyiv.

The attack on the Engels air base - located near the city of Saratov, about 730 km (450 miles) southeast of Moscow and hundreds of kilometers from the frontlines in Ukraine - was the second this month.

It was previously hit on Dec. 5 in what Russia said were Ukrainian drone attacks on two Russian air bases that day.

The air base is one of two strategic bomber bases housing Russia's air-delivered nuclear capability. There was no comment from Kyiv, which has never publicly claimed responsibility for attacks inside Russia.

"A Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicle (drone) was shot down at low altitude while approaching the Engels military airfield in the Saratov region," the defence ministry statement said.

Three Russian servicemen were killed by falling drone wreckage, it said.

Russia has 60 to 70 strategic bomber planes of two types - the Tu-95MS Bear and the Tu-160 Blackjack. Both are capable of carrying nuclear bombs and nuclear-armed cruise missiles as well as conventional munitions.

Moscow has used its air force to fire cruise missiles in attacks that Kyiv has said amount to war crimes.

Saratov's regional governor Roman Busargin said on Monday civilian infrastructure facilities had not been damaged in the latest incident at the base and there was no threat to residents.

Putin again said he was open to negotiations - a stance Ukraine's most powerful backer, the United States, has previously dismissed as posturing given the relentless Russian attacks.

## S. Korea Scrambles Jets as North Korea Sends Drones Over Border

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Five North Korean drones crossed into South Korea and South Korea responded by scrambling jets and attack helicopters and opening fire to try to shoot down the North Korean aircraft, the South Korean military said.

As part of its response, the South Korea military also sent surveillance aircraft into the North to photograph its military installations, a South Korean military official said.

"This is a clear act of provocation by the North violating our airspace," a South Korean official with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Lee Seung-o, told a briefing.

One of the five North Korean drones flew near the South Korean capital, Seoul, and the others flew near the west coast, Lee said the South Korea military "operated assets to shoot down" the drones.

He did not say if any drones had been shot down but the Yonhap news agency later said South Korea's military fired about 100 shots but failed to shoot any down. Lee said South Korea initially fired "warning shots" when it first detected the drones.

One of the drones was known to have returned to North Korea while South Korea lost track of the other four, Yonhap reported, citing the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

## Brazil Election-Deniers Threaten Lula's Inauguration

RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - Election-denying protesters camping outside Brazilian army bases have become "incubators of terrorism," Brazil's incoming justice minister said, a day after police detonated an explosive device and arrested a suspect they accused of links to the Brasilia camp.

"Yesterday's serious events in Brasilia prove that the so-called 'patriotic' camps have become incubators for terrorists," tweeted Flavio Dino, the incoming minister. "There will be no amnesty for terrorists, their supporters and financiers."

Supporters of President Jair Bolsonaro have been camped outside army bases in Brazil for weeks, urging the military to overturn the victory of leftist President-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who takes office on Jan. 1.

Dino said arrangements for Lula's inauguration would be "re-evaluated, with a view to tightening security."

In another tweet, Dino said he would propose the creation of "special groups to combat terrorism and irresponsible weaponry. The rule of law is not compatible with these political militias."

News of the bomb added a new dimension to post-election violence in Brazil, where tensions remain high after the most fraught election in a generation.

Bolsonaro, who has yet to concede defeat, has made baseless claims about the credibility of Brazil's voting system, and many of his hardcore supporters believe him. The head of Brazil's electoral court last month rejected a complaint from Bolsonaro's allies challenging the presidential election.

The Brasilia camp, outside the army headquarters, has become one of the country's most extreme. On Dec. 12, the day Lula's victory was certified, some of the camp dwellers attacked the federal police HQ in Brasilia.

Robson Cândido, head of the Civil Police in Brasilia, said a 54-year-old man from the northeastern state of Para had been arrested and confessed to planting the device in a fuel truck near the Brasilia airport in order to sow chaos.



## Xi Urges Steps to Protect Lives as China Battles Covid Wave

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Chinese President Xi Jinping urged officials to take steps to protect lives in his first public remarks on Covid-19 since Beijing dramatically loosened hardline containment measures this month.

Having mostly cut itself off from the rest of the world during the pandemic, China is now experiencing the planet's biggest surge in infections after abruptly lifting restrictions that torpedoed the economy.

Studies have estimated that around one million people could die over the next few months. Many in the population are now grappling with shortages of medicine, while emergency medical facilities are strained by an influx of undervaccinated elderly patients.

"At present, Covid-19 prevention and control in China are facing a new situation and new tasks," Xi said in a directive, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

"We should launch the patriotic health campaign in a more targeted way... fortify a community line of defense for epidemic prevention and control, and effectively protect people's lives, safety and health," Xi said.

Hospitals and crematoriums across the country have been overflowing with Covid patients and victims, while China's National Health Commission on Sunday announced it would stop publishing daily

nationwide infection and death statistics.

The decision to scrap the daily virus count comes amid concerns that the country's blooming wave of infections is not being accurately reflected in official statistics.

Beijing has admitted the scale of the outbreak has become "impossible" to track following the end of mandatory mass testing, as people are now not obliged to declare test results to authorities.

And last week, Beijing narrowed the criteria by which Covid-19 fatalities were counted -- a move experts said would suppress the number of deaths attributable to the virus. The winter surge comes ahead of two major public holidays next month, in which millions of migrant workers are expected to travel to their hometowns to reunite with relatives.

Authorities are bracing for the virus to hit under-resourced rural areas hard, and on Monday called for the guaranteed supply of drugs and medical treatment during New Year's Day and the week-long Lunar New Year holiday, which begins January 21.

The ruling Communist Party and State Council issued a notice calling on officials to "ensure the smooth and orderly adjustment and transition of epidemic prevention and control measures".



## Taiwan Reports Deployment of 71 Chinese Warplanes During War Drills

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Cina deployed 71 warplanes in weekend military exercises around Taiwan, Taipei's defense ministry said, including dozens of fighter jets in one of the biggest daily incursions to date.

The People's Liberation Army said it had conducted a "strike drill" on Sunday in response to unspecified "provocations" and "collusion" between the United States and the self-ruled island.

Data from Taiwan's defense ministry showed those drills were one of the largest since they started releasing daily tallies.

In a post on Twitter, Taiwan said 60 fighter jets took part in the drills, including six Su-30 warplanes, some of China's most advanced.

Moreover, 47 of the sorties crossed into the island's air defense identification zone (ADIZ), the third-highest daily incursion on record, according to AFP's database.

Taiwan lives under constant threat of invasion by China, which claims the democratic island as part of its territory, to be taken one day.

Beijing has ramped up military, diplomatic and economic pressure on Taiwan under President Xi Jinping as relations have deteriorated.

One of the pressure tactics China has increasingly used is probing Taiwan's ADIZ with its warplanes.

So far this year, there have been more than 1,700 such incursions compared with 969 in 2021 and 146 in 2020.

China did not specify the number of aircraft mobilized for Sunday's exercises, nor the exact location of these maneuvers.

Taiwan's daily tally showed most of the incursions crossed the "median line" which runs down the Taiwan Strait that separates the two sides, while a smaller number went through Taiwan's southwestern ADIZ.

Many nations maintain air defense identification zones, including the United States, Canada, South Korea, Japan and China.

They are not the same as a country's airspace.

Instead, they encompass a much wider area, in which any foreign aircraft is expected to announce itself to local aviation authorities.



# UK Economy Is Facing an Exceptionally Tough 2023

LONDON (Dispatches) - 2023 is expected to be an exceptionally tough year for the UK economy. The country is almost certainly already in a year-long recession, one that will probably prove to be deeper than that experienced in the early 1990s.

The squeeze on real household incomes will intensify as rising interest rates join soaring inflation.

Admittedly, the Government's austerity measures won't harm growth in the short term, according to Thomas Pugh, economist at RSM UK.

"Most of the pain has been delayed until after the next General Election. But they won't help the economy much in the short term either," said Pugh.

Not all recessions are created equal though. Pugh expects a peak-to-trough fall in GDP of around 2.5 percent.

"That would be slightly smaller than the early 1990s recession and significantly less than the Global Financial Crisis," he stressed.

Pugh also anticipates the unemployment rate to rise from the 3.6 percent it is now, to around 5 percent by the end of 2023, entailing job losses of about 200,000.

"Hospitality and retail sectors are likely to bear the greatest losses as consumers discretionary spending power shrinks."

Looking for the good news? Inflation will fall over 2023.

The bad news is that it will probably still average around 7.5 percent over the whole of next year.

High inflation and a tight labour market will force the Bank of England (BoE) to raise interest rates from 3 percent currently to around 4.5 percent early next year, said Pugh, adding that "it will be 2024 before the bank considers cutting rates."

Households' disposable incomes have been hammered by the cost-of-living crisis, which has seen inflation soar from 0.5 percent at the start of 2021 to 10.1 percent in September 2022 due to the huge rises in food and energy prices.

The Government's energy price guarantee (EPG) has shielded households and businesses from the worst of the energy crisis, Pugh pointed out.

But he added that utility prices will rise by another 20 percent in April 2023 when the government's Energy Price Guarantee for the average annual utility bill rises from £2,500 to £3,000.

"As if that wasn't enough, the surge in mortgage rates will further sap households' disposable incomes," Pugh continued.

Mortgage rates have surged well ahead of the base rate as banks anticipate higher interest rates, meaning that anyone unlucky enough to be mortgaging over the next few months will see the share of their income spent on the soaring mortgage interest.

Pugh singled out the average borrower rolling over a 75 percent LTV ratio two-year fixed rate mortgage today for another two years will see the proportion of their incomes being absorbed by monthly repayments soar to about 34 percent, from 22 percent.

"What's more, a loosening labor market, as firms reduce hiring and even start to cut workforce numbers, will result in nominal wage growth dropping back to more 'normal' levels," he said.

"Throw in higher taxes potentially worth 1 percent of GDP and a real terms reduction in public sector pay, and the 2023 outlook is bleak for household's real disposable income," Pugh added. All in, he expects RHDI to contract by 2.5 percent in 2023. That would be the biggest fall on record.



Admittedly, consumers have, on average, a considerable level of savings, equivalent to around 10 percent of GDP.

"But given consumer confidence is at a record low, we aren't expecting them to dip into these savings by much," Pugh noted.

"The latest data suggests consumers are adding to their savings pile rather than dipping into it."

So, consumers have less money to spend and are less willing to spend it. This will inevitably mean a sharp reduction in consumer spending, especially on discretionary items such as hospitality and retail goods.

"We are expecting a decline of 2 percent in total consumer spending next year," Pugh said.

Surging interest rates and slumping demand will also reduce business investment which is still about 8 percent below its previous level, he continued.

"This is mainly driven by a slump in investment in offices and transport equipment, as demand for office space and travel has not fully recovered because many people have continued to work remotely."

The recession will go some way to reducing domestic inflationary pressures. Some leading indicators are already pointing to an easing in domestic price pressures.

With energy price inflation about to turn down decisively, UK CPI inflation will soon start to fall from October's 41-year high of 11.1 percent, Pugh said.

In addition to that, the current \$80 level of Brent crude oil prices suggests that motor fuel's contribution to the headline rate will fall to almost zero by March.

"The stabilisation of food prices over the last six months also points to food CPI inflation falling quickly next year," he noted.

Meanwhile, the plunge in shipping costs and increase in retailers' stock levels suggests that core goods prices will fall back soon.

"Even so, inflation will remain high for most of next year. We think that inflation will be around 7 percent in mid-2023, around 4 percent by the end of 2023, but may fall below the BoE's 2 percent target in the second half of 2024."

However, there is a risk that inflation proves stickier than we think, either because a tight labour market means that wage growth falls more slowly than we expect or because firms are rebuilding margins.

Indeed, the Q4 edition of the RSM UK MMBI showed that middle market firms are getting better at passing on costs.

"That said, the recession and weaker demand will make it more difficult for middle market firms to continue to pass on higher costs," Pugh said.

With inflation set to remain high throughout 2023, it will be difficult for firms to continue to defend their margins.

The recession will inevitably cause unemployment to rise.

Slumping demand reduces the need for staff, but this is combined with the huge squeeze in firm's costs and rising interest rates, forcing firms to shed staff.

"However, we do not expect unemployment to surge, especially in sectors experiencing a skills shortage," Pugh said.

"The labor market is incredibly tight because of a lack of supply of labor, not because of an excess demand for workers."

And given the recent challenges firms have had in recruiting staff and the relatively short recession, firms will have more of an incentive to hoard labor than in previous periods of economic weakness, he continued.



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## Toyota's Nov Global Vehicle Production Rises 1.5%

TOKYO (Reuters) - Toyota Motor Corp reported on Monday a 1.5% rise in November global vehicle output, reaching a new record of 833,104.

Domestic production slid 3.3% to 266,174 vehicles, while overseas output rose 3.8% to an all-time high of 566,930 for the month. Global sales and production in November exceeded last year's levels due to solid demand, particularly in North America, and a recovery in parts supplies that had been impacted by COVID-19 slowdowns, Toyota said. The automaker reported earlier this month it expected to produce 700,000 vehicles in January and held to a reduced goal of 9.2 million in the year through March.



## Germany Could Become Bankrupt State Due to Energy Spending

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany is fearing its own demise at its own hands as the measures it takes to combat the ongoing energy crisis are causing its reserves to falter.

Germany could soon become a dysfunctional, bankrupt state if it stays on the same path it is currently on and fails to deal with the ongoing energy crisis in light of its imbalanced financial policies, Bundestag Vice-President Wolfgang Kubicki said.

"If we continue that way and want to provide energy assistance for years, then we could face state bankruptcy rather than state socialism," Kubicki told the German Bild am Sonntag newspaper.

According to the Parliament's deputy speaker, the extra money Germany is currently planning to spend on energy imports from elsewhere than Russia would be withdrawn from other areas, as the surplus can be "neither printed on a money printing machine nor covered by taxpayers."

"Many people have a feeling that Germany is on the way to becoming a dysfunctional state. Infrastructure, governing, energy prices, and the inability of the Bundeswehr to defend its country - we have to take countermeasures; otherwise, things could go wrong," Kubicki stressed.

German left-wing politician and chairman of the Bundestag committee on energy, Klaus Ernst, commented back in September on statements by Chancellor Olaf Scholz that the sanctions should not hit Europe harder than Russia itself: "We have now imposed seven packages of sanctions and Gazprom is making record profits. At the same time, we are threatened with a wave of bankruptcies. Therefore: negotiate with Russia with an open mind."

The largest EU economy is anticipated to contract in 2023, as gas and electricity prices continue to skyrocket. According to the Ifo Institute for Economic Research, the Munich-based think tank, the ongoing energy crisis as a result of the war in Ukraine is "wreaking havoc" on the German economy and they project it could lead to a 0.3% drop in GDP next year.

German politician and fellow left-wing Bundestag member Sahra Wagenknecht condemned the government for dragging the country into a full-blown "economic war" with Russia who happened to be its top energy supplier, while she referred to the Bundestag concerning the fatal impacts that the Russian sanctions have on Germany.

The consecutive sanctions against Moscow prompted a race against the clock to diminish Germany's reliance on Russian gas before winter. Groceries and food are other sectors experiencing the aftermath of soaring inflation which saw prices surge 12% in June before reaching 16.6% in August.

The Bundestag warned that Germany's economic health is at stake considering the spiraling of energy prices out of control, which will serve as "a reminder of the good old days," followed by Wagenknecht urging for the cancellation of restrictions and engaging in talks with Moscow.

## Russia Ready to Resume Gas Supplies to Europe Via Yamal-Europe Pipeline

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Moscow is ready to resume gas supplies to Europe through the Yamal-Europe Pipeline, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak told state TASS news agency.

"The European market remains relevant, as the gas shortage persists, and we have every opportunity to resume supplies," TASS cited Novak as saying in remarks published by the agency.

"For example, the Yamal-Europe Pipeline, which was stopped for political reasons, remains unused."

The Yamal-Europe Pipeline usually flows westward, but has been mostly reversed since December of 2021 as Poland turned away from buying from Russia in favor of drawing on stored gas in Germany.

In May, Warsaw terminated its agreement with Russia, after earlier rejecting Moscow's demand that it pays in roubles.

Russian supplier Gazprom responded by cutting off supply and also said it would no longer be able to export gas via Poland after Moscow imposed sanctions against the firm that owns the Polish section of the Yamal-Europe pipeline.

Novak also reiterated that Moscow is discussing additional gas supplies through Turkey after a creation of a hub there. He also said that Moscow expects it will have shipped 21 billion cubic metres (bcm) of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Europe in 2022.

"This year we were able to significantly increase LNG supplies to Europe," Novak said. "In the 11 months of 2022 they increased to 19.4 bcm, by the end of the year 21 bcm are expected."

## Europe-Driven Foreign Arrivals in Turkey Leap Nearly 45%

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The number of foreign visitors arriving in Turkey sustained a strong recovery in November after a 2020 slump owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, official data suggested.

Backed by demand from European countries, foreign arrivals jumped 44.64% from a year earlier to 2.55 million last month, revealed Culture and Tourism Ministry data.

The arrivals stood at 1.76 million foreign visitors in November 2021 and 833,991 in

November 2020. This year's arrivals have been mainly boosted by Russian visitors who were hit by flight restrictions by Western countries after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The rebound has also been driven by a major leap in demand from Europe, spearheaded by Germany and the United Kingdom.

Tourism revenues are vital to Turkey's economy as the government's new economic program focuses on flipping the current account deficits to a surplus, prioritizing exports, production and investments while curbing rising inflation.

Russian visitors topped the list in November with 312,486 arrivals. They were followed by Bulgaria at 232,709 and Germany at 207,340, the data showed.

In the January-November period, the number of foreign visitors stood reached 42.16 million people, up 84.77% compared to the same period in 2021, matching pre-pandemic levels of 2019.

At 5.48 million, Germans topped the list, followed by nearly 4.95 million arrivals from Russia and 3.3 million arrivals from the United Kingdom, said the Culture and Tourism Ministry.

The rebound prompted the government to once again revise its year-end tourism targets. Culture and Tourism Minister Mehmet Nuri Ersoy earlier this month said they now expect 51.5 million tourists and \$46 billion in revenues. Estimates had stood at 45 million arrivals and \$35 billion in income at the beginning of the year. Forecasts for 2023 have also been upgraded, as Turkey now expects 60 million foreign visitors and \$56 billion in revenues.

Officials had hoped tourism this year could replicate or exceed 2019 figures, when some 52 million visitors brought in \$34 billion in revenue.

The number of foreign visitors soared by 94.1% to 24.71 million last year when COVID-19 measures were eased compared to 2020. Tourism revenues doubled to almost \$25 billion but remained well below the recorded level in 2019.

## World Economy Is Headed for a Recession in 2023

LONDON (Dispatches) - The findings are more pessimistic than the latest forecast from the International Monetary Fund. That institution

warned in October that more than a third of the world economy will contract and there is a 25% chance of global GDP growing by less than 2% in 2023, which it defines as a global recession.

The world faces a recession in 2023 higher borrowing costs aimed at tackling inflation cause a number of economies to contract, according to the Centre for Economics and Business Research.

The global economy surpassed \$100 trillion for the first time in 2022 but will stall in 2023 as policy makers continue their fight against soaring prices, the British consultancy said in its annual World Economic League Table.

"It's likely that the world economy will face recession next year as a result of the rises in interest rates in response to higher inflation," said Kay Daniel Neufeld, director and head of Forecasting at CEBR.

The report added that, "The battle against inflation is not won yet. We expect central bankers to stick to their guns in 2023 despite the economic costs. The cost of bringing inflation down to more comfortable levels is a poorer growth outlook for a number of years to come."

The findings are more pessimistic than the latest forecast from the International Monetary Fund. That institution warned in October that more than a third of the world economy will contract and there is a 25% chance of global GDP growing by less than 2% in 2023, which it defines as a global recession.

Even so, by 2037, world gross domestic product will have doubled as developing economies catch up with the richer ones. The shifting balance of power will see the East Asia and Pacific region account for over a third of global output by 2037, while Europe's share shrinks to less than a fifth.

The CEBR takes its base data from the IMF's World Economic Outlook and uses an internal model to forecast growth, inflation and exchange rates.

China is now not set to overtake the US as the world's largest economy until 2036 at the earliest — six years later than expected. That reflects China's zero Covid policy and rising trade tensions with the west slow, which have slowed its expansion.

CEBR had originally expected the switch in 2028, which it pushed back to 2030 in last year's league table. It now thinks the cross-over point will not happen until 2036 and may come even later if Beijing tries to take control of Taiwan and faces retaliatory trade sanctions.

## India to Rise to 3rd Spot on the World Economic League Table by 2037



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's growth trajectory will rise to the third spot by 2037 from the current fifth spot on the World Economic League Table, according to CEBR. The Centre for Economics and Business Research said that over the next five years, India's annual rate of GDP growth is expected to average 6.4%, after which growth is expected to average 6.5% in the subsequent nine years.

According to the CEBR report, India's estimated PPP-adjusted GDP per capita is \$8,293 in 2022— classifying it as a lower middle-income country. PPP GDP is gross domestic product converted to international dollars using purchasing power parity rates.

While the pandemic had a devastating impact on India's economy in absolute terms with output contracting by 6.6% in FY21. However, a sharp rebound in economic activity was seen post-pandemic, fuelled by an uptick in domestic demand, resulting in GDP growing by 8.7% in the fiscal year 2021-22, making it the fastest-growing major economy in the world.

The UK-based consultancy still expects growth in the fiscal year 2022-23 to remain robust, at 6.8% amid inflation, U.S. monetary policy, the Russia-Ukraine war, and other global uncertainties.

The consultancy report said output growth is expected to ease in the fiscal year 2023-24, however, CEBR is forecasting growth of 5.8%, as accelerating, price levels bite into domestic demand. Annual inflation in India has exceeded the target in 2022, at 6.9%, thereby above the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s tolerance band upper margin of 6%, according to the report.

Mentioning inflation, the report stated that it has remained lower than in most other large economies. Much of India's current inflation rate reflects higher food prices, an erratic item but one that also accounts for a larger share of the consumer basket than in any other G20 country, CEBR added.

## Malaysia, Indonesia 2023 GDPs Revised Up on Firm Spending

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Economists have revised up next year's growth projections for Malaysia and Indonesia, citing robust domestic demand, according to a fresh survey compiled by the Japan Center for Economic Research (JCER) and Nikkei, underscoring the Southeast Asian economies' resilience amid a global downturn.

The JCER and Nikkei conducted the latest quarterly consensus survey from Nov 25 to Dec 15, receiving 34 answers from economists and analysts in the six biggest ASEAN economies — Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand — and India.

Five of the six countries are projected to see slower gross domestic product (GDP) expansion in 2023 than in 2022 as central banks' tighter monetary policy cools the economy. Only Thailand is projected to grow faster in 2023, thanks to the expected recovery in the country's core tourism sector.

Nevertheless, Malaysia's GDP growth rate was upgraded by 0.2 point to 4.2% for 2023. In addition, its growth rate projection for 2022 was upgraded to 8.5% from the previous 6.9%, backed by domestic consumption and business activities upon recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Looking ahead to 2023, Malaysia's robust growth this year should provide a solid foundation for further growth in a difficult 2023," said Sedek Jantan, head of wealth research and advisory at UOB Kay Hian Wealth Advisors.

Kenanga Investment Bank head of economic research Wan Suhaimie Saidie said, "GDP growth forecast is expected to remain intact on the back of resilient domestic demand, aided by various policy supports and increased tourist arrivals."

Likewise, Indonesia's figure for 2023 has been revised to 5% from 4.9%. "Consumption and high commodity prices supported economic growth in 2022 and will likely do so in 2023," said Umar Juoro, senior fellow of the Habibie Center in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, next year's growth projections for the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand have been lowered by 0.1 to 0.2 point to 5.3%, 2.1% and 3.5%, respectively. Economists pointed out that the weakening global economy would weigh on exports for these countries.

"Because the Thai economy is highly dependent on exports to China and tourists from China, the economic slowdown there will have a strong impact on Thailand," said Lalita Thienprasidhi, senior researcher at Kasikorn Research Center.

"China's outbound travel may continue to be restrictive, and thus we do not expect mass tourism from China to Thailand next year."



## Iranian Movie "Escargot" To Be Screened in U.S.

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Short Iranian movie Escargot is scheduled to be screened in the 28th edition of the Slamdance Film Festival 2023 in the United States.

Escargot is the first film directed by Amin-Reza Ali-Mohammadi. The movie is also the only Iranian film to compete in the US festival. Escargot is going to appear on screen in the presence of its filmmaker

at the Park City in the western state of Utah on January 25, 2023. Bahar Nohian, Ilia Akhavanrad and Ali-Reza Javid are the main characters of the Iranian movie.

The Slamdance Film Festival is one of the important events approved by the Oscar Academy, the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) and the Canada Screen Awards.



# Race to Develop Hydrogen Storage

LONDON (Dispatches) - Around the globe, energy companies and governments are racing to develop their hydrogen storage capacity in an attempt to boost their energy security and reduce their reliance on natural gas. As investment into the research and development of hydrogen technologies increases, several world powers are developing better storage solutions to support the rollout of hydrogen for a multitude of uses. Boosting storage capacity will allow countries to produce and store hydrogen for use much in the same way as natural gas.

As part of its National Clean Hydrogen Strategy and Roadmap, the U.S. Department of Energy (DoE) discusses the potential for increasing hydrogen storage. It considers the alternative approaches to hydrogen storage to decide on the optimal option for long-term storage. Hydrogen can be kept in a number of different ways, either in gaseous or liquid vessels, in underground formations, or in materials such as hydrogen carriers. Depending on how the hydrogen will be used, each of these options can be appropriate.

There are already commercial tanks and liquid dewars being used in the U.S., mainly on energy sites and fuelling stations. As huge quantities of liquid hydrogen are used in aerospace, the Kennedy Space Center in Florida is home to a storage vessel for 1.25 million gallons of liquid hydrogen. Underground caverns are also used to store hydrogen for use in the petrochemical industry, with three large-scale geological hydrogen storage caverns in the U.S. at present. Most of these caverns are excavated in salt deposits near areas intended for hydrogen use. The DoE roadmap identifies some of the regions in the U.S. most suitable for greater cavern storage development, both for hydrogen and for carbon from carbon capture and storage (CCS) operations.

The DoE highlights hydrogen storage as key for the advancement of hydrogen and fuel cell technologies for stationary power, portable power, and transportation. Due to its low ambient temperature density hydrogen has a low energy per unit volume, and it requires specialist forms of storage. Tanks used to keep hydrogen gas must sustain a high pressure of between 350-700 bars. And liquid hydrogen needs to be stored at cryogenic temperatures, as it has a boiling point of -252.8°C. The U.S. Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technologies Office (HFTO) aims to develop hydrogen storage options to meet the DoE hydrogen storage targets for onboard light-duty vehicles, material-handling equipment, and portable power applications.

In the U.K., the energy company SSE started work this month on the excavation of an underground cavern in east Yorkshire to store hydrogen for use when urgently needed. The project includes a 35-megawatt electrolyzer to produce green hydrogen that will be stored in the giant cavern. The hydrogen can be used to fire a turbine to supply power to the grid during times of peak demand. SSE hopes the Pathfinder



project, which is expected to cost over \$120 million, will offer a blueprint for larger-scale hydrogen storage projects in the future. It expects the project to be operational by 2025. Siemens Energy will be carrying out the project's design and engineering work. SSE has even bigger long-term plans, having partnered with Norwegian energy firm Equinor to develop the Keadby hydrogen power station on the same site for 2028. It is expected to be the world's first big 100 percent hydrogen-fired power station.

The firm hopes to attract government funding for its low-carbon hydrogen operations. As the U.K. faces record low temperatures and soaring energy prices, with fears of gas shortages, SSE is offering an alternative renewable energy that it expects will one day take the place of natural gas. The slow development of the green hydrogen sector is mainly due to the high costs incurred with the set-up of operations. However, government funding for these types of projects could help technologies advance more quickly and become cheaper to roll out on a bigger scale.

The European Union is also developing its hydrogen storage plans. It sees hydrogen storage as key to supplying renewable energy to power grids as needed. As hydrogen can be stored in large quantities over long periods of time, it offers greater energy security in the transition to green. It can help make energy systems more flexible, balancing supply with demand. This is an issue that plagues the green energy industry, as solar and wind projects often fail to provide energy during the peak hours of demand. New hydrogen storage facilities, as well as the expansion of the region's battery storage capacity, could help boost reliable renewable energy provision.

As investment in hydrogen technology and production continues to increase worldwide, companies are shifting their focus to hydrogen storage as a means to make the energy supply from the renewable energy sector more reliable. This could support a more rapid transition away from fossil fuels, as well as boost energy security around the globe.

## West Admits Miscalculation...

FROM PAGE 1

"Such accusations are of no help to the Ukrainian nation and authorities," he said.

"We reiterate once again our disengagement with the war in Ukraine and voice our preparedness to resolve the crisis and restore peace there. We also view as irresponsible any threats by Ukrainian authorities, and hold the Ukrainian government accountable for their potential political and legal repercussions," he said.

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

Elsewhere in his remarks, the spokesman said the Islamic Republic has always kept the window of diplomacy open for the revival of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

He said the deal on revival on the 2015 nuclear deal is still within reach if the Western side exhibits genuine willingness.

He described the recent meeting between Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell as an important event and a good opportunity for both sides.

"The [ultimate] agreement is still viable, and the window of diplomacy is open on the part of Iran. The US administration pursues a policy of confusion and confrontation and maintains negative and hostile stances. We believe that the agreement is within reach and remains on the negotiating table provided that Westerners demonstrate the needed determination" to strike the final deal, Kanaani said.

He underscored that the European sides to the JCPOA - Britain, France and Germany - must take practical steps if they are looking for an ultimate agreement in the talks to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, adding that Iran's foreign policy is not tied to the JCPOA and Vienna talks and that the Islamic Republic follows a policy of cooperation with its neighbors.

The spokesman also suggested that representatives from the Islamic Republic would most likely launch a new round of talks with their Saudi counterparts in the Iraqi capital city of Baghdad aimed at mending strained ties between the two nations.

"Our stance regarding Saudi Arabia and the process of negotiations between the two countries is quite clear. Fortunately, it seems that the two sides see eye to eye about the constructive and positive course of talks," Kanaani said.

He added that five rounds of talks mediated by the Iraqi government have been held between the official delegations of the two countries in Baghdad.

## Iranian Messaging Services...

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The official said that Eita, the second most popular social media platform in Iran, was the main target of the DDoS attacks launched from the US and Europe, adding that attackers had created more than 140 terabytes of traffic with a maximum rate of 30 gigabits per second.

Iran-based online messengers have seen their active users increase exponentially since September when authorities restricted access to US-based social media platforms WhatsApp and Instagram over their role in fomenting street riots in the country.

Figures by Iran's telecoms ministry released in early December showed the number of active daily users of Iranian social media applications had reached over 10 million for at least two popular platforms.

## Iran, EEU to...

FROM PAGE 1

The Iranian government aims to economize on its foreign currency reserves by applying import restrictions.

Iran and EEU have finalized negotiations on free trade of more than 7,500 types of commodities, the head of the Iranian delegation negotiating with the Eurasian bloc said earlier this month.

"Over the past two years, we have held around 30 rounds of negotiations with representatives of the Eurasian side - some face to face and others online. In the end, we agreed on a 150-page deal, which is the most comprehensive trade agreement [Iran has had]," Mirhadi Seyyedi also said.

Noting that the agreement has the widest range of commodity coverage in terms of duties, he said officials from Iran's Trade Promotion Organization and the Eurasian side will soon announce the end of talks by signing a memorandum in Tehran.

## India Replaces COVID-Era Free Food Program With Cheaper Scheme



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India will end its COVID-19 era free food program on Dec. 31 and replace it with a cheaper program that will save the government nearly \$20 billion in the next 12 months.

India's Food and Trade Minister Piyush Goyal said the government will stop the free food programme after 28 months as the economic situation has improved since COVID-19 cases and restrictions have eased.

The pandemic and its impact on the economy, particularly on high food prices, have squeezed India's hundreds of millions of poor people over the past few years.

The program provided poor families with 5 kg (11 lb) of foodgrains each month in addition to other highly subsidised foodgrains. It started in April 2020 and has cost the government nearly \$47 billion.

The government was also spending 2 trillion rupees (\$24.16 billion) under the National Food Security Act to provide highly subsidised foodgrains to nearly 75% of its rural and 50% of its urban population.

Now the government will make the highly subsidised foodgrain free for the next 12 months, Goyal said. This gives 35 kg of food grain every month to families at the cost of 1 Indian rupee to 3 Indian rupees (\$0.0362). Millions of poor households benefit while some priority groups get 5 kilogram foodgrains per person for the same price.

The government will save at least \$20 billion over the next 12 months by ending the pandemic-era free food program, as they will only spend on one food scheme instead of multiple programs, according to an official, who did not want to be named.

The Indian government was struggling to manage wheat stockpile due to additional distribution of wheat and the prices in the local market jumped to the record high.

"The discontinuing scheme means the government can now sell 2 to 3 million tonnes in the open market to calm prices," said a New-Delhi based dealer with a global trade house.

## New EU Rule Could Transform Global Metal Manufacturing

LONDON (Dispatches) - Global metal manufacturing is already set to change in 2023. Indeed, the European Council and European Parliament recently reached a provisional agreement over the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). This would impose new tariffs on materials from carbon-intensive industries imported into the 27-member bloc.

According to members of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health, and Food Safety (ENVI), the CBAM will include steel and aluminum as well as hydrogen imports. In a December 13 news conference, CBAM rapporteur Mohammed Chahim said, "If you want to sell your products, then you have to pay at the border."

Implementation of the agreement would tentatively begin on October 1, 2023. After a monitoring period, the program would ramp up to full implementation over the following three years. Chahim added that European metal manufacturing companies must "fulfill the same conditions" on carbon emissions.

According to the Financial Times, a final set of talks on the provisional plan was due to conclude over the weekend. After that, CBAM will require approval from the member states and the European Parliament,



headquartered in Strasbourg.

"The phasing out of free allowances for CBAM sectors still needs to be agreed in the context of the ongoing EU ETS negotiations," the council noted. "Further work is also required on measures to prevent carbon leakage on exports." The council also noted that legislators began negotiating back on the 11th of July. Clearly, metal manufacturing has been in their sights for some time.

The Financial Times noted that several European trading partners were immensely critical of CBAM. In their opinion, it would not only be protectionist but significantly impact their own economies. One trader told MetalMiner they remained unconcerned about CBAM's potential impact because the full implementation remains a year away.

Another metal manufacturing industry watcher was supportive. "I think that this is a necessary step for Europe. They need protection whilst undertaking their own carbon-reduction investments," the analyst said. They added that the initiative would pass along costs and allow imports to undercut them. Finally, they claimed that the project would prompt third-country steel exporters to invest in carbon-reducing equipment rather than paying heavy duties.

## Iran Among World's...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran and Russia have repeatedly denied claims that Tehran has provided Moscow with drones to be used in the Ukraine war.

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

Following a technical meeting between Ukrainian and Iranian specialists earlier this month, Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani said Kiev has failed to provide any evidence for the claim that Russia is using Iranian drones in its war on Ukraine.

"The Ukrainian side did not present any evidence of Russia's use of Iranian drones in the war with this country at the technical meeting," Iran's defense chief said.

Meanwhile, Baqeri also said in his Sunday remarks that the Israeli regime has reached its weakest-ever position, dismissing recent threatening comments by Israeli officials as valueless.

"The Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran are fully prepared and powerful, and we will respond decisively to any aggression against our land," the top general said. He said Iran has the capability and will to counter threats and will give a crushing response to any country that seeks to carry out an action against Iran and its territorial integrity.

## Germany Set to...

FROM PAGE 1

German government announced on Friday that it was suspending state measures designed to foster business with Iran in a gesture of support for street unrest in Iran.

Germany's economy ministry said the measures will affect Berlin's export credits and investment guarantees and some other trade and business projects in Iran.

However, Seyyed Hamid Hosseini, a senior Iranian

businessman and a petroleum products exporter, said that the restrictions will hardly affect Iran's total trade performance and will instead lead to a major reduction in German exports to Iran.

"Even if we tend to believe that Germany's decision was an economic decision rather than a political one, the hit to German companies will be much bigger," Hosseini was quoted by Iran's ISNA news agency.

## Former Uruguay Midfielder O'Neill Dies at 49

MONTEVIDEO (Reuters) - Former Uruguay midfielder Fabian O'Neill, who played for Cagliari and Nacional at the club level, died at the age of 49, Uruguay's soccer federation said.

ESPN reported that O'Neill had been admitted to hospital on Saturday in a coma with bleeding due to chronic liver disease.

The midfielder made 19 appearances for Uruguay and was part of the squad at the 2002 World Cup in South Korea and Japan, although he did not play.

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## Wolves Sign Brazil's Cunha On Loan From Atletico

LONDON (Dispatches) - Wolverhampton Wanderers have signed Brazil forward Matheus Cunha on loan from LaLiga side Atletico Madrid, both clubs said.

Cunha will join Wolves from Jan. 1 on a deal which could become a permanent move until 2027 if certain clauses are triggered, Wolves said.

"We've found one more gift under the tree," the Premier League side wrote on Twitter, announcing the 23-year old as Julen Lopetegui's first signing as Wolves head coach.

# Packers Dump Dolphins, Extend Playoff Push

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Aaron Rodgers completed 24 of 38 passes for 238 yards, a touchdown and an interception to lead the Green Bay Packers to a 26-20 comeback win over the Miami Dolphins on Sunday in Miami Gardens, Fla.

Green Bay (7-8) won its third consecutive game and kept its NFC playoff hopes alive. The Dolphins (8-7) dropped their fourth in a row but still would clinch an AFC wild-card berth if they win their last two games. Jaire Alexander, De'Vondre Campbell and Rasul Douglas each had fourth-quarter interceptions of Dolphins quarterback Tua Tagovailoa to help the Packers put the game away.

Tagovailoa threw a career-high three interceptions in a game, completing 16 of 25 passes for 310 yards and an 84-yard touchdown to Jaylen Waddle.

### Buccaneers 19, Cardinals 16 (OT)

Ryan Succop capped a four field-goal performance by drilling a 40-yarder with 3:41 remaining in overtime to lift Tampa Bay to a victory in Glendale, Ariz.

Tom Brady completed 32 of 48 passes for 281 yards and a touchdown to rookie Rachaad White for the Buccaneers (7-8), who remained one-game ahead of the Carolina Panthers and New Orleans Saints atop the NFC South.

James Conner rushed 15 times for 79 yards and a touchdown for the Cardinals (4-11), who have lost five in a row. Trace McSorley completed 24 of 45 passes for 217 yards and an interception in his first career start.

### Rams 51, Broncos 14

Cam Akers ran for three touchdowns, Baker Mayfield connected with Tyler Higbee for two more and Los Angeles thoroughly embarrassed Denver in Inglewood, Calif.

Akers ran for 118 yards on 23 carries, becoming the first Los Angeles running back to crack the 100-yard mark this year. Mayfield picked apart the Broncos (4-11) to the tune of 24-for-28 passing for 230 yards.



## Curry to Be Out at Least Two More Weeks

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Four-time NBA champion Stephen Curry, sidelined since suffering a partially dislocated left shoulder, will be out for at least another two weeks, the reigning champion Golden State Warriors said.

Curry, who suffered the injury December 14 at Indiana while trying to make a steal, has missed the team's past four games.

The Warriors said Curry was recently reevaluated and the exam indicated Curry is "making good progress" in his recovery and "will be re-evaluated again in two weeks," the team said in a statement.

The 34-year-old guard, a two-time NBA Most Valuable Player and last season's NBA Finals MVP, will miss at least six games in the next two weeks, starting with Golden State's home showdown Sunday against Memphis.

That contest is part of the NBA's annual Christmas Day NBA schedule, this year featuring five games involving most of the league's best clubs and biggest stars.

## Brentford Boss Frank Extends Deal to 2027

LONDON (Dispatches) - Brentford head coach Thomas Frank has signed a two-year contract extension that will keep him at the Premier League club until 2027, the club said.

Frank, who took charge in 2018, led the London club to the top flight for the first time in 74 years.

The Dane guided Brentford to a 13th-placed finish in their first season in the Premier League.

"I have been here six years in total, which is a long time in modern football, and I'd like to say thank you to the fans for the support you give us - the players, the staff, everyone involved with the club," Frank said in a statement.

Frank last signed an extension in January this year, and his previous contract was set to run until 2025.



Rashford has rediscovered his form this season under new boss Ten Hag, playing 20 matches in all competitions and scoring nine goals. Dalot, Fred and Shaw have also been

## Man Utd Trigger One-Year Contract Extensions for Four Players

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United have triggered one-year contract extensions for four first-team players, including England forward Marcus Rashford, manager Erik ten Hag said.

Rashford, Diogo Dalot, Fred and Luke Shaw were all in the final year of their deals but had an option to extend their contracts by 12 months.

heavily involved, each making more than 15 appearances in all competitions.

"Yes, I can confirm it," Ten Hag told the club's website in an excerpt from an interview to be published today.

"We are happy because the squad is going in the right direction and those players (have) a massive contribution in that direction. We want to develop, we want to support those players and we want them to keep in our process.

"So, that's why we came to those decisions. I'm sure they are the right decisions. We want to construct a team for the future, so for longer years, and those players have to be part of it."

Goalkeeper David de Gea, who is also in the last year of his contract and has a similar option for an extension, is yet to come to an agreement with the club. Ten Hag said in October he hoped the Spaniard would stay on at Old Trafford.

## World Cup Final Officials Hit Back at France Fans

LONDON (Dispatches) - The World Cup final officials have hit back at criticism from French fans and sections of the media as the fall-out from Argentina's victory continues.

Complaints began in the immediate aftermath of last weekend's remarkable final, with L'Equipe among those to claim that Lionel Messi's extra-time goal should have been ruled out as two Argentina substitutes were already on the pitch in celebration before the ball crossed the line.

That made it 3-2 to Argentina before Kylian Mbappe completed his hat-trick late in extra-time to send it to a penalty shootout, which was won when Gonzalo Montiel converted his spot-kick.

Referee Szymon Marciniak was praised by many for his officiating in the final, and responded to the disgruntled French fans at a press conference by lifting up his phone and revealing a picture he said showed a number of substitutes were also on the pitch for one of Les Blues' goals.

"The French didn't mention this photo, where you can see how there are seven Frenchmen on the pitch when Mbappe scores a goal," Marciniak said.

## Tatum Leads Celtics Past Bucks

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Jayson Tatum posted his fifth straight 30-point game, leading the Boston Celtics with 41 en route to a 139-118 Christmas Day win over the visiting Milwaukee Bucks.

Tatum and Jaylen Brown (29 points) combined for 70 points in a game for the eighth time in their careers. Tatum added seven rebounds, five assists and three steals as Boston won back-to-back games.

Derrick White, Grant Williams and Al Horford also scored in double figures, helping Boston shoot 19 of 39 from 3-point range. Marcus Smart handed out eight assists.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had a team-high 27 points, while Jrue Holiday finished with 23, Brook Lopez scored 16 and Massachusetts native Pat Connaughton added 15 on four 3-pointers in Milwaukee's third straight loss.

Joel Embiid had 35 points and eight rebounds, James Harden added 29 points and 13 assists and Philadelphia 76ers defeated host New York Knicks 119-112.

Georges Niang contributed 16 points and De'Anthony Melton had 15 for the Sixers, who won their eighth in a row without injured guard Tyrese Maxey.

Julius Randle led the Knicks with 35 points and eight rebounds while Jalen Brunson added 23 points and 11 assists. Brunson went to the locker room with 3:59 left in the fourth quarter with an undisclosed injury and sat out the remainder of the game on the bench.

Meanwhile Luka Doncic scored 32 points, grabbed nine rebounds and dished out nine assists, and Dallas Mavericks outscored visiting Los Angeles by 30 points in the third quarter to take control in a Christmas Day 124-115 win.



## Haaland Can Score 800 Goals

LONDON (Dispatches) - Kevin De Bruyne believes Manchester City teammate Erling Haaland can go on and score 800 goals before his career ends.

Haaland, who will return to the city of his birth when the champions resume their Premier League title defence at Leeds on Wednesday, has scored 24 goals in just 19 appearances since his summer move from Borussia Dortmund.

"He already has about 200 goals, so he can probably go to 600, 700 or 800 if he stays fit and does the things that he does," said De Bruyne.

The Belgian international has played with a host of top strikers in his career and is well-placed when it comes to 22-year-old Haaland's place in the pecking order.

De Bruyne enjoyed a fruitful relationship with the club's record goalscorer Sergio Aguero before the Argentinian left the Etihad Stadium in 2021.

He has also combined with Romelu Lukaku on international duty, former City teammate Gabriel Jesus and new World Cup-winner Julian Alvarez, a current fellow City player.

"It is very hard to compare because they are all totally different," said De Bruyne.

"They have all scored 300 or 400 goals. Erling is so obsessed with goals he can maybe go beyond that."

He added: "He is still a young boy enjoying his life and he takes his football very seriously. He loves scoring goals, so I think that is the most unique thing he has."

