

Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the Geneva-Based UN Says Iran Has During the Past Four Decades Spared No Effort in Offering Services to the Afghan Refugees Despite the Sanctions

IRAN NEWS

Health Ministry Announced on Saturday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **144,637** With **Three** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

VOL. XXVIII, No. 7652 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

SUNDAY DECEMBER 4, 2022 - AZAR 13, 1401

2 DOMESTIC

Constitution Guaranties Basic And Legitimate Freedoms

> SEE PAGE 2



200 People Lost Their Lives in Recent Riots, ISC Announces

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's Security Council issued a statement regarding the recent events, announcing that 200 people lost their lives in the riots, saying: "The appeasement of the Islamic system with the rioters has caused the protest of the majority of the people."

Iran's security council issued a statement and explained the recent events and the text of the statement of the council as follows:

The Security Council of Iran, considering the beginning and continuation of the riots, indicates a hybrid war against the Islamic Republic of Iran with the aim of weakening national solidarity and pushing back the progress of the country, and basically diverting the real demands of the people, according to the general demand of the people, in order to improve the level of social security, provides the following explanations:

The Islamic Republic of Iran, with its religious democratic system, has been the anchor of regional stability and security during the last four decades. The failure of the coup, the terrorist actions of the counter-revolutionary and separatist groups in the first decade of the Islamic Revolution, the repelling of the invasion of the Baathist regime of Iraq during the Holy Defense period,...

See Page 7

Iran Launches Construction of Nuclear Power Plant in Khuzestan



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has announced the start of construction operation for a nuclear plant in the southwestern province of Khuzestan, praising the country's remarkable progress in development of nuclear power plants.

Mohammad Eslami inaugurated the construction operation of "Karun" nuclear power plant in Darkhovein

District in the Shadegan County of southwestern province of Khuzestan on Saturday, saying, "The government is moving towards the production of low-cost energy and fuel; therefore the development of nuclear power plants is on the agenda of this organization."

According to reports, the power plant is of a pressurized water reactor (PWR) type and with the capacity of producing 300 megawatts of electricity is to be built on a land of approximately 50 hectares in the vicinity of the Karun River.

During the inauguration ceremony, Eslami said the high-speed movement towards the development of nuclear power plants has begun across the country, adding that, "The start of the construction operation of the Karun nuclear power plant has taken place in this regard to scale up the share of nuclear energy in the country's electricity basket to about 20 percent," which is considered a "big step in the 20-year horizon" of the AEOI.

Stressing that the 300-megawatt power plant is important for the southwest of the country, especially the Khuzestan Province, Iran's nuclear chief said, "We hope to build the power plant as a first step of building small power plants in order to create a new chapter in the country's industrial and technological capacity, and also to expand this technology at a general level as well."

Eslami said the construction of Karun power plant is in line with the AEOI's mission to produce nuclear electricity through building indigenous nuclear power plants, adding that the approximate time for the completion of the project is eight years, which is carried out by using the maximum domestic capabilities in the fields of design, equipment supply and construction of nuclear power plants.

The financial estimate of the implementation of the project, as Eslami said, is about two billion dollars, and one of the benefits of the project is the supply of electricity to the region and the southwestern province.

In recent years, Iranian scientists have made remarkable progress in the field of peaceful nuclear technology despite the tough sanctions imposed by the West.

3 DOMESTIC

Qeshm Air to Launch Direct Flights to Tashkent, Samarkand on December 22

> SEE PAGE 3



ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian



Human Rights Turning Into Laughing Stock by the West

Human rights is a very important issue for the nations and for this reason some countries, mostly the Westerners, have tried to turn it into a tool for their sometimes ill intentions, namely, dominance on the nations, and gradually human issue is turning into a laughing stock by the Western states and it becomes meaningless.

In recent years countries which have not bowed down to the arrogant powers have been threatened by the weapon of "human rights" and they have been accused of violating the human rights and countries like the Islamic Republic of Iran have been the major target of the Westerners for violating human rights.

Following any incident or riots or unrests in those countries which do not follow the West, they are bombarded with accusations of violating human rights while the Westerners themselves are the main violators of the human rights according to their own media, experts and activists but their governments rudely ignore them and when it comes to independent countries they suddenly wake up and start raising accusations of human rights violation.

For weeks the Western countries led by the U.S. have started the "violation of human rights game" with the Islamic Republic of Iran and have pushed the international bodies to condemn Tehran for violating human rights and they have even shown interventionist policies by approving some resolutions and statements against Tehran while Tehran has tried to stop rioters which is the right of any government in dealing with illegal activities.

On Thursday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman lashed out at Western governments over their instrumental use of human rights against other countries, saying the United States and its allies are "convicted in the court of human conscience" due to their "shameful" record.

Nasser Kanaani made the remark in a string of tweets on Thursday as he attached to his posts a picture of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who murdered African American George Floyd during a violent arrest in May 2020, and the merciless torture of inmates at the infamous US-run Guantanamo prison.

"Those with record of committing crimes against other nations and backing an occupier and terrorist regime, don't have moral/legal right to comment on human rights in other countries. HR is a sacred value and Iran believes that it's Islamic, humane, legal and moral imperative to promote it," said one of the tweets.

See Page 7

Housing; the Achilles Heel of the Economy



Hamidreza Abedi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Bita Behineh Khorasan Company

It has been a long time that in public circles and economic intellectuals and at the level of society, the phrase command economy has been heard and become very common. The command economy goes back to the time

when they were mostly looking for the hopes of the city of dreams. In this type of economy, everyone lived at the same level without any preoccupation with the economy. Proletarian society sought such an economy. The economy was governed by government ownership and no one owned anything. In Western governments, which are based on an open economy, ownership is given to the people, and the government is only an observer, legislator and regulator, and only owns the central bank, which regulates money and credit. Tax, export, production and consumption laws are in the hands of the government and the government has no interference in supply and demand. The government's support is mostly for money creation, and its printing and reproduction does not take place without any money creation, and money creation is not done through printing and reproduction, but through economic movement. There are many such articles that are not included in this article. What can society and the government do at this critical time?

Is there a way out of the status quo? The answer to these questions lies in the following recommendations:

1- The independence of the Central Bank in the regulation and regulation of the country's banking and monetary system and preventing the non-printing of money, which is the biggest cause of the country's rampant inflation.

2- Lack of order to the monetary system and banks to give mandated loans to different layers and strata, because this type of loans, in addition to being ineffective, creates inflation and false demand in the market for goods and services. This false demand further causes the pathological movement of dollars, goods and services. If the government intends to give microcredit to low-income groups, it seems that the laws and credit system of the country should be amended and regulated in a proper law, so that the producer and seller can provide their goods and services to the final consumer without worrying about the return of money and capital. It is possible for the parties to leave.

In this type of monetary system, the seller and producer are assured of the return of the capital, and the final consumer buys the goods and services according to his ability and credit without worry and pays the price. The pressure is removed from the banks and the economy is smooth according to the demand and the inflation is well controlled.

3- The Achilles heel of Iranian society is housing. If the parliament and the government can regulate and implement the laws related to housing, many problems of the people

will be reduced and the rampant inflation that manifests itself every year will be curbed. For example, an apartment that is rented for 5 million Tomans this year will be offered for nearly double the next year without any supervision. The surplus amount of the next year without any economic work and creation of production and money is placed in the layer of the society and the monetary system and greatly contributes to inflation. The government should act quickly to regulate and regulate this sector, and effective laws should stop this creation of misplaced money and restore peace to the society. It is in such an atmosphere that different layers of the society without worry from the following years take housing according to their income in different parts of the city and the pressure is removed from the society and inflation is controlled and it is taken over by the government.

4- Preventing mandatory pricing in the supply of goods and services and, on the contrary, supporting production and production and production. If we have many producers and suppliers in every product and service, because competition is the characteristic of the market, this competition will be formed in the direction of capturing and dominating the market. Usually, in the normal environment, the diversity of the producer causes the quality to increase and the price to decrease in order to seize the market and sell, and this ends up benefiting the final consumer. For example, at the macro level, we have two major car manufacturers. Maybe there are smaller producers in Iran. These producers have the monopoly of the consumer market and they only produce without any competition and with any acceptable quality and they sell the goods to the market at the highest price and without any acceptable quality under false pretenses. In such an environment, the right to choose is neither in quality nor in price; The story of these two manufacturers is the story of the same two car manufacturers, which only differ in the appearance of the products, and in the interior, all the parts and efficiency are usually the same, and unfortunately, it destroys most of the country's energy. If this monopoly ends, parts, prices and quality will become real, and in addition to controlling energy consumption, the efficiency of supply, production and quality will greatly increase and the price will decrease. It is recommended that smaller producers are supported so that they can enter the cycle of supply and demand.

5- Rapid amendment of tax laws, which is more often seen as tax evasion with the existing laws rather than the correct payment of taxes. The tax should be removed from this state without accounting. The annual payment of tax units should be dissolved and all departments and taxpayers should pay their taxes monthly according to their performance and according to their income. In such an environment, there is no room for tax evasion, the market and payment have become smoother, and the government can plan its expenses in different months and seasons according to its income from taxes. Due to the shortness of supervision, it will be facilitated and tax evasion, which is the downfall of the monetary system, will be greatly reduced. In the end, we recommend all those involved in the monetary banking system and small and large producers of the country to spread the culture of honesty.

FM Rejects Claims About Iran Arms Sales to Russia

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has once again rejected claims about the Islamic Republic's arms sales to Russia to be used in the ongoing war against Ukraine, saying such allegations are aimed at legitimizing the West's military assistance to Kiev.

In a phone conversation with Secretary General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres on Friday, Amir-Abdollahian said the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine is rooted in the wrong policies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), namely its expansion toward the east.

The top diplomat reiterated Iran's opposition to the dispatch of weapons to the parties involved in the war which he said would only increase human losses and financial costs for both sides.

He said Tehran would continue its efforts to stop the war and promote lasting peace in Europe.

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

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.

The Iranian foreign minister last month dismissed media controversy over Iran's alleged support for Russia in the Ukraine war, adding, however, that Tehran had provided Moscow with a limited number of drones months before the war in Ukraine.

He also assured that Iran will not be indifferent if it is proven that Russia has used Iranian drones in the conflict.

Amirabdollahian also said the United States and some Western states have resorted to misinformation and abused international mechanisms to provoke chaos and acts of terror in Iran in recent months.

See Page 7

Iran Proved Progress Is Possible Without U.S., JCPOA

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi says the current administrative government that came to office more than a year ago proved the country can advance without waiting for the outcome of talks with the US and other world powers to revive a 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA. Speaking in a gathering on Saturday, Vahidi described the JCPOA as a deal “imposed” on Iran by the United States and added that the administration led by President Ebrahim Raisi has adopted economic policies to enable Iran to live without the deal. Iran has been under U.S. sanctions since 2018 when the former government in Washington pulled out of the JCPOA and reimposed sanctions on Tehran. Experts say the sanctions on Iran’s crude exports have backfired as Iran has sought to diversify its economy away from oil revenues.

Constitution Guaranties Basic And Legitimate Freedoms

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi called the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran the guarantor of fundamental rights and legitimate freedoms of people in Iran.

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran was adopted by referendum on December 2 and 3, 1979, and went into force, replacing the Constitution of 1906.

Raisi, on Saturday speaking at the National Conference on “Responsibility for the Implementation of the Constitution,” which was held in Tehran in commemoration of “National Day of Islamic Republic of Iran Constitution,” said: “The rights that the Almighty God has given to the citizens and, the duties of the officials have been stated in the Constitution.”

t Raisi at the “Tehran Summit Hall said that the “Constitution is the national covenant and the embodiment of the glorious Islamic revolution.

He further said that the Constitution guarantees the nature of the Republic and Islam in Iran’s political system and guarantees fundamental rights and legitimate freedoms of people.

He continued: “The Constitution is the basis and principles that indicate both rights and obligations. The rights that God has bestowed on citizens and the duties that exist alongside these rights for officials and those involved.

President Raisi said that because Human rights are the actual arrangements of the universe, he stresses: “It should be observed that the Constitution is implemented or neglected, and these observations should be addressed inside the society.

The president stated: “Those who have executive duties should see whether they have fulfilled their duties according to the constitution.”

President Raisi considered the constitution to include the basis and principles that indicate both the rights of individual citizens and the duties of officials and those involved, and said: “The fact that intellectuals and experts evaluate the quality of the implementation of the principles of the constitution not only in academic and scientific circles, but also in to examine and monitor the social fields, it will be very informative and useful.”

He considered the supervision of the implementation of the constitution as effective and productive for both the rights holders and the duty holders so that the rights holders see and know what rights they have according to the constitution and also the duty holders know whether they have fulfilled their duties or not?

Referring to his trip to Africa, President said: “During my trip to South Africa, one of the prominent law professors who had a very close friendship with Nelson



Mandela shared his memories of Mandela’s rule in South Africa Constitution; a few people and I were assigned to write the Constitution.

He (African Professor) said that “My friends and I studied all the constitutions of the world, and we came to the conclusion that the most progressive constitution of the world is the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran; President Raisi said he added that “He told me because you have succeeded in combining ideals and democracy.”

Stating that incomplete implementation of the Constitution is not the reason for the law’s inefficiencies, President Raisi said: “The principles of republicanism, Islam, independence and freedom of the Islamic establishment, the rights and freedoms stipulated in the Constitution are the principle of this law.

Emphasizing that the Constitution of Iran has no deadlocks, the President stated, “The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran was drafted, compiled and finalized in such a way that we will not face any deadlocks in its implementation and in the administration of the country’s affairs, and this is one of the characteristics of our Constitution.”

He added: Methods and mechanisms exist for implementing the law, which can be checked, and the method can be changed, but the value cannot be changed. The method is subject to change, and the value is immutable. Mechanisms and methods can be reviewed as needed.”

The President clarified, “Efforts should be made to implement all the principles of the Constitution, so that all the rights formulated, regulated and announced in it are fulfilled for the right holders and all the tasks set in the Constitution in various executive, legislative and other areas and parts of the system are also fulfilled”.

Raisi further pointed out, “It is necessary to hold this meeting and scientific and legal summits in order to inform all officials and people throughout the country and all institutions.”

The President added, “The third point is that the implementers should be asked if they have faced any obstacles and problems in the implementation of their mandated tasks in the constitution or not.”

He said, “Basically, popularising the implementation and monitoring of the Constitution means that all the people and departments should have a role in this.”

Iran Asked Iraqi Kurdistan To Extradite Terrorists

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says Iran has already asked Iraq’s semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region to dismantle terrorist groups and hand over terrorists to the Islamic Republic.

“We have compiled clear files about terrorists hosted by the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and we have called for their extradition to Iran,” the commander of Hamzeh Seyed al-Shohada Base, Brigadier General Mohammad Taqi Osanlou, told Lebanon’s al-Mayadeen on Friday.

If authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan hand over these “wanted terrorists” to Iran as soon as possible, the [security] situation will improve, he added.

The remarks come as the IRGC has on numerous occasions targeted the positions of terrorist groups operating near the country’s western borders in Iraq’s semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region. The latest of such attacks was reported on November 14.

Tehrannames hostile activities of counterrevolutionary groups that are hosted by the Iraqi Kurdistan Region as one of the reasons behind recent violent riots in the country. Various reports also indicate that terrorist groups have been engaged in smuggling weapons to Iran to instigate insecurity.

Osanlou said that some 23 meetings have been held with Iraqi officials to solve the issue diplomatically, stressing that Iran has highlighted the need to push away terrorist groups from its borders.

Borders in the west of the country are under the constant watch of Iranian armed forces, he said, adding, “Unfortunately, there are some movements in Iraqi borders that lead to instability.”

Iran has already asked the Iraqi Kurdistan to dismantle terrorist groups but “no cooperation has yet been offered on the issue,” added the commander.

Pointing to the IRGC’s powerful intelligence surveillance over the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, he said the military force was well capable of targeting a leader of the terrorist group but refrained from doing so because he was being accompanied by his family.

The IRGC also managed to target a terrorist leader who was injured and transferred to a hospital in Erbil, the provincial capital of Iraq’s Kurdistan Region, he said.

“We can reach terrorist groups wherever they are,” he said, noting that the IRGC could target houses that host terrorists.

Iran Sanctions Eight Canadian Individuals, Entity

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian Foreign Ministry has imposed retaliatory sanctions on a Canadian entity and several individuals over their support for terrorism and acts of violence against the country.

The ministry said in a statement that the bans targeted eight Canadian individuals and one entity over their support for the so-called Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) and encouraging terrorism and violence against the Iranian people.

“The blacklisted people and entity have spread wrong information against Iran, and helped intensified cruel sanctions against the people of the country,” the statement added.

The Foreign Ministry’s statement said the Canadian government had violated international obligations on fighting terrorism by supporting the MKO terrorist group and facilitating the anti-Iran cult’s activities.

The ministry said Canada had also violated international law and the UN Charter regulations by imposing and implementing cruel sanctions against Iran.



Those targeted, according to the statement, will not be granted visas to enter Iran, their assets will be frozen on Iranian soil and their bank accounts will be blocked within Iran’s banking and financial system.

The Canadian government has over the past month imposed a series of

sanctions against a number of Iranian entities and individuals over what it claimed was “Iran’s rights violations” and “suppression” of foreign-backed riots after the death of a young woman of Kurdish descent in the country’s capital.

In a latest move, the Canadian foreign ministry announced on Friday bans on four Iranian individuals and five entities over baseless claims of Tehran’s “systematic human rights violations” and actions that “threaten international peace and security.”

Western-provoked riots have hit some Iranian provinces since 22-year-old woman Mahsa Amini died at a hospital in Tehran on September 16, three days after she collapsed at a police station.

Amirabdollahian, Borrell Discuss Latest Situation of JCPOA Talks

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and European Union’s Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell have held a phone call on the latest developments of negotiations for removal of anti-Iran sanctions.

In the phone conversation, the two sides discussed issues of mutual interest, including the Islamic Republic’s cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as well as the talks in Vienna, Austria, to lift anti-Iran sanctions and return to the 2015 nuclear deal officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Amirabdollahian appreciated Borrell’s role in paving the ground for interaction and negotiation and criticized a few European ministers for resorting to undiplomatic behavior, saying that today some radical politicians hide themselves behind the European Union and misuse the bloc’s reputation.

The Iranian FM went on to say that as a result of such behavior, the strategic goals of the European Union have been sacrificed for interests of some violation seekers and even terrorists, who provide politicians with wrong information.

The top diplomat also underlined the importance of the role that the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy can play to keep the bloc away from such unconstructive emotions.

Borrell referred to his efforts to promote all sides in Vienna to return to their commitments under the JCPOA, emphasizing that he will keep up his consultations to pave the ground for reaching a consensus in this respect.

Iran Calls for Ties Expansion With Russia to Combat Terrorism

TEHRAN (MNA) - Head of the Iranian Supreme Court called for bolstering ties with Russia to fight against terrorism and organized crimes.

Ahmad Mortazavi Moghadam made the remarks in a meeting with the Chairman of the Russian Supreme Court Vyacheslav Lebedev.

Touching upon the previously agreed documents between Iran and Russia, the Iranian official voiced his country’s readiness to cooperate in the transfer of convicts within the framework of the agreements.

He described the 10th meeting of judges held in Russia as effective.

The legal process is electronically held in Iran, he said, expressing the Iranian side’s readiness to exchange know-how to this end.

Mortazavi Moghadam arrived in Moscow on Monday night to take part in the ceremony on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Supreme Court of Russia.

The officials from Tajikistan, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, and Azerbaijan attended the latest edition of the ceremony.

Iran Condemns U.S. Sanctions at UN BWC Revision Conference

LONDON (IRNA) - Managing director of Foreign Ministry International Peace and Security Office giving a lecture at Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention condemned US sanctions, which he said breach conventions.

Asadollah Eshraq-Jahromi, said in the conference that the US sanctions are both illegal and illegitimate, because they block the path for international cooperation, which is reiterated under article 10 of the convention to counter the threats against biological environment, as well as breaching the biological weapons ban treaty, especially during the Corona pandemic.

The Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention will take place in Geneva, Switzerland, from 28 November to 16 December 2022 for three weeks.

The participating countries in the conference surveyed ways for strengthening the ban of toxic and biological weapons at global level.

Some Criminal States Have Made a Toy of Human Rights

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Ministry spokesman has denounced the fatal shooting of a young Palestinian man by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank, saying human rights have turned into a plaything in the hands of some criminal governments.

Nasser Kanaani made the remarks in a post published on his Twitter page after video footage widely circulated on social media showed an Israeli soldier putting the Palestinian man, identified as 22-year-old Ammar Mefleh, in a headlock on the street in the town of Huwara, south of Nablus, as two other men try to wrestle him away.

The man then appears to strike the Israeli soldier, before the trooper pulls out a handgun and shoots him several times at point-blank.

“The assassination of young Palestinian Ammar Hamdi Mefleh by the Zionist regime’s military fire at point-blank and before many eyes deserves an international reaction. Nevertheless, the daily crimes of the criminal Zionist regime are neither condemned by the so-called advocates of human rights, nor a fact-finding commission is formed to probe such crimes,” Kanaani tweeted.

He added, “Human rights have become a plaything in the hands of some criminal governments.”

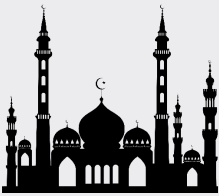
Israeli forces present at the scene prevented residents and ambulances from providing aid to the injured Palestinian youth, provoking clashes with locals.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Middle East envoy, Tor Wennesland, said on Twitter that he was horrified by the latest killing.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh said the criminal execution in the town of Huwara reflects the extent of organized racism being practiced by Israeli military forces.

Shtayyeh expressed his utter shock and anger over the heartbreaking video footage of Mefleh being fatally shot at point-blank by an Israeli soldier.

He said Israeli soldiers feel assured that they will not be held accountable for their crimes, and the approach emboldens them to repeat such offenses.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)

■ Evening (Maghreb)

■ Tomorrow’s Dawn (Fajr)

■ Tomorrow’s Sunrise

11:54

17:10

05:29

06:59

54. Eat (for yourselves) and pasture your cattle: verily, in this are Signs for men ended with understanding.

55. From the (earth) did We create you, and into it shall We return you, and from it shall We bring you out once again.

Surah 20. Ta-ha (54 - 55)

Qeshm Air to Launch Direct Flights to Tashkent, Samarkand on December 22

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Qeshm Air will launch direct flights from Tehran to Tashkent and Samarkand of Uzbekistan as of December 22 and this decision will help tourism activities between Iran and Uzbekistan boost.

In a ceremony held conference at Uzbekistan Embassy in Tehran and in presence of Qeshm Air officials and some tour operators and travel agencies, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Tehran Bakhodir Abdullaev announced the news and said that Qeshm Air is to start direct flights from Tehran to Tashkent and Samarkand of Uzbekistan as of December 22 and it will help the ties between the two countries develop and tourism activities of both states pick up.

Addressing the ceremony, Mr. Abdullaev pointed to the historic and amicable ties between Iran and Uzbekistan which is getting stronger day in day. He went on to say that on September 14-16 of this year, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi had a visit to Tashkent and had effective high-level talks with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. He added that 18 MoUs and agreements were signed during the visit in order to further expand multifaceted cooperation between the two states and one of the agreements was simplification of visa procedures for representatives of business and scientific circles and tourist groups and cooperation program in the field of tourism in 2022-2025.

The Uzbek Ambassador added that currently Zagros Airline operates direct flights between Uzbekistan and Iran once a week, noting that until the end of December, both countries will start more direct flights on the routes of Tehran-Tashkent and Tehran-Samarkand and Qeshm Air will be in charge of these flights.

He added that he is sure that the increase of direct flights between the two countries will ease the traffic, create another favorable opportunity for the development of the tourism industry and as the result, the friendly relations between both nations will continue to strengthen.

Abdullaev further said that Uzbek President Mirziyoyev adopted the development strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026 and in this program, further expansion of



Uzbekistan Ambassador Mr. Abdullaev (R), the CEO of Qeshm Air Mr Hamzeh (C) and Head of Central Asian Office of Qeshm Air Mr. Mofidi (L) speak to participants in the ceremony on Saturday December 3.

existing relations with partners in South Asia and the Middle East region indicated.

He stated in particular, the acceleration of mutual cooperation in the trade-economic and cultural-humanitarian spheres with Iran and improvement of its legal framework have been defined as one of the main tasks.

He noted that the World Tourism Organization declared Samarkand the World Tourism Capital in 2023, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation declared Khiva the Islamic World Tourism Capital in 2024.

Abdullaev said that over 300,000 tourists have visited Uzbekistan and only some 350 Iranians have been among the foreign tourists. He expressed hope by increasing the direct flights, the number of tourists between the two countries would increase.

Then Head of Central Asian Office of Qeshm Air Mr. Seyed Ali Mofidi, for his part, hailed the sincere cooperation of Uzbek officials for the launch of direct flights of Qeshm Air to Uzbekistan and said that the flights will officially start on December 22, reiterating that in case the flights are welcomed by the passengers, the number of flights will increase.

He stated that from late March, the tourist capacity will increase, adding that Iran and Uzbekistan have many cultural commonalities which can help the tourist activities.

Then the CEO of Qeshm Air Mr. Ramin Hamzeh, for his part, welcomed the launch of direct flights to Uzbekistan by this airline and said that airlines play key role in development of tourism, adding that although the launch of flights to Uzbekistan is because of cultural bods and commonalities but economic issues also matter, reiterating that direct flights can develop tourism of both states.

He noted that Qeshm Air will use its modern plane Airbus 320 for these flights and will offer the best services for these flights, adding that Qeshm Air and IranAir are the only two Iranian airlines which can fly to EU countries.

100 Idle Industrial Units Revived in Tehran Province

TEHRAN (MNA) - As announced by Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), 100 idle industrial units have been revived in Thran province during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 22).

The mentioned units returning to the production cycle created jobs for 1,583 persons.

According to the ISIPO, 766 idle industrial units have been revived in the country in the seven-month period, creating jobs for 15,041 persons.

Tehran province accounted for the highest number of revived idle units in the country in the said period of time.

As previously announced by ISIPO Head Ali Rasoulilian, 2,067 idle industrial units were revived in the country’s industrial parks and zones during the previous Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20).

According to the official, with the reviving of the mentioned units job opportunities were created for over 39,000 people.

“ISIPO had put it on the agenda to revive 2,000 stagnant units inside and outside industrial parks and zones in the previous year and by the end of the year 2,067 idle units returned to the production cycle, which provided employment for more than 39,000 people,” Rasoulilian said.

The official noted that 1,433 small workshop units were also established in the mentioned year most of which were production and knowledge-based units with high technology.

The necessary licenses were also obtained for establishing 26 new industrial parks and zones across the country in the previous year, he added.

In late February, the official said that 900 consultants from the private sector and knowledge-based companies were selected in the form of industry clinics across the country to recognize the weaknesses of industrial units with the aim of reactivating stagnant units or units that are operating below capacity.

Tehran Chamber Stresses Coordination Between Agro Ministry and Private Sector

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA)’s Agriculture and Process Industries Committee held its 21st meeting on Saturday during which constructive interaction between the private sector and Agriculture Ministry was emphasized.

The meeting was attended by Head of TCCIMA Agriculture Committee Kaveh Zargaran, other members of the committee, and Deputy Agriculture Minister for Trade Development Mohsen Shiravand, as well as the representatives of some private companies active in the agriculture sector, the TCCIMA portal reported.

In this meeting, the private sector representatives raised some issues and problems that the businesses

active in the agricultural sector are currently facing, and then Shiravand answered some questions.

Attendees of the meeting stressed the positive impacts of having a single-rate foreign currency in the country’s economic system and considered some of the government’s interventions in the business and trade sector harmful to the production sector as well as the consumers.

Ahmadreza Farshchian, a member of the TCCIMA Agriculture Committee, also said that the export of agricultural products and Iran’s share in the global market is decreasing and emphasized that the downward trend of the export of agricultural products in Iran is due to the implementation of some forex policies and the lack of reform.

Iraq to Import More Gas From Iran

BAGHDAD (IRNA) - The Iraqi Electricity Ministry announced that it had reached an agreement with Iran on importing more gas.

The Iraqi Electricity Ministry Spokesman Ahmad Musa said that the agreement was made during the Iraqi prime minister’s recent visit to Tehran.

Iraq expects and hopes that more gas will be injected into its power plants, he said adding that the two sides have agreed to prepare to be prepared for winter and even summer.

He noted that the two sides have signed the agreements and contracts between the two parties regarding the injection of a certain level of gas in winter and summer.

Earlier, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia’ Al Sudani stressed that Iraq is trying to pay Iran’s arrears through special mechanisms.

From Iraq’s point of view, interaction is the best way to avoid problems, he said emphasizing the Iraqi government’s commitment to cooperate with the Islamic Republic of Iran in all common fields.

Construction of \$3b Petchem Projects in Ilam

TEHRAN (Shana) -- The CEO of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) said Iran’s petrochemical industry has \$3 billion worth of petrochemical projects under construction in Ilam province, western Iran.

According to the National Petrochemical Company (NPC), on the second day of visiting petrochemical development projects in Ilam province, Morteza Shahmirzaei visited the Dehloran petrochemical and Ilam petroolefin projects, NGL 3100 plant, Bayat and Cheshmehkhosh pressure stations, and feedstock transmission lines and was closely informed about the last stages of the construction of these important national projects.

In the meeting of the executives of these projects, he emphasized the need to use the power of capable Iranian manufacturers to build and complete petrochemical projects, and stated: “Today, Ilam province has become a big workshop and we are witnessing the construction of various petrochemical projects in different parts of this province.”

The NPC CEO added: “Fortunately, today, in all fields, Iranian companies can meet the needs of the value-creating petrochemical industry, and this existing capacity of Iranian companies should be used more than what was the case in the past.”

Shahmirzaei stated: “In the visits made to the construction process of petrochemical projects in Ilam province, we saw that knowledge-based companies, manufacturers of equipment and goods, and other capable domestic companies have an active presence in this project.”

IME Sets Record for Weekly Trade In Volume and Value

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 2,315,255 tons of commodities with a total trading value of nearly \$559m, logging growths of 18% and 22% in volume and value of trades compared with the week before that.

According to a report by the IME’s International Affairs and PR, the exchange traded on its metals and minerals trading floor 1,899,000 tons of commodities valued at almost \$336m.

Commodities sold on this floor included 1,197,546 tons of cement, 284,000 tons of iron ore, 277,303 tons of steel, 106,500 tons of sponge iron, 25,350 tons of zinc, 5,975 tons of aluminum, 4,110 tons of copper, 2,000 tons of cast iron, 150 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 134 kg of gold bars and 2,118 vehicles.

Furthermore, the IME saw on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 393,337 tons of commodities worth more than \$219m.

The IME’s customers purchased on this floor 90,443 tons of polymeric products, 123,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 42,500 tons of lube cut, 36,636 tons of chemicals, 7,340 tons of sulfur, 270 tons of argon, 4,668 tons of base oil, 200 tons of insulation and 86,579 tons of bitumen.

Last but not least was the IME’s side market with 22,642 tons of commodities traded on it.



Iranian Oil Terminal Infrastructure Kept Up-to-Date

TEHRAN (MNA) - Managing Director of Iranian Oil Terminals Company (IOTC) Abbas Asadrz has said the company is taking all the necessary measures to keep the country’s oil terminal infrastructure maintained and up to date, Shana reported.

Speaking on the sidelines of a visit to Kharg Island Oil Terminal, Asadrz emphasized the necessity and significance of maintaining and modernizing the country’s oil infrastructure, including storage tanks, pipelines and export docks.

“Iranian Oil Terminals Company as a technical, operational and specialized company in charge of crude oil and gas condensate export operations must have the necessary capabilities to carry out the assigned missions in the best possible way,” he said.

Iran Lifts Import Ban On All Goods Listed for Trade With Pakistan

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced on Saturday that the imports of all commodities listed under an Iran-Pakistan preferential trade agreement have been allowed by the government.

In late November, the Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry had got the government’s approval for allowing the import of some products exclusively shipped from Pakistan under the framework of the preferential trade agreement between the two countries.

Now, Iranian importers have been allowed to register import application forms for all products that were previously on the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration’s (IRICA) import ban list, provided that the source of the commodities is Pakistan.

Tehran and Islamabad have been taking new measures for broadening economic ties as the Iranian government is promoting economic diplomacy in the region.

Back in October, Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FPCCI) signed three memorandums of understanding (MOU) with the aim of expanding trade between the private sectors of the two countries.

The MOUs were signed during a visit of an Iranian private sector delegation headed by ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafei to the Pakistani cities of Karachi and Lahore.

Based on the signed memorandums, the two sides agreed to strengthen comprehensive cooperation between the private sectors of the two countries, to establish a joint trade council of Iran and Pakistan, and to determine a mechanism to resolve trade disputes.

During their visit to Pakistan, the Iranian delegates also attended a meeting with officials from the State Bank of Pakistan (the country’s central bank) in which the two sides discussed details of a barter trade mechanism between the two countries.

After the trip of the Iranian trade delegation to Pakistan, TPO and the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) also signed an MOU to pursue and develop free trade with Pakistan.

Germany to Send 7 Additional Gepard Tanks to Ukraine

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany is preparing to deliver seven Gepard tanks to Ukraine, adding to the 30 air-defense tanks that are already being used to fight against the Russian army, according to a German government website.

According to Spiegel magazine, which first reported the number of additional tanks, the seven Gepards, which were initially destined for the scrap pile, should arrive in Ukraine in Spring 2023 and are currently being repaired by Munich-based arms manufacturer Krauss-Maffei Wegmann (KMW).

The government did not say when it planned to deliver the tanks, which it said have come from manufacturers' stocks and whose deliveries in some cases depend on repair measures or production still being ongoing.



Labor Beats Conservatives To Retain UK Parliament

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain's opposition Labor Party scored a resounding victory in a vote for a parliamentary seat in northwest England on Friday, underlining the scale of the challenge facing Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to win a general election in the next two years.

Compounding the gloom for the Conservatives, who are trailing in nationwide polls and seemingly heading for defeat in a national election expected in 2024, one of the governing party's most experienced frontline politicians, Sajid Javid, said he planned to stand down. The country's former finance minister joins a growing group of Conservative lawmakers who will quit Westminster at the next national election, as the party faces the strong possibility of being out of power for the first time since 2010.



Russia Open to Talks on Ukraine But Presses Demands



KYIV (Dispatches) - Russian President Vladimir Putin is "open to negotiations" on Ukraine but the West must accept Moscow's demands, the Kremlin said, a day after U.S. President Joe Biden said he was willing to talk if Putin were looking for a way to end the war.

Speaking after talks on Thursday at the White House with French President Emmanuel Macron, Biden said he was ready to speak with Putin "if in fact there is an interest in him deciding he's looking for a way to end the war", adding the Russian leader "hasn't done that yet".

Biden has not spoken directly with Putin since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. In March, Biden branded Putin a "butcher" who "cannot stay in power".

Now, after more than nine months of fighting and with winter tightening its grip, Western countries are trying to boost aid for Ukraine as it reels from Russian missile and drone attacks targeting key energy infrastructure that have left millions without heating, electricity and water.

Fighting is raging in eastern Ukraine, with the town of Bakhmut the main target of Moscow's artillery attacks, while Russian forces in the southern Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions remain on the defensive, Ukraine's General Staff said in its latest battlefield update.

In a bid to reduce the money available for Moscow's war effort, the European Union has tentatively agreed to a \$60 a barrel price cap on Russian seaborne oil, diplomats said. The measure will need to be approved by all EU governments in a written procedure by Friday.

In Moscow's first public response to Biden's overture, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters: "The president of the Russian Federation has always been, is and remains open to negotiations in order to ensure our interests."

However Peskov said the U.S. refusal to recognise annexed territory in Ukraine as Russian was hindering a search for ways to end the war. Moscow has previously sought sweeping security guarantees including a reversal of NATO's eastern enlargement.

Putin told German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in a phone call on Friday that the Western line on Ukraine was "destructive" and urged Berlin to rethink its approach, the Kremlin said.

In Berlin's readout on the call, Scholz's spokesperson said the chancellor had condemned Russian air strikes against civilian infrastructure and called for a diplomatic solution to the war "including a withdrawal of Russian troops".

Separately, the German government confirmed it was preparing to deliver seven Gepard tanks to Ukraine, adding to the 30 air-defense tanks already being used to fight Russian forces.

Putin has said he has no regrets about launching what he calls a "special military operation" to disarm and "denazify" Ukraine. He casts the war as a watershed moment when Russia finally stood up to an arrogant West after decades of humiliation following the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union.

Ukraine and the West say Putin has no justification for what they cast as an imperial-style war of occupation in which thousands of civilians have been killed. Kyiv says it will fight until the last Russian soldier is ejected from its territory.

"Our desire to live freely... will not be broken. Ukrainians will never again be a tiny stone in some empire," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said late on Thursday in a message marking the 31st anniversary of Ukraine voting overwhelmingly in favor of independence from the Moscow-led Soviet Union.

Biden and Macron said in a joint statement after their talks on Thursday they were determined to hold Russia to account "for widely documented atrocities and war crimes, committed both by its regular armed forces and by its proxies" in Ukraine.

N. Korea Slapped With New Sanctions Over Missile Tests

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Japan, South Korea and the United States have imposed sanctions on North Korean officials connected to the country's illicit weapons programmes, with Washington saying Pyongyang's ballistic missiles "pose grave risks to the region and the entire world".

The US Treasury Department named the individuals as Jon Il Ho, Yu Jin, and Kim Su Gil, all of whom the European Union designated for sanctions in April.

The sanctions freeze any US-based assets of the individuals and bar dealings with them but appear largely symbolic.

South Korea's foreign ministry announced sanctions on seven other individuals, including a Singaporean and a Taiwanese person, and eight entities. All are already under US sanctions imposed between January 2018 and October 2022, the ministry said.

Japan also designated three entities and an individual for new sanctions, Japan's foreign ministry said, including the Lazarus Group, which is suspected of carrying out cyberattacks.



Japan, Britain, Italy to Announce Joint Fighter Project

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan, Britain and Italy will announce a groundbreaking agreement as early as next week to jointly develop a new advanced jet fighter, two sources with knowledge of the plan told Reuters.

For Tokyo and London it represents the culmination of ever closer defence ties, which in turn give Britain a bigger security role in Asia and provide Japan with new security partners that can help it counter neighboring China's growing military power.

The push to merge the British led Tempest jet fighter project with Japan's F-X fighter program was first reported by Reuters in July. It will be the first time that Japan has collaborated with countries beyond the United States on a major defense equipment project.

The announcement will come before Japan releases a new national security strategy and military procurement plan around mid-December, the sources said.

That arms build up, which could double the country's defense budget to around 5% of gross domestic product(GDP) over the next five years, will pay for new weapons including long-range missiles designed to deter China from resorting to military action in and around the East China Sea.

Talks between Japan, Britain and Italy on the new jet fighter, which will be led by BAE Systems Plc and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, will continue next year to hammer details of the project,



such as work share and the designs of variants that each partner will deploy, the sources said.

Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party is also looking at proposals to relax its military export rules so that the joint jet fighter could be exported, Itsunori Onodera, a former Japanese defense minister and influential lawmaker said in an interview last month.

More Calls for South Africa Leader to Quit Over Theft Probe

JOHANNESBURG (Dispatches) - South African President Cyril Ramaphosa faced calls to step down after a parliamentary panel's probe found he may have breached anti-corruption laws in connection with the alleged theft of a large amount of money from his Phala Phala game farm.

The calls follow allegations by the country's former head of intelligence, Arthur Fraser, that Ramaphosa tried to conceal the theft of a huge sum of cash stuffed into couches at his farm in 2020. Fraser, an ally of the president's political rival and predecessor, Jacob Zuma, accused Ramaphosa of money laundering and violating foreign currency control laws.

In its report, the parliamentary panel raised questions about the source of the money and why it wasn't disclosed to financial authorities, and cited a potential conflict between the president's business and official interests.

Ramaphosa has denied any wrongdoing, insisting that the money was proceeds from the sale of animals at his farm. But opposition parties and Ramaphosa's detractors in the ruling African National Congress party have called for him to step down.

The ANC's national executive committee, the party's highest decision-making body, is expected to meet Thursday evening to be briefed on the matter and possibly to determine Ramaphosa's fate. Ramaphosa is seeking reelection as party leader during the ANC's

upcoming conference. That would enable him to run again for South Africa's presidency in 2024.

Lawmakers are expected to debate the report on Tuesday, and they will vote on whether further action should be taken, including whether to proceed with impeachment proceedings. ANC lawmakers are a majority in Parliament and may push back against attempts to impeach their leader.

"The president appreciates the enormity of this issue and what it means for the country and the stability of government," Ramaphosa's spokesperson Vincent Magwenya told reporters, saying the president is still processing" the report. "We are in an unprecedented and extraordinary moment as a constitutional democracy as a result of the report, and therefore whatever decision the president takes, it has to be informed by the best interest of the country. That decision cannot be rushed," Magwenya said.

According to the parliamentary report, Ramaphosa claimed the stolen money amounted to \$580,000, disputing the initial amount of \$4 million that Fraser alleged was stolen.

The report also questioned Ramaphosa's explanation that the money was from the sale of buffaloes to a Sudanese businessman, Mustafa Mohamed Ibrahim Hazim, asking why the animals remained at the farm more than two years later.



Assassination Attempt On Pakistan Envoy in Kabul

KABUL (Dispatches) - An "assassination attempt" targeted Pakistan's top diplomat in Afghanistan, Pakistan's prime minister said, as tensions between the neighboring countries simmer.

The head of mission, Ubaid-ur-Rehman Nizamani, was the target of an attack on its embassy compound, Pakistan's foreign ministry said on Friday.

"I strongly condemn dastardly assassination attempt on Pakistan Head of Mission, Kabul," Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Twitter.

The attacker failed to harm the Pakistani diplomat, but shot and wounded his security guard, Sharif added. No immediate confirmation on the security guard's condition was available.

"I demand immediate investigation & action against perpetrators of this heinous act," Sharif tweeted.

An embassy official said a lone attacker "came behind the cover of houses and started firing".

"The ambassador and all the other staff are safe, but we are not going outside of the embassy building as a precaution," he said.

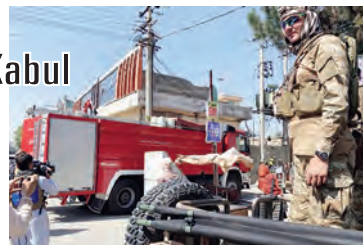
Nizamani arrived in Kabul last month to take up the role at one of the few embassies that had remained operational throughout the period after the Taliban took over the country in August 2021.

A spokesperson for the Taliban's ministry of foreign affairs denounced the attack.

"Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan strongly condemns the attempted shooting and failed attack on the Pakistani embassy in Kabul," said spokesperson Abdul Qahar Balkhi on Twitter.

The shooting comes a day after Pakistan's government demanded Afghanistan's Taliban rulers prevent attacks coming from their soil.

The Pakistani Taliban, who are allied with their namesake's across the border, claimed responsibility for a deadly suicide bombing earlier in the week in southwestern Pakistan that sent a wave of shock and anger across the nation.



New York, Singapore Top the List of World's Most Expensive Cities

LONDON (Dispatches) - New York was the world's most expensive metropolis in 2022, sharing the unwanted title with Singapore, as soaring energy prices doubled the inflation rate across the major global cities, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit's annual survey.

Last year's leader Tel Aviv dropped to third, while Sydney snuck into the Top 10 and Moscow and St Petersburg in Russia scaled the rankings by as much as 88 places as sanctions and buoyant oil prices propelled prices higher, the EIU's Worldwide Cost of Living report found.

Venezuela's capital, Caracas, with its 132% price increase in 2022, was well down on the 2019 hyperinflation rate of more 25,000%, but remained too high to be included in the survey. The average inflation of 8.1% in local currency terms was still the highest in more than two decades of surveys, and up from 3.5% last year and 1.9% in 2020.

A stronger currency was also one factor driving cities up the rankings. Six of the eight highest climbers (after the two Russian cities) were US cities, led by Atlanta going from 42nd to 46th in the rankings of the 172 cities surveyed. The US currency has strengthened sharply against almost all currencies as the US Federal Reserve hiked interest rates and signalled more rises to come.

Cities in countries where their currency slumped featured among those dropping down the listing of most costly cities. Japan's Tokyo and Osaka were among the 10 biggest drops, ending at 37th and 43rd respectively, down from 13th and 10th in 2021.

Stockholm and Luxembourg dropped the most, both losing 38 places to 99th and 104th. Damascus in Syria and Tripoli in Libya retained their slots as the cheapest cities surveyed.

Singapore's placing at the top of the index was little surprise. The city-state was the equal-second most expensive city in 2021 and has been No 1 in eight of the past 10 years. This year was the first time the Big Apple has been ranked as No 1.

The three UK cities surveyed all dropped down the rankings, with London now 28th from 17th in 2021. Edinburgh came in at 46th, down from 27th, while Manchester was 73rd most expensive compared with 41st last year.

Australian cities generally edged up the rankings, with the harbour city rising from 14th last year to 10th spot in 2022. Melbourne moved up to 15th from 16th last year, while Brisbane was 32nd up from 36th. Perth bucked the trend, dropping two spots to 73rd.

The global surge in inflation had been gathering steam before Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February caused disruptions to supplies of key commodities, particularly food. Subsequent sanctions on Russia prompted further surges in oil, gas and other energy prices.

Rising petrol prices produced the biggest single propellant to higher inflation. On average, a litre of the fuel was 22% more expensive in local-currency terms than a year earlier.

Gas and electricity prices were 29% higher in western European cities, or almost triple the average increase of 11% globally, as the region scrambled to find alternatives to Russian energy.

Solace for some of those increases came in "subdued" increases in the price of recreational goods and services. "[T]his may reflect softer demand as consumers focus spending on essentials," the EIU said.

Short of some unforeseen calamity, the EIU predicts cost increases will ease in 2023 as higher interest rates remove some of the demand pressure and supply-chain blockages start to ease. China may remain a wildcard as its zero-Covid policy starts to fray.



Spiking Costs, Fading Snow Squeeze Austrian Ski Resorts

MITTERSIL (Dispatches) - One of Austria's top ski resorts is making as much artificial snow as possible to lay a thick base on the slopes before its energy bills leap.

Like other spots across the Alps, world-famous Kitzbuehel is being hit by inflation-driven cost hikes, but also warmer winters that are ever less snowy.

"We expect that our power costs will at least double this season," said Anton Bodner, head of the resort's Bergbahn Kitzbuehel company, noting several lower price energy contracts run out by year's end.

"We are talking about millions of euros," he added, while looking over one of the few slopes already open.

The soaring energy bills for Austria's famed ski resorts have translated into pricier tickets, but also shorter hours and reduced service.

"We have no choice but to pass higher power prices on to our customers," Bodner told AFP, adding that they had kept increases below inflation, which stood at 11 percent by October.

Ski resorts like Kitzbuehel will try to save money by trimming opening times, ramping up snowmaking when temperatures are colder and reducing lift capacity to save energy.

Kitzbuehel plans to run its lifts about two hours less per day, opening slightly later and closing earlier.

But at the end of the day, it's skiers who wind up feeling the pinch and fewer are expected to turn up.

A recently conducted survey was pointing towards significantly fewer holidaymakers this winter season in Austria due to high inflation compared to 2019, said Oliver Fritz, senior economist at the Austrian Institute of Economic Research (WIFO).

"Even if a (winter) vacation is planned, potential guests want to spend less," Fritz said.

Cutting expenses like eating out, shortening holidays or turning to cheaper accommodation or resorts are some of the ways people are dialling back.

"Everything has become about 20, 30 percent more expensive. Another 20, 30 percent, and we can no longer afford skiing. Then we would unfortunately have to give up our hobby," the 58-year-old added.

Equipment and season passes for him and another family member "already ate up two to three monthly salaries", he said.

Sabine Huber, a local from a nearby valley, said she expected more and more people to continue to switch to ski touring, a sport where enthusiasts climb the slopes on skis, rendering lift tickets unnecessary.

"I'm lucky that I'm a ski tourer and can practise my sport relatively cheaply. Of course, I know many who are already considering whether or not to buy a ski pass because of high prices," she said.

Austria's famous ski resorts are part of its winter tourism industry, which pulled in about 3.9 percent of the country's national GDP in 2019, before the pandemic slashed profits.

Ski resorts are trying to stay optimistic, but it remains to be seen how Alpine tourist destinations across Europe will fare as warming temperatures and inflation threaten their very existence.

"Since 1961, the average annual snow cover duration over the entire area of Austria has decreased by 40 days," said Marc Olefs, head of climate research at Austria's national meteorological and geophysical service ZAMG.

Without measures to cut greenhouse gas-related warming, the duration of natural snow cover at altitudes ranging from 1,500 to 2,500 metres could "decrease by a further 25 percent by 2100", Olefs noted.

And without snowy winters and sub-zero temperatures, both natural and artificial snow will soon be a thing of the past.



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Swiss Frozen \$8b in Financial Assets Under Russia Sanctions

ZURICH (Dispatches) - Switzerland has frozen financial assets worth 7.5 billion Swiss francs (\$7.94 billion) as of Nov. 25 under sanctions against Russians to punish Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) said.

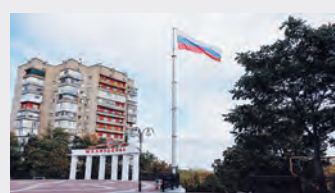
SECO, the agency overseeing sanctions, also said that 15 properties in six cantons are also "blocked". It did not name the cantons.

Up until June 3, SECO had been notified of existing deposits held by

Russian nationals, and individuals and legal entities in Russia, amounting to 46.1 billion francs, it said.

This was far below the 150 billion to 200 billion Swiss francs of Russian wealth that the Swiss Bankers Association has estimated Swiss banks hold.

SECO officials said the discrepancy could reflect the fact that Russians who are also Swiss or EU citizens, or have residence there, are not covered by the measures.



Economic Headwinds Set to Push Oil Below \$100 in 2023

LONDON (Dispatches) - Brent oil prices will hold above the \$100 level for the rest of 2022 as an impending EU ban on Russian oil sparks uncertainty over supply, but will tick lower next year as economic concerns prevail, a Reuters poll showed.

A survey of 38 economists and analysts forecast benchmark Brent crude would average \$100.50 a barrel this year, and \$93.65 in 2023, slightly lower than October's \$101.10 and \$95.74 consensus, respectively.

U.S. crude was forecast to average \$95.56 a barrel in 2022 and \$87.80 next year.

Brent traded around \$84 a barrel on Wednesday, having shed over 15% since early November, dragged down by concerns over demand from top consumer China as it grapples with COVID lockdowns and protests.

The oil market faces three major questions, said Frank Schallenberg, head of commodity research at LBBW.

"What happens to Russian supply when the EU ban becomes effective? How much will demand growth go down because of weaker economic perspectives? And how fast will OPEC+ lower oil output?"

The EU ban, on Russian oil is set to kick in on Dec. 5 along with a plan by G7 nations to enforce a low price for Russian oil sales.

But with the overall plan still being debated by EU leaders, analysts were divided on its likely impact, and forecast a resultant supply shortfall of anywhere between 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 2 million bpd, with some saying Russia could find alternative routes to move its crude.

"The EU ban will mean that an uneasy balance will characterise the market from the first quarter, which will be supportive of prices in the 80s or even higher," said Matthew Sherwood, lead commodities analyst at EIU.

Most market watchers agreed that the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia, known as OPEC+, would keep to current output cut levels on Dec. 4, although additional reductions could be considered.

A small number of respondents predicted that the oil market could be more balanced in the second half of 2023.

Demand was seen growing by 1.8-2.1 million bpd in 2022 and by 1-2 million bpd next year, led by Asia.

But while prices will moderate in 2023 because of an economic slowdown, "we don't expect oil prices to fall off the cliff as supplies are tight and OPEC+ has pre-empted with additional voluntary production cuts, and some Russian oil production will also be impacted by the EU ban," said DBS Bank lead energy analyst Suvro Sarkar.

South Korean Truckers' Strike Cost \$1.2b in Lost Shipments

SEOUL (Dispatches) - A strike by South Korean truckers is estimated to have cost 1.6 trillion won (\$1.23 billion) in lost shipments, the industry ministry said, as a lengthy strike becomes more likely with the government and union far from a compromise.

Disruptions to the country's supply chain expanded on Thursday, the eighth day of the nationwide strike by more than 20,000 truckers, as the government prepares to order more of them back to work.

The cement, steel, auto and oil refining industries have seen 1.6 trillion won in lost shipments in seven days since the strike began last week, the ministry said in a statement.

This includes 562,600 tons of steel worth 731.3 billion, 6,707 cars worth 319.2 billion won, and 259,238 kiloliters of oil products valued at 442.6 billion won stuck in transit, it said.

No date has been set yet for the next round of negotiations. Two people at the meeting on Wednesday said shouting erupted during Wednesday's meeting between the government and strike organizer Cargo Truckers Solidarity Union (CTSU).

The government has said it would not expand a minimum pay system for truckers beyond a further three years, which the union says should be permanent and wider in scope.

Kumho Tire Co Inc, South Korea's No. 2 tire maker, which makes 65% of its sales from exports, told Reuters it is cutting 15% to 40% of production output at its two factories until Dec. 6 because the strike has disrupted shipments.

Member companies of Korea International Trade Association (KITA) said in a statement that fresh produce such as fish and kimchi had been scrapped because industrial hubs are blocked, without citing exact figures.



Exports at Samsung Electronics' Gwangju plant, which mainly produces refrigerators and air conditioners, have been halted, although raw materials and other shipments were moving normally, Yonhap news agency reported, citing a plant official.

Samsung Electronics said it is monitoring the situation.

The government is preparing to potentially order oil industry truckers back to their jobs, the industry ministry said on Thursday, after it issued an unprecedented order to force 2,500 cement industry truckers back to work this week. As of Wednesday, 350 of those drivers had been served those orders.

Refusing to get back on the road after a "start work" order can be punished by a fine or jail time, and cost drivers their licenses.

Euro Zone Banks Not Facing Up to Reality of Downturn

FRANKFURT (Dispatches) - Euro zone banks have not yet fully faced up to the reality of an economic downturn, so finance industry supervisors will need to force them to be more conservative in managing capital, ECB supervisory chief Andrea Enria said.

The euro zone is almost certain to fall into a recession over the winter as sky high energy costs hit consumer budgets. But banks, enjoying an unusual period of high earnings, have been criticised for underplaying the likely impact.

"A number of banks seem to use relatively mild macroeconomic assumptions in their adverse scenarios," Enria told a hearing in the European Parliament. "Supervisors will closely scrutinise capital planning and challenge management actions to ensure an appropriate level of conservatism."

Enria said non-performing loans in the consumer loans segment and early arrears, both for households and corporate customers, are already increasing.

The rapid rise in interest rates -- mostly a function of ECB rate hikes -- is also highlighting vulnerabilities in residential and commercial real estate markets, as well as in consumer and leveraged finance, Enria said.

Banks' credit exposures to energy-intensive corporate borrowers will be a particular area of supervisory attention, even if there has been only limited signs of distress so far.

"The focus on the risk management of these exposures is particularly warranted in light of the recent temporary relaxation of margining requirements, enabling the use of uncollateralised bank guarantees as eligible collateral for non-financial corporates accessing central clearing services," he said.

Asia Crude Oil Imports Hit Record High, But Strength Is Deceptive

LAUNCESTON (Dispatches) - Asia's crude oil imports most likely rose to a record high in November, but much of the strength was because refiners were ensuring sufficient inventories ahead of possible disruptions of shipments from Russia.

A total of 119.12 million tons of crude, equivalent to 29.1 million barrels per day (bpd) was landed in November, according to data compiled by Refinitiv Oil Research.

This was sharply higher than the 25.6 million bpd in October and the 26.6 million

bpd in September, with gains led by China, India and South Korea.

The European Union's ban on crude imports from Russia comes into effect on Dec. 5, along with other measures that are aimed at making it harder for the world's second-biggest oil exporter to profit from its energy exports.

Although China and India, the world's biggest and third-largest crude importers, haven't signed up to such a ban, they may find it difficult to continue to import at the hefty volumes of recent months because of constraints with shipping capacity, financing and insurance.

For this reason it appears both Asian giants splurged on Russian crude in November, with Russia once again surpassing Saudi Arabia as China's biggest supplier.

China imported 1.9 million bpd from Russia in November, up from 1.82 million bpd in October, while Saudi Arabia supplied 1.72 million bpd last month, a drop from October's 1.87 million bpd.

China's total imports of 12.16 million bpd in November are the most since March 2021, and are almost 2 million bpd higher than October's 10.2 million bpd, according to Refinitiv data.

Hardly any of this strength is because of stronger domestic demand; rather, it's a combination of factors that may not be sustained.

On the temporary front is the startup of two new refining units with a combined capacity of 720,000 bpd.

New units require working inventories, so imports will have been boosted by the need to build up these commercial stockpiles.

Chinese refiners have also boosted exports of refined fuels in recent months, after having received additional export quotas as Beijing allowed them to take advantage of the high margins on offer, especially for diesel.

China in November exported 2.38 million tons of gasoil, the building block for diesel and jet fuel, a 19-month high and a jump of 125% from October's 1.06 million tons.

U.S. Job Openings Still Elevated

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. job openings decreased in October, but remained significantly high, pointing to continued labor market resilience despite the Federal Reserve's efforts to cool demand by aggressively raising interest rates.

The tight labor market keeps the Fed on course to continue tightening monetary policy, heightening the risks of a recession next year. Most economists, however, believe any downturn will likely be short and mild because of the unprecedented jobs market strength.

"Elevated job openings during a time of an economic slowdown implies that the labor market may remain tight for quite some time," said Jeffrey Roach, chief economist at LPL Financial in Charlotte, North Carolina. "Firms could hoard workers even though the economy may go through a recessionary period."

Job openings, a measure of labor demand, decreased 353,000 to 10.3 million on the last day of October, the Labor Department said in its monthly Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, or JOLTS report, on Wednesday.

It was the 16th straight month that job openings remained above 10 million and left vacancies 40% higher than they were before the COVID-19 pandemic. October's job openings were in line with economists' expectations.

There were 1.7 job openings for every unemployed person in October, down from 1.9 in September. Last month's decrease in job openings was led by state and local government, excluding education, where vacancies dropped by 101,000.

There were 95,000 fewer job openings in nondurable goods manufacturing, while federal government vacancies fell by 61,000. But there were 76,000 additional job openings in other services and unfilled positions increased by 70,000 in the finance and insurance industry.

The job openings rate fell to 6.3% from 6.5% in September. Job openings were little changed in the Northeast, but fell in the South and Midwest. They rose in the West.

Hiring slipped to 6.0 million from 6.1 million in September.

With recession fears mounting, the great resignation trend appears to have run its course. About 4.0 million people quit their jobs, down from 4.1 million in September. The quits rate, viewed by policymakers and economists as a measure of job market confidence, fell to 2.6% from 2.7% in the prior month.

Layoffs increased to a still-low 1.4 million from 1.3 million, leaving the layoffs rate unchanged at 0.9%.

"The data suggest only very little loosening in the labor market so far," said Isfar Munir, an economist at Citigroup in New York. "It will be difficult for the Fed to be anything but hawkish at the moment."

India Economy Likely To Grow 6.5%-7% Next Fiscal Year



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - The Indian economy is likely to grow 6.5% to 7% next fiscal year if the global environment does not worsen, a member of the prime minister's economic advisory council said, giving a higher estimate than some economists.

Global agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, for instance, have forecast India's growth will be 6.1% and 6.0%, respectively, next fiscal.

The country will continue to maintain macroeconomic stability, despite a "very difficult" global environment, helped by the stable banking sector and buoyant tax revenue collections, Sanjeev Sanyal told Reuters.

India posted annual economic growth of 6.3% in the July-September quarter, a tad above the 6.2% forecast by economists polled by Reuters.

"I think we are now on stream to achieve somewhere slightly short of 7% GDP growth rate for this financial year," Sanyal said, which is in line with the country's central bank projection.

India's fiscal year starts on April 1 and runs through March 31.

Earlier this year, economists had cut their projections for India's growth in fiscal 22-23 to around 7% due to slowing exports and risks of high inflation crimping purchasing power.

Despite that, the Asian nation is expected to remain the second-fastest growing economy -- lagging only Saudi Arabia-- among G20 countries in the current fiscal year, according to the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development.

India's supply side is capable of growing further and the manufacturing sector will need support from external demand, which is presently weak, Sanyal said.

He added that medium-term demand prospects are good, with private-sector investments beginning to show in the domestic economy.

Over 50m Iranians Suffering From Overweight

TEHRAN (IRNA) - More than 50 million people of the Iranian population are suffering from overweight, which increases the risk of being subject to diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure, a university professor said.

Abdolreza Pazouki, the chancellor of Iran University of Medical Sciences, said in a press conference at the Razi International Conference Center in Tehran on Saturday that about 12 percent of the population are diagnosed with

diabetes and one-fourth of the Iranians are suffering from high blood pressure, both of which have their roots in obesity. When the body mass index is higher than 35, the person is considered obese and needs to go ahead with metabolic surgery, he warned, noting that being overweight affects the life span in people from childhood to adulthood and that excessive obesity can decrease lifespan for around 20 years, so the obese people need surgery.



200 People Lost Their Lives in Recent Riots, ISC Announces

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's Security Council issued a statement regarding the recent events, announcing that 200 people lost their lives in the riots, saying: "The appeasement of the Islamic system with the rioters has caused the protest of the majority of the people."

Iran's security council issued a statement and explained the recent events and the text of the statement of the council as follows:

The Security Council of Iran, considering the beginning and continuation of the riots, indicates a hybrid war against the Islamic Republic of Iran with the aim of weakening national solidarity and pushing back the progress of the country, and basically diverting the real demands of the people, according to the general demand of the people, in order to improve the level of social security, provides the following explanations:

The Islamic Republic of Iran, with its religious democratic system, has been the anchor of regional stability and security during the last four decades.

The failure of the coup, the terrorist actions of the counter-revolutionary and separatist groups in the first decade of the Islamic Revolution, the repelling of the invasion of the Baathist regime of Iraq during the Holy Defense period, and the maintenance of national security in the turbulent environment of West Asia with the repeated military aggression of the United States and ISIS terrorism, all show a high-security capability based on the model of people-based security.

The national authority in the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on the maximum participation of the people in the religious democracy system, for this reason, the focus point of the enemy is the people and the Velayat Faghih (the rule of the highest religious authority).

In the past year, the 13th Administration has put its program on reforming economic structures, social justice, and fighting corruption to improve public livelihood with the discourse of "People-oriented administration and a strong Iran".

The accumulation of a large number of union requests and economic demands on the part of the dear people of the country has been the main concern, and the main effort of the administration has been to solve them. On the other hand, the administration has pursued multilateral diplomacy, while promoting relations with its neighbors, joining economic unions with emerging powers, and negotiating with the West about the JCPOA, by standing up for national interests and, specifically, the immediate lifting of oppressive sanctions.

The administration's approach, without getting involved in marginal issues, is focused on reforming the processes and structures for diligent progress so that the country is placed on the threshold of economic surge

after years of internal and external sanctions.

In a situation where the country has reached political peace, the neutralization of sanctions and economic stability after the major project of targeting the preferred currency, and the administration has to face the roots of socio-economic dissatisfaction in the areas of housing, employment, marginalization, social harms, etc, as a result of the wrong policies of development in the past decades, the enemy turned to the hybrid war with the desperation of the strategy of maximum pressure.

The impressive death of Mrs. "Mahsa Amini" after being present at the moral security police unit of Tehran on September 16 caused the enemy to accelerate its complex design in the hybrid war that was started under various pretexts.

Therefore, although the official reports of the Forensic Medicine Organization, the Parliament, the Police Command and also the expert opinions of committed doctors of the country showed that no direct action by the law enforcement personnel has led to the death of Mrs. Amini, the riots started under this pretext and basically the matter of the deceased was forgotten.

Peaceful protests were quickly turned into illegal processes and street riots by the negative atmosphere of the terrorist media (BBC and Saudi-sponsored Iran International TV). Within a short period of time, with the actions of a network of professional and organized rioters led by the British-Saudi media smear campaign, it turned into riots and terrorist acts.

Direct attacks on security, military, and law enforcement centers, killing innocents for political goals among the protesting crowd, destruction of medical centers and ambulances, as well as extensive destruction of public places such as municipalities, fire engines, mosques, banks and private property of people were on the agenda.

The enemy also intended to create an excuse to deprive the people of comfort and spread unrest on the street through widespread psychological warfare and false killings of innocent people for political goals through consensus building among anti-revolutionary groups and by inciting some celebrities. Therefore, what is in front of people's eyes today is not civil protest, but destruction, violence, and insecurity by a minority of rioters, which paves the ground for the entry and abuse of separatist groups and ISIS terrorism to carry out brutal attacks on innocent and oppressed countrymen, such as what happened in the third shrine of Ahl al-Bayt Shahcheragh of Shiraz or the terrorist attack of Izeh.

Investigations by the relevant authorities show that, as a result of the aforementioned riots, more than 200 people have lost their lives, which can be categorized as

the security forces, and civilians in terrorist acts, innocent victims of the project of killing by the outfits who died in the situation where the ensuring security was in its limited level, rioters and armed counter-revolutionary elements of the separatist gangs. The zealous and noble Iranian tribes in the border provinces of the country have recently been the targets of the enemy's plots to turn the protests into an ethnic and religious conflict.

The riots were planned with the entry of separatist groups in the provinces of Sistan and Baluchistan, Kurdistan and West Azarbaijan with the aim of creating cycles of violence and disintegration in the ranks of the nation.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Leader's praise of the Kurds and Baloch ethnicities, as well as his special measures for the field management of the Zahedan incidents in separating the innocent victims, consoling them and calling them martyrs, have realized stability and peace.

It is necessary to emphasize that the continuation of this positive and reforming approach, away from any pressure and political partisanship, is the definite will of the Islamic Republic of Iran system in managing the ethnic-religious situation in different parts of the country. Regarding the protesters, the Islamic Republic of Iran has tried to deal with maximum security tolerance and put political measures to attract maximum attention on the agenda.

What's more, in explaining the right to protest and distinguishing it from riots, the President of the Islamic Republic mentioned three components: dialogue, criticism, and protest with the aim of reform. The enemy's plan for the continuation of unrest and the system's strategic patience in managing the country's public space has resulted in countless material and spiritual damages to the general public. The formation of this situation, which some consider appeasement of the system with rioters and terrorists, has resulted in the harsh criticism of the majority of people who want stability and security in the country.

The injection of despair, the impact on economic businesses, and the insecurity of the social environment and universities, which has caused the families to worry, is the result of the actions of the stateless rioters who are instigated and directed by the enemy's media room.

But today, the main demand of the people of Iran and their decisive message in the rallies to mark the birth of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), the funeral procession of martyrs of the terrorist incident in the Shahcheragh Shrine, the march of November 4 and numerous references and requests from the authorities, is the need to end insecurity, a serious and decisive approach vis-a-vis the perpetrators of disturbances in the streets as well as their internal and external supply and providing networks.

200 People Lost...

FROM PAGE 1

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Human Rights Turning...

FROM PAGE 1

"Those HR violators are better to look at their own shameful record and stop political and instrumental use of human rights. U.S. government and many other self-proclaimed advocates of human rights are convicted in the court of human conscience because of their despicable historical conduct," said another tweet.

Last Thursday, the UN Human Rights Council convened a meeting at the request of Germany and Iceland to discuss alleged human rights violations in Iran during the handling of recent foreign-backed riots in the country.

The body voted to establish an independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the purported abuses.

Foreign-backed riots have hit some Iranian provinces since 22-year-old woman Mahsa Amini died at the hospital on September 16, three days after she collapsed at a police station.

The West's hostile approach and policy does not want to come an end as it wants to continue this policy as it tries to outs Iran from the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) under pretext of violating women's rights.

This time it is the gang leader, the U.S., which leads this move as it tries to remove Iran from the 45-member U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) over the government's denial of women's rights and brutal crackdown on protests according to the claim of U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris .

Iran is just starting a four-year term on the commission, which meets annually every March and aims to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

This claim comes from a country which is itself famous for violating of rights of migrants, black community and women and many women in this country face rights violation and black people are the victim of racist policies of the country but unfortunately the U.S. Administration is indifferent towards them and even claim that the U.S. is cradle of democracy and freedom.

According to the U.S. media, women face many problems in this country and statesmen do not take any serious decision to help them but with even smallest incident occurs in any country which is at odd with the West, suddenly the U.S. and allies cry foul and start "human rights violations game".

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a very ardent supporter of human rights and women's rights but there is a difference between women's rights in Islam and Western culture as Islam pays great value to women's dignity and does not look at them as a commodity and means of misuse.

So the West is better to stop this accusation game and solve their domestic issues and respect women's rights in their own countries than meddling in other countries' domestic laws and affairs, and the Islamic Republic of Iran, as it has reiterated before, will remain supporter of women's rights and human rights but not in the way the West likes because values in Islam and the West are totally different and the Islamic Republic is determined to stick to the Islamic values in all issues.

FM Rejects...

FROM PAGE 1

He said diplomacy and dialogue are the best ways to solve problems, emphasizing, however, that in the face of other options, the Islamic Republic's hands are not tied, apparently referring to the West's sanctions against Tehran over the recent unrest and Iran's tit-for-tat punitive measures.

The UN chief, for his part, hailed Iran's constructive role in regional issues and expressed hope that Tehran's efforts would lead to the end of the war in Ukraine and the establishment of a ceasefire there.

Guterres said dialogue and diplomacy are suitable ways to solve regional and international issues and stressed the importance of continued efforts by Iran to help find a political solution to the Yemeni crisis.

The Iranian foreign minister and the UN chief also exchanged views about the latest developments in the talks to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and Iran's cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Tour de France 2024 Final Moved to Nice

PARIS (Dispatches) - The final stage of the Tour De France, traditionally held on Paris's Champs Elysees, will be moved to the southern city of Nice in 2024 when the capital hosts the Olympics, the southern city's mayor confirmed.

"It's with some emotion that I am announcing the final stage of the Tour De France 2024 will be held in Nice", Christian Estrosi told a news conference. The finale of cycling's biggest race has not been moved in the last 100 years, but the 2024 edition will come as Paris prepares to host the Summer Olympics, starting just a few days after the Tour ends.

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ISSN 1024-6053

P.O. Box: 15875-8551

Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St.,

Golestan II St, Golestan St. Marzadaran

Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Printed by: Honar Sarzmin Sabz

Distributed by:

Cities of Iran Cultural and

Artistic Institute

Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

Scott Joint Leader In Australian Open

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Former Masters champion Adam Scott zoomed into a two-way share of the lead in the Australian Open while Cameron Smith narrowly avoided the halfway cut in Melbourne.

Scott, 42, rolled back the years with five birdies and an eagle three at the 18th for an unblemished seven-under 63 to join overnight leader David Micheluzzi on eight-under 134.

In the adjoining women's tournament held on the same sandbelt courses at Kingston Heath and Victoria Golf Club, Australia's Hannah Green swept into the lead after a six-under 66.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

SUNDAY DECEMBER 4, 2022

South Korea Stun Portugal To Reach Knockouts

DOHA (Dispatches) - Substitute Hwang Hee-chan scored the winner in injury time to rescue South Korea from the brink of World Cup elimination in a thrilling 2-1 victory over already-qualified Portugal.

The Wolverhampton Wanderers' forward slipped in the winner in the 91st minute at Education City Stadium in Qatar to spark delirium and tears among the Korean fans.

Talisman Son Heung-min, who set up the winner, collapsed to the floor and lay on his back on the turf at the final whistle. He had tears in his eyes.

The Korean players then stood in a huddle on the pitch watching the Ghana v Uruguay match on a mobile phone as they awaited their place in the last 16 to be confirmed.

A much-changed Portugal had taken a fifth-minute lead through Ricardo Horta but the Koreans, who had to win to stand any chance of staying alive, hit back in the 27th minute through Kim Young-gwon.

Portugal skipper Cristiano Ronaldo played a part in the Korean equalizer, turning his back on a corner and the ball hitting him to set up Kim.

South Korea and their skipper Son, in a mask after recent surgery, needed to score again but they failed to really trouble Portugal until Son set up Hwang in injury time after a fine run.

Before a ball was even kicked a roar went up at Education City Stadium every time Ronaldo's face popped up on the big screen, even during the national anthems. There were some jeers too and chants of "Messi, Messi".

South Korea coach Paulo Bento, the former Portuguese international, had to watch from the stands after he was sent off following the final whistle of the Koreans' 3-2 defeat to Ghana.

He saw his men fall behind after just five minutes when defender Pepe played the ball down the right to Manchester United full-back Diogo Dalot.

Dalot easily evaded a weak Korean challenge and pulled the ball back from the byline for winger Horta to fire unmarked into the back of the net in front of a 44,000 crowd.

With qualification already secure, Portugal made six changes from the team that beat Uruguay 2-0, Dalot and Horta among those bought in.

But they still looked dangerous every time they went forward in the first half against a Korean defense missing Napoli's Kim Min-jae.



South Korean skipper Son, the Spurs forward, was yet to get going at this World Cup after surgery for a fracture around his left eye at the start of November.

Wearing a black mask to protect the wound, the 30-year-old showed glimpses of his brilliant best as South Korea chased the win they so badly needed.

The 37-year-old Ronaldo, surely playing at his last World Cup, unwittingly played a central role in the South Korean goal.

Currently without a club after his bitter departure from Manchester United, the forward turned his back on a Korean corner and the ball hit his shoulder and fell straight to defender Kim to turn in.

The second half was more of the same -- Portugal enjoying more possession and stroking the ball around but South Korea and an increasingly influential Son a threat on the break.

Portugal coach Fernando Santos brought Ronaldo off on 65 minutes to save his legs, then attacker Hwang came on and proved to be the hero at the death.

Uruguay crashed out of the World Cup despite beating Ghana 2-0 after South Korea scored a late winner in the other Group H match to leapfrog the South American side.

Giorgian De Arrascaeta netted twice in quick succession in the first half, with 35-year-old Luis Suarez having a hand in both goals.

China GP Cancelled for Fourth Successive Year

PARIS (Dispatches) - Formula One chiefs cancelled the China Grand Prix for a fourth straight year today, citing continuing problems related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Formula 1 can confirm, following dialogue with the promoter and relevant authorities, that the 2023 Chinese Grand Prix will not take place due to the ongoing difficulties presented by the Covid-19 situation," read a statement on their website.

"Formula 1 is assessing alternative options to replace the slot on the 2023 calendar and will provide an update on this in due course."

The last time the race was staged in Shanghai was in 2019.

The decision comes at a time when cities across China further unwound Covid restrictions today, loosening testing and quarantine rules in the wake of nationwide protests calling for an end to lockdowns and greater political freedoms.

Anger over China's zero-Covid policy — which involves mass lockdowns, constant testing and quarantines even for people who are not infected — has sparked protests in major cities, including Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

Juventus Vow to Defend Itself Over Account Probe

TURIN (Dispatches) - Italian football club Juventus, facing scrutiny over its financial accounts, said that it did not believe it had done anything wrong and would defend its interests with sporting and legal bodies.

Chairman Andrea Agnelli and the entire board of the club dramatically quit on Monday night as the country's most successful team tries to get to grips with its financial and legal troubles.

"Allegations put forward by prosecutors appear unfounded and not in line with conclusions reached by (Italian market regulator) Consob," Juventus said in a statement.

"In the belief that it has always conducted itself properly, Juventus FC intends to uphold its rights and defend its corporate, economic and sports interest everywhere necessary," it added.



It is the fourth time Japan have reached beyond that stage.

"In terms of a finish, the new aim for us is the last eight," said Moriyasu.

"The players are showing us a different and new view of being able to fight on the world stage.

"I would like to set a new record of the last eight or better."

Hayes Helps Detroit Down Doncic-Led Mavs

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - A late burst of scoring from Killian Hayes spurred the Detroit Pistons to a thrilling 131-125 overtime victory against Luka Doncic and the Dallas Mavericks.

Hayes drained back-to-back three-pointers with just over a minute of overtime remaining to hand Detroit the win in a pulsating finish at the Pistons' Little Caesars Arena.

Hayes, who ended the game with 22 points, four rebounds and eight assists, nailed a 27-foot three-pointer with just over a minute left to put Detroit ahead 128-125.

The 21-year-old then hit a superb stepback triple to seal the victory for the struggling Pistons, who improved to 6-18.

"Seeing the first one go in felt good ... just felt ready to shoot another, and we got the W (win)" Hayes said of his overtime heroics. "Just feels good to get the win."

"We didn't fold. Overtime, we played strong, played our defense and hit shots. We deserved that one."

Hayes' pair of game-clinching threes came after a towering performance from Bojan Bogdanovic helped Detroit stay within reach as Dallas star Doncic threatened to take over. Bogdanovic finished with 30 points including five three-pointers, with four rebounds and four assists.

Sixteen of Bogdanovic's points came in the third quarter as he traded buckets with Doncic, who led all scorers with 35 points.

The Pistons had built a 10-point cushion heading into the fourth quarter but Dallas went on a 15-6 run to get within one possession.

Detroit responded with another 10-0 run after three consecutive mid-range shots from Hayes.

Detroit's win ended a three-game losing streak, but the Pistons remain near the bottom of the Eastern Conference, ahead of only the Orlando Magic.



Japan Aiming for Best World Cup Finish

DOHA (Dispatches) - Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu said he was setting his sights on a best-ever finish for the country at the World Cup after they stunned Spain 2-1 to finish top of Group E.

The Blue Samurai will face Croatia in the next round, but Moriyasu is looking even further down the line, having beaten and helped eliminate four-time champions Germany.

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"The players are showing us a different and new view of being able to fight on the world stage.

"I would like to set a new record of the last eight or better."

Spain took the lead against Japan through Alvaro Morata's header, but like in their comeback against Germany, Moriyasu's side turned the game on its head after the break.

Ritsu Doan blasted home from outside the area in the 48th minute and three minutes later Ao Tanaka bundled home from on the goal-line.

The controversial goal was given after officials decided the ball had not gone out of play using VAR.

"First of all, concerning that goal, we were just playing to win," the coach told a press conference.

"We think that our intent materialised as a goal, whether the ball was out or not.

"There is great technology nowadays for 'big football' and if it was really out, it would have been a goal kick.

"The judgement of the referee was that it was in and we respected that. But we were willing to accept it either way, but the final judgement was that it was in."

Japan players collapsed at the full-time whistle, while the substitutes and staff raced on to the pitch in celebration of an enormous accomplishment.

"Big thanks to all our supporters, the people of Japan, for their support," added Moriyasu.

German FA Demands Analysis For World Cup Flop

DOHA (Dispatches) - The German Football Association (DFB) will next week launch a round of talks to identify the reasons for their second consecutive World Cup flop, after the team were eliminated in the group stage again on Thursday night.

Four-time champions Germany - who host the European Championship in 2024 - crashed out of the World Cup despite their 4-2 victory over Costa Rica in their last Group E match, tumbling at the first hurdle for the second consecutive tournament.

They had arrived in Qatar determined to restore their tarnished reputation after their shock 2018 group stage exit. Instead they finished third in the standings, level on four points with Spain but behind on goal difference, and they return home early to face scathing criticism.

"You can imagine that today there is deep disappointment," DFB President Bernd Neuendorf told reporters on Friday at Doha airport as the team prepared to return home.

"This elimination is extremely painful. But we have to look ahead and so we will lead a process on how to deal with this."

Germany will host Euro 2024 and following their shock World Cup exit, expectations - and pressure - have just increased many times over.

Neuendorf said a meeting would be held next week with national team coach Hansi Flick, team manager Oliver Bierhoff, and German Football league (DFL) CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke to discuss the latest debacle.

"The expectation is for the sporting direction to have a sporting analysis of this tournament and to also develop a prospect for after the tournament and the Euros (2024) on home soil," Neuendorf said. "It (analysis) must also include the development of the national team since 2018. This is the demand and claim that we have. Then we will have more talks."

The Germans suffered a similar first-round exit at the 2018 World Cup in Russia, their earliest departure in over 80 years at the time, but the once mighty tournament team had never before failed to win any of their first two group matches as in Qatar.

