

The 15th Joint Economic Commission Meeting of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Tajikistan Will Be Held in Tehran on December 5-6, 2022 as Iranian Energy Minister Will Host the Event

IRAN NEWS

Health Ministry Announced on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **144,640** With **Three** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

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Iran Oil Sales Rose 20% To 1.2m bpd in H1

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A member of Iran's parliament says oil sales by the country rose by 20% in the first half of the calendar year that started in late March against the previous six-month period to reach 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd).
 Mohammad Reza Pourebrahimi said that Iran had also increased its exports of petroleum products over the March-September period.
 The announcement confirms previous reports by global tanker tracking services which indicated that Iran has been increasing its oil exports in recent months despite a continued regime of US sanctions that bar countries and entities that have interests in the US from buying Iranian oil.
 Those reports have suggested that a bulk of Iranian oil shipments have been sold to private refineries in China.
 U.S. sanctions were imposed in 2018 after a former government in Washington pulled out of international deal on Iran's nuclear program. The bans were toughened in May 2019, leaving Iran with oil exports of as low as 300,000 bpd. **See Page 7**

Americans Unsuccessful In Creating Unipolar World



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri said that Americans acknowledge today that they have not been successful in the approach of unilateralism and creating a unipolar world.
 Speaking in a meeting with the visiting Russian Deputy Defense Minister for International Affairs Colonel General Alexander Fomin in Tehran on Saturday evening, he emphasized the development of bilateral, regional and international cooperation within the framework of the goals and national interests of the two countries as well as establishment of peace, stability and security in the region.
 General Baqeri reiterated that Americans today confess that they have not been successful in the approach of unilateralism and creating a unipolar world.
 Countering the common threats and cooperating in the field of common interests require more consultations which should be taken into consideration in the continuation of the development of cooperation, he underlined.
 General Baqeri went on to say that the two countries have had successful cooperation with each other in confronting terrorists in Syria, adding that Syria still needs the continuation of these supports.
 On the behalf of the Russia's Defense Minister, Fomin invited Major General Baqeri to attend the meeting of heads of the defense institutions of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)'s member states in Moscow.
 Russia's Deputy Defense Minister Fomin arrived in Tehran on Saturday at the head of a high-ranking military delegation to participate in the fourth meeting of the Joint Military Coop. Commission in Tehran.
 Meanwhile on Sunday, Baqeri underscored the high maritime security of the Persian Gulf region, saying there has been a significant decrease in the presence of extra-regional fleets in the strategic area as a result.
 "The significant reduction of extra-regional fleets in the Persian Gulf indicates the lasting security that the Islamic Republic of Iran has established in the region," Bagheri said on the sidelines of a visit to an airbase in the southern city of Bushehr.
 "The fully-established security in the region shows the accountability of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has been ensured with round-the-clock aerial and naval patrols."
 The chief of staff of the Iranian Armed Forces pointed to the outcomes of the aforementioned security for residents in the Persian Gulf region, saying, "Under the ensured security in the Persian Gulf, we are witnessing the daily activities of people and coastal residents in the highly strategic province of Bushehr in the field of maritime trade and fishing, as well as activities in the field of oil and gas."
 Bagheri also announced the full readiness and high capability of the military and law enforcement units, including the Army, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and the Defense Ministry, to protect the country's borders.
 The Iranian military and political officials have on numerous occasions said Iran will never compromise on defending the country's interests and resources, warning that the security of the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz is a "red line."
 They said the security of the Persian Gulf region should be established by regional countries, adding that there is no need for the presence of foreign forces in the international waterway.
 Iranian officials have also described Israel's destabilizing activities as the main source of insecurity in the region, warning regional countries about the perils of allowing Tel Aviv to establish a foothold in the region.

ViewPoint The Same Old Nonsense Claim

The U.S. Administration every now and then repeats its rubbish claim and threats against the Islamic Republic of Iran and it dusts off its option of "on the table" and renews it while Tehran gives no damn to it because of its reliable military power and determination.
 U.S. President Joe Biden during his presidential campaign used to reiterate that the U.S. wanted to return to the JCPOA which had been left by former President Donald Trump and since the first day in office, Biden has said that he wants talks and diplomacy but at the same time has stressed that he would consider military option if the talks do not work.
 U.S. Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley said President Biden is willing to take military action against Iran if Tehran rejects Washington's terms on the nuclear deal.
 The Iran nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), was an agreement signed in 2015 by Tehran with the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia and China, during the presidency of Barack Obama. However, Obama's successor Donald Trump abandoned the JCPOA in May 2018 and slapped cruel sanctions on Iran. Biden had vowed to resume talks to revive the Iran nuclear deal and remove the harsh US sanctions. Two years into the presidency, Biden has failed to keep his promise and is now threatening to take military action.
 In an interview with Foreign Policy's podcast Playlist broadcasted on Wednesday, Malley said Biden is prepared for a military option if nuclear talks between Washington and Tehran and others fail to reach an agreement.
 Malley said that Washington was exerting unprecedented pressure on Iran to accept the terms of the nuclear deal.
 "First, I think the president has made this clear, our priority is diplomacy. It's the proven way, the best way. It's the most sustainable way to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. And, that still remains our preference," he said, despite the fact that the Islamic Republic has repeatedly rejected US allegations that it is seeking to build a nuclear bomb.
 "Now, there are other tools that we are already using: pressure, international pressure, of a kind that Iran has not experienced for many many years," he added.
 "Remember under the Trump administration much of the world, including our three European allies in the negotiations, spent at least as much time blaming the US, as they were blaming Iran for its nuclear advances." **See Page 7**

Tax Revenues Top \$8.85b

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran collected around \$8.85 billion worth of tax in the eight months to November 21, according to a report that cites data from the Iranian National Tax Administration (INTA).
 The report by the semi-official Tasnim news agency said INTA's total tax receipts for the March-November period had exceeded 3,100 trillion rials.
 The report said the INTA had collected some 1,940 trillion rials in direct tax in the eight months to late November of which some 1,270 trillion rials were corporate receipts.
 Income receipts reached more than 550 trillion rials over March-November while tax on wealth generated 114 trillion rials over the same period, said the report.
 Tax on goods and services topped 1,160 trillion rials over the eight months to late November of which some 823 trillion rials were added value tax, the INTA figures showed.
 INTA's tax receipts dropped by 20% in the calendar month to late November to 400 trillion rials (\$1.14 billion), said the report by Tasnim.
 The Iranian government has sought to rely more on tax revenues in recent years to shore up finances hit by lower crude exports

Anti-Israel Protests Rage in Bahrain

MANAMA (Dispatches) - People in Bahrain have staged fresh demonstrations across the Persian Gulf country to reiterate their support for the Palestinian cause, and to condemn the establishment of full diplomatic relations with the Tel Aviv regime, and the visit by Israeli president Isaac Herzog to Manama.
 Protesters in the village of al-Markh chanted slogans in protest against the normalization of ties, voiced solidarity with the Palestinian nation in their struggle against the occupying Israeli regime and called for the expulsion of Israeli tourists from Bahrain.
 They chanted slogans including "We shall never accept humiliation," "Normalization is treason" and "Bahrain is the cemetery of Zionists". The demonstrators also trampled upon the Israeli flag.
 A similar rally was also held in the village of al-Daih, where participants held up placards against Herzog's visit and normalization of relations with Israel. They waved Palestinian national flags and chanted "Death to America" and "Death to Israel."
 Elsewhere in the coastal village of Dumistan, demonstrators called for the immediate and unconditional release of political prisoners. **See Page 7**

Kashmir Fruit Growers Demand Stiffer Controls on Iranian Apple Imports

SRINAGAR (Dispatches) - Kashmiri apple growers are demanding that the Indian government take strong action to stop the alleged illicit movement of Iranian apples through Afghanistan to markets in India, saying the practice is depressing prices and undermining a \$150 million (12 billion Indian rupees) in annual regional industry.
 The growers say there is evidence that the Iranian apples are being shipped through Afghanistan so they can be imported into India duty free under the terms of the eight-country South Asian Free Trade Area. Iran is not a party to the agreement.
 "We don't want a ban on Iranian apples. Rather we want that they should be imported to India through legal means by paying the import duty. After paying proper taxes, it will no longer be cheaper any more in Indian market," said Mir Mohammad Amin, a grower and trader from South Kashmir's Shopian district.
 Kashmir's cool climate makes it a favored region for growing fruit and nuts, some 2.6 million tons of which are shipped annually to more than 150 markets across India as well as overseas. The apple industry alone is an important source of livelihood for 3.5 million people in Indian-administered Kashmir.
 But a large share of this year's bumper crop is sitting unsold in cold storage sites, the result of a combination of unusual transport problems and, the Kashmiri growers say, unfair competition from Iran. "We still have lot of apple produce in our godowns and [climate controlled] stores that will get a hit because of the import of Iranian apples to various coastal states of India," said Bashir Ahmad Bashir, chairman of the Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers/Dealers Union. **See Page 7**

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4 Rioters Convicted of Links to Mossad Executed

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's judiciary has announced that four rioters convicted of links to the Zionist regime of Israel's intelligence service Mossad were executed early on Sunday.

The statement by the judiciary identified the four convicts as Hossein Ordukhazadeh, Shahin Imani Mahmoudabad, Milad Ashrafi Atbatan and Manouchehr Shahbandi Bejandi. The four men had been arrested in June by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC). A court later sentenced them to death for intelligence cooperation with the Zionist regime and for kidnapping.

The group had received instructions from Mossad officers on how to use battle rifles for kidnapping purposes while being paid in return with cryptocurrencies, according to a previous IRGC statement.

Heads of State Stress Vigilance Against Enemy's Seditions

TEHRAN (MNA) - The heads of the three power branches of the Iranian government emphasized the necessity of being more vigilance by the noble nation of Iran against enemies' undocumented, false news and attempts to create seditions.

In a joint and regular meeting between Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Judiciary Chief Mohseni Ejei on Saturday evening, as hosted by Iranian President Raisi, they called on Iranian nation to be vigilant against enemies' undocumented, false news and their attempts to create seditions in the Islamic Establishment.

After pointing to the recent seditions and foreign-backed riots in the country, the heads of three power branches considered the false and unsubstantiated news of enemies of the country 'as a part of psychological operations.'



The top authorities rejected media warfare waged by the enemies of the country and said that the noble nation of Islamic Iran has shown that they will not be affected by such fake news warfare waged against the Islamic Establishment which is aimed at undermining the stability of the society.

Ayatollah Khamenei Replies To Letter by Schoolgirls

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has replied to a letter by a group of high school girls who had missed a face-to-face meeting with Ayatollah Khamenei on November 4.

In the letter published on Sunday, the students expressed their love and commitment to Iran's leadership and said they would do their best to make the country more stable and powerful in the future.

In his reply to the letter, Ayatollah Khamenei recommended the students to boost their morale for building a prosperous Iran.

"My dear children, may God's blessing be with you. Always boost the spirit of hope and hard work and progress in yourself. The future of the country belongs to you; prepare yourself for building and adorning it in the best manner. I will pray for you. May you attain success with the help of God," Ayatollah Khamenei said in his short response to the letter.

Tehran, Moscow Agree on Mechanism For Fostering Relations

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ali Bagheri Kani said that Tehran and Moscow have agreed on a mechanism for advancing towards relations.



Iran and Russia enjoy good cooperation in the Caucasus area and their relations are not limited to the issue of Syria, Bagheri Kani who is now in Moscow, said while speaking about his meetings with Russian officials.

About his Moscow visit, the official noted that the two sides reviewed bilateral ties in recent months.

He went on to say that the two countries have a very good regional cooperation in the issue of Afghanistan to provide security for that country.

Speaking about the details of his travel to Moscow, the official underlined that interactions are underway between the foreign ministries of Iran and the neighboring states.

Such interactions prepare the ground for strengthening and deepening relations in all areas, in the field of economy in particular; and they can support the establishment of stability and security in the region.

U.S. Misuses Int'l Entities to Pressure Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The United States misuses international organizations, human rights, and women's rights in order to put pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran in order to reach its desired goal, an Iranian lawmaker said.

Fereydoun Abbasi said that following World War II, a new mechanism of international interaction was formed and the West used international entities to dominate the world, so they have been ruling the institutes for nearly 70 years and are now resorting to the organizations to advance their goals instead of using colonial methods.

Every country in the world, which follows the Westerners' hegemonic policies, will be exempted from the West's accusations, even if the state violates human rights, but an independent country like Iran is always being accused of such issues, the legislator noted.

The Islamic Revolution in Iran helped the country get rid of the US and the UK dominance, he said, adding that the decision-making headquarters on the Iranian nation moved from Washington to Tehran; therefore, the West is unhappy with the Islamic country and has been pursuing regime change in Iran via coup and war.

According to the MP, the independence and progress of the Iranians proved that a country can resolve its own problems without relying on the West, and this issue is not agreeable to the US; thus, the American authorities imposed economic sanctions on the Iranian nation, but they did not reach the expected result and put pressures relating to human rights issues on agenda.

In the UN Human Rights Council, the Western powers condemned the Islamic Republic on the recent unrest and questioned the judicial system in Iran, while they are expected to avoid interfering in internal affairs of other countries, he added.

The enemies do not want to witness progress in Iran, so they resort to new scenarios to harm the Islamic establishment, but the Iranian nation will stand against the plots by resorting to vigilance and empathy.

West Resorts to Human Rights to Derail JCPOA Talks

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The new verbal attacks by the West against Iran on human rights allegations are being orchestrated with the aim of derailing the negotiations on the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal and the removal of anti-Iran sanctions, an Iranian legislator believes.

Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi, a member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of the Majlis (the Parliament), said that they raise human rights issues, while the United States and Europe have the grimmest dossier in terms of human rights around the globe.

The nuclear talks with Iran have not borne pleasant fruit for the Western powers because they wanted to impose their own demands on the Iranians concerning restriction of nuclear and missile breakthroughs in the Islamic country, he noted.

Thus, they pursue a three-stage plan to replace the nuclear issues with human rights claims, resort to international organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to tighten their grip on Iran, and put pressure on Iranian officials by the use of sanctions, he argued.

The Western attitude toward Iran emerges when they have a long history of violating human rights and supporting regimes like the Zionist regime, which has a long record of occupying lands, killing women and children, and torturing men along with carrying out illegal and unannounced atomic activities, the MP added.

He went on to say that the West utilizes its media empire to downplay its own crimes and exaggerate small mistakes or weaknesses of the Islamic Republic in order to turn the issues into a tool to be used against the Islamic System.

Given the fact that the UN human rights resolution against Iran is being pursued by the West in order to manage public opinion in the world, the diplomatic capacities of the country should be used properly to inform the officials and ordinary people around the globe of the stances of the Islamic Republic, the lawmaker said.

Tehran, Baghdad to Enhance Ties in Health Diplomacy

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran and Iraq are to bolster relations in health diplomacy, Pir-Hossein Kolivand, the head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) said.

Iran is trying to serve sick pilgrims in Iraq by completing Imam Ali hospital in Najaf as quickly as possible, Kolivand said in a meeting with the head of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Force (Hashd al-Shaabi) Falihi al-Fayyadh.

Both states cooperated in holding the latest Arbaeen ceremony, he said, calling for making plans for the next edition of the event.

IRCS has rendered services to the Iranian pilgrims, he said, noting that the entity has also delivered services to the Iraqi pilgrims.

Synergy must be increased between Iran and Iraq so that all wards of the under-construction hospital should be launched as quickly as possible, he noted.

The two countries enjoy the capacity to cooperate more in the field of health diplomacy so that the nations of Iran and Iraq come together in all areas, he further noted.

Self-Sufficiency in Nuclear Energy Nullified Health Sanctions

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami said that the country's self-sufficiency in the nuclear energy neutralized the health- and medical-related sanctions.

About 210 nuclear medicine centers currently use the radiopharmaceuticals produced by the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, and about one million people in the country benefit from these services every year, he said on Sunday.

Rendering quality services to people is considered as the most important achievement of the nuclear industry of the country, he added.

To deal with cancer disease, the healthcare and medical treatment sector needs products of the Organization both in the diagnostic and

therapeutic fields, Eslami emphasized.

Eslami also expounded on the achievements of AEOI in the healthcare and treatment sector, saying that giant steps have been taken in the previous years in a way that AEOI unveiled three new radiopharmaceuticals in the past three years.

About 210 nuclear medical centers in the country are using products of the AEOI, he noted.

The country would have depended on foreign countries in the field of pharmaceuticals if it was not able to produce fuel for the Tehran reactor and in absence of the nuclear industry, he underlined.

Contrary to the Western countries' claims about human rights, requirements of the health sector are the most important part of the human rights that have been sanctioned by them, Eslami criticized.

3.3% of Iranians Migrated In a Single Year

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian principlist newspaper Javan has said some 2.8 million Iranians migrated to foreign countries in the past year. The figure accounts for 3.3 percent of the total population.

According to Javan Newspaper, the migrants include 160 heart specialists. During the period, 30 thousand medical staff members also called for clear criminal record certificates and their destination has been Oman, a sultanate in the Persian Gulf.

Reports also say 37 percent of top students who pass the universities entrance exams or pass the scientific Olympiad tests are among those who leave Iran for foreign countries.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's administration has been making efforts to reverse this trend since he took office over a year ago.

Iran, Russia Can Use Export Capacities to Boost Mutual Trade

TEHRAN (IRNA) - A top official at Iran's Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization said on Saturday that the export capacities of Iran and Russia can pave the ground for the further promotion of trade ties between the two countries.

Azizollah Qorbani, deputy head of ISIPIO for small industries, made the comments in a meeting with a group of Russian economic operators in Tehran.

He said that many small and medium-sized companies are now active in Iran, which are capable enough and can significantly contribute to boosting trade exchanges between the two sides.

The official said that Russian economic operators can pay visits to Iran's industrial parks in order to assess ground for the promotion of bilateral trade relations.

The Russians present in the Saturday meeting represented more than 30 companies.

They were the latest Russian delegates to visit Iran over the past months.

Iran Has High Potential to Diversify Energy, Transit Routes

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Georgian economy minister has said that Iran has high potential to become a transit hub for the transfer of goods and energy to Europe.

Levan Davitashvili Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia made the comments in a meeting with Iran's ambassador to Tbilisi Mahmoud Adib.

Referring to the world's current need for energy and Georgia's location as the linking point for corridors with Europe, Adib reminded the need for using that advantage to carry out transportation and transit and energy transfer projects.

Referring to agreements with neighboring countries for energy transfer and swap, the Georgian minister said, "Iran has a high capacity for diversifying energy and commodity routes due to its location on the south-north and east-west corridors."

Davitashvili called cooperation in the field of information technology, high-speed internet and electricity swap among other areas that can be taken into account to work on in the form of tripartite agreements with neighboring countries.

Iran, India Ink MoU On Academic Cooperation

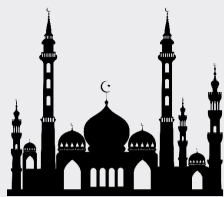
TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's Tarbiat Modares University (TMU) and Indian Institute of Technology Delhi have signed a MoU on academic cooperation.

Iran's TMU is to cooperate with the Indian entity in the field of science, education, research, and technology.

The MoU will be valid based on the provisions enshrined in the document for five years.

The Institute keeps its position in the 701-800 group in the Shanghai ranking of the world's top universities.

Earlier on November 30, the TMU inked a Memorandum of Understanding with Russia's Saint Petersburg State University (SPBU).



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:55
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:10
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:30
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:00

56. And We showed Pharaoh all Our Signs, but he did reject and refuse.
57. He said: "Hast thou come to drive us out of our land with thy magic, O Moses?"
Surah 20. Ta-ha (56 - 57)

Iran on Verge of Becoming a Gas Importing Country

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Former Head of National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) Hamid Reza Araqi says currently gas production is leaning on decline and the more time passes, the production decline is getting intensified and in the next years Iran will be completely a gas importing country.

Speaking to ILNA, Araqi talked about Qatar's gas plans in its joint gas fields with Iran and said that South Pars is a joint reservoir and both parties can extract from it as much as they can, adding that of course it has an international treaty that restricts both sides to extract the fields according to the international standards and currently Qatar is signing contracts and it recovers more while Iran because of lack of investment is unable to recover more.

He noted that currently South Pars fields have reached the stage where they need to increase the pressure, and it costs and it needs new technology for having horizontal exploitation while the Phase 11 of South Pars is progressing sluggishly and it lacks horizontal exploitation, new investment and boosting pressure. He admitted that the trend of job is not ideal and Qatar invests and uses new technology and signs contracts with big companies and it meets the demand of the world's gas need and also takes more gas in the future, adding



that the Iran's side of wells see drop and there is no investment and the country is unable to import new technology.

Araqi reiterated that currently the gas production is facing downward trend and the more time passes, this decline will be intensified and the country will turn into a gas importing country and the oil ministry, government and Majlis should think of technology and investment and increase the pressure.

He went on to say that country is facing with a serious gas crisis, adding that for example in the winter gas supply for industries should be restricted and gas for households should not be cut because any disrupt in gas supply for households may lead to social crisis and if the gas supply for industries is restricted, economic crisis will happen in the country and industries like petrochemicals, steel and power plants will face problems and they will be pushed to move towards using the second fuel and it will lead to more air pollution.

He also called for reinforcing the pressure system in the gas fields and upgrading the technology and investment in new energies. He also urged the government and Majlis to focus on long-term projects and they need to make the nation aware of their decisions and make the difficult decision. He noted that today all part of the country is linked to gas energy and there is no network in the world like Iran because we have many transmission lines and reinforcing power stations.

Araqi reiterated that NIGC is unable to resolve the problem by itself and the oil ministry, government and Majlis should define a solution for this problem.

Using Capabilities of Knowledge-Based in Producing Products With High Value Added

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade and Head of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) during his visit to the 19th



International Metallurgical Exhibition, Iran METAFO, stipulated they can produce products with high value added in the field of steel by using state-of-art knowhow and knowledge-based companies.

Ali Nabavi said that Esfarayen Industrial Complex as one of the subsidiaries of IDRO, which is unique in the region in producing alloy products, should distance itself from producing general products and move towards producing much more specialized products with higher value added, and to this end they naturally need to use knowhow and knowledge-based companies.

He added that these exhibitions are good opportunities for exchange of information and displaying the latest products and expressed hope that due to holding METAFO exhibition, a good climate would be provided for producers and the knowledge-based companies, and therefore it leads to improvement in productions and better quality products.

The 19th International Metallurgical Exhibition, Iran METAFO, was held on Nov.30-Dec. 3 at Tehran's Permanent International Fairground.

Iran Cereal Production Rises 17.3%

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Cereal production in Iran is estimated to grow 17.3 percent in the current crop year compared to the previous year, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)'s latest Crop Prospects and Food Situation report released on December 2.



Based on the said report, the Islamic Republic produced 20.8 million tons of cereals in the current year, 3.59 million tons more than the figure for the previous year.

According to FAO, Near East countries' total cereal production in 2022 is estimated at 70.6 million tons, about 0.5 million tons below the previous five-year average, but about 12 percent above the drought-affected output in 2021.

"The partial production recovery [of the mentioned region] at the aggregate level is mostly accounted for by increases in Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran," the report said.

"In the Islamic Republic of Iran, cereal production recovered and is estimated at 20.8 million tons, an increase of 17.3 percent compared to 2021, but still slightly below the average," the FAO report read.

FAO estimates Iran's wheat production in the 2022 crop year to be 13 million tons, registering a significant growth of 25 percent compared to the previous year. Iran produced 10.4 million tons of wheat last year.

Rice production also reached 3.5 million tons in the current year, 20 percent more than the 2.9 million tons in the previous crop year.

The significant growth of Iran's cereal production comes as, according to FAO's estimates, world cereal production this year faced a two percent drop compared to the previous year and reached 2.756 billion tons.

FAO has estimated Iran's total cereal stocks at 12.7 million tons at the end of 2022. According to FAO's expectations, Iran's grain stocks will grow by 23 percent this year compared to the previous year.

Shrimp Exports to Russia Up by 350% This Year

TEHRAN (MNA) - Deputy Minister of Agriculture on Saturday said that the country's export of shrimp to the Russian Federation has increased up more than three times since the beginning of this year in 1401 (started March 21).

Seyed Hossein Hosseini, the Head of Iranian Fisheries Organization said that Iran's exports of shrimp to Russia has risen up to three and a half fold from March 21 to Dec. 3, showing a considerable hike as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

Given the geographical situation and proximity of Gomishan, Golestan province, to the water border, this capacity can be used for extraterritorial cultivation with the neighboring country and to activate economic diplomacy as well, he added.

Hosseini considered the investment for producing aquatics and stability of production in farming shrimp in Gomishan area as 'necessary' and added that proper investment in this sector will create more benefits for the prosperity of the region.

More than 3,000 tons of shrimp were caught in harvesting season of this year, showing more than twice as compared to the previous year, the Deputy Ministry of Agriculture added.

Emphasis on Reinforcing Pressure in South Pars

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Managers and experts of Research Center of Majlis paid a visit to South Pars projects last week.

According to the public relations of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGS), managers and experts of Research Center of Majlis paid a two-day visit to Assalouyeh where they inspected the latest developments in the projects and especially Phase 14 of South Pars and visited the construction site of the onshore reinforcing pressure station and during the visit they were informed of the latest details of the projects and their progresses.

In the meeting, the CEO of POGS Mr. Mohammad Hossein Motejalli welcomed the visit and called it important and called for holding specialized meetings for removal of problems in different fields.

He noted that attention of the state bodies to the issue of increasing the pressure and maintaining production from South Pars is very important, adding that regarding the rise in gas consumption and serious concern in the unbalance between consumption and production in the future, it is



expected the officials to take prudent decisions and the consumption pattern needs to be corrected.

He reiterated that according to the approved plan, the company is assigned to produce 700m cubic meters of gas per day and currently with using all capacities and even the offshore platforms, this amount of gas is produced in order to avoid any unbalance but it needs the consumption pattern is corrected otherwise in the future the country will face problem for gas supply.

\$10m Investment of IRISL in Salianka Port of Russia

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Development of Salianka Port in Russia by the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line Group (IRISL) with an investment of \$10m will continue in line with the emphasis of the 13th government in field of pick-up in the North-South Corridor.

IRISL Group issued a report on latest development regarding development in Salianka Port of Russia that the group is in charge of its development. The report says the executive program for developing Salianka Port has started less than one year ago and it moves ahead with full speed due to good cooperation between the national diplomacy apparatus and getting the required licenses from the Russians.

The group has equipped the port with required machineries like cranes and lift trucks as the reforms are aimed at increasing the export capability of the export by 30% and import capabilities by 45% comparing to the same period last year.

Concurrent with development operation, the portal operation in this port was underway and the first transit container shipment from the North-South Corridor from Salianka Port to the destination in South Asia has been done in the current year in order that this port could practically join the cycle of activities of the port.

The report also goes into details of developmental plant in this Russian port and equipping it by IRISL group as the group has purchased 32-ton cranes for boosting the capacity of loading and unloading especially for shipment of 40-feet containers which are mainly used for transit of goods.

Development of Salianka Port will lead to a new era for trade between the two countries especially for Iranian traders.



Iran, Iraq Form Joint Oil Working Group

TEHRAN (MNA) - The oil ministries of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq announced their agreement to establish a joint oil working group.

Following several meetings between the representative of the oil minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraqi oil officials, the two sides agreed to establish a joint working group, Shana reported.

The working group, which was established as a parent working group with the approach of increasing discussion and exchange of views about joint cases in the field of energy in two neighboring countries, benefits from the help of several specialized working groups, including in the field of joint fields, education, etc.

So far, numerous meetings have been held between the Iranian and Iraqi members of this working group, and some common issues, including the joint oil fields of the two countries, have been discussed and exchanged in these meetings.

Australian MPs Delegation to Visit Taiwan

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - A group of Australian MPs will leave Sunday for a five-day visit to Taiwan, a spokesman for one of the politicians said Saturday, risking China's ire just as Beijing-Canberra relations appeared to be thawing.

The bipartisan trip will be the first such Taiwan visit in more than three years, a period marked by a long disruption to air travel caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Details of the visit were confirmed to AFP by a spokesman for Scott Buchholz, a conservative MP who is in the delegation. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese sought to play down the mission's significance after it was first reported by the Weekend Australian newspaper.



El Salvador Deploys 10,000 Troops To Gang-Run Capital Suburb

SAN SALVADOR (Dispatches) - El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele announced the deployment of 10,000 security forces to a suburb of San Salvador known to be a stronghold for gangs.

The move is the latest escalation in a crusade against gang violence that began in March, which human rights groups say has been marred by unjustified detentions.

"Soyapango is totally surrounded," the president wrote on Twitter early Saturday, referring to the municipality in the eastern part of the capital region known to be a stronghold of the Mara Salvatrucha and Barrio 18 gangs.



Russia Not to Accept Oil Price Cap



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia "will not accept" a price cap on its oil and is analyzing how to respond, the Kremlin said in comments reported on Saturday, in response to a deal by Western powers aimed at limiting a key source of funding for its war in Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow had made preparations for Friday's price cap announcement by the Group of Seven nations, the European Union and Australia, the Russian state news agency TASS reported.

"We will not accept this cap," RIA news agency quoted him as saying. He added that Russia would conduct a rapid analysis of the agreement and respond after that, RIA reported.

Russia has repeatedly said it will not supply oil to countries that implement the cap - a stance reaffirmed by Mikhail Ulyanov, Moscow's ambassador to international organizations in Vienna, in posts on social media on Saturday.

"Starting from this year Europe will live without Russian oil," he said.

The G7 price cap will allow non-EU countries to continue importing seaborne Russian crude oil, but it will prohibit shipping, insurance and re-insurance companies from handling cargoes of Russian crude around the globe, unless it is sold for less than \$60. That could complicate the shipment of Russian crude priced above the cap, even to countries which are not part of the agreement.

Russian Urals crude traded at around \$67 a barrel on Friday.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said the cap will particularly benefit low- and medium-income countries that have borne the brunt of high energy and food prices.

"With Russia's economy already contracting and its budget increasingly stretched thin, the price cap will immediately cut into (President Vladimir) Putin's most important source of revenue," Yellen said in a statement.

In comments published on Telegram, Russia's embassy in the United States criticized what it called the "dangerous" Western move and said Moscow would continue to find buyers for its oil.

"Steps like these will inevitably result in increasing uncertainty and imposing higher costs for raw materials' consumers," it said.

"Regardless of the current flirtations with the dangerous and illegitimate instrument, we are confident that Russian oil will continue to be in demand."

Tunisia Trade Union

"No Longer Accepts" President's Agenda

TUNIS (Dispatches) - Tunisia's powerful labour union has issued its clearest challenge to President Kais Saied yet, rejecting his political and economic agenda and saying it will not tolerate what it called a threat to democracy.

"We no longer accept the current path because of its ambiguity and individual rule, and the unpleasant surprises it hides for the fate of the country and democracy," Noureddine Taboubi, leader of the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT), said in a speech to thousands of supporters on Saturday.

"We will not hesitate to defend rights and freedoms whatever the cost," he added.

Saied shut down the elected parliament last year and moved to rule by decree before writing a new constitution that was passed mid-year in a referendum with low turnout, setting up elections for a new, weakened legislature. The president's critics have denounced his moves as a coup and have held repeated street protests. Saied has said his actions were necessary to save Tunisia.

Myanmar Military Uses Death Penalty to Crush Opposition

GENEVA (Dispatches) - UN rights chief Volker Turk said that more than 130 opponents of Myanmar's military regime have been sentenced to death.

Myanmar's military government is using capital punishment as a tool to crush opposition to its rule and has sentenced more than 130 opponents of the regime to death since February 2021, a senior United Nations official said.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said on Friday that at least seven university students were sentenced to death behind closed doors on Wednesday, and there are reports that as many as four more youth activists were also sentenced on Thursday.

Turk called for a suspension of all executions and for Myanmar's military rulers to place a moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

"The military continues to hold proceedings in secretive courts in violation of basic principles of fair trial and contrary to core judicial guarantees of independence and impartiality," he said in a statement.

The military had also shown a disdain for regional and international peace efforts "by resorting to use death sentences as a political tool to crush opposition", the UN chief said.

The Students' Union of Dagon University in Yangon - the country's largest city - announced on Thursday that seven

university students between the ages of 18 and 24 who were arrested on April 21 had been sentenced to death on Wednesday by a military court in Yangon's Insein prison.

An executive member of the Dagon University Students' Union told The Associated Press that the seven were accused of links to an urban armed movement opposed to military rule and were convicted of murder for allegedly taking part in shooting a bank branch manager in April.

About 2,000 people have also been killed since the military seized power and toppled the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, said Duwa Lashi La, the head of a parallel civilian government established in opposition to the military regime.

Duwa Lashi La, the acting president of the National Unity Government (NUG), which is comprised of remnants of the administration of deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi and others, told Reuters on Thursday that the death toll was high but it was "the price we must pay" to resist the military.

The crushing of peaceful protests against military rule has now fuelled a popular armed resistance movement and that, in turn, has increased repression by the military, particularly in rural areas.



Thousands Protest in South Korea In Support of Truckers

SEOUL (Dispatches) - Thousands of demonstrators representing organized labor marched in South Korea's capital denouncing government attempts to force thousands of striking truckers back to work after they walked out in a dispute over the price of freight.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or major clashes from the protests near the National Assembly in Seoul. The marchers, mostly members of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, accused President Yoon Suk Yeol's conservative government of labor oppression and ignoring what they described as the truckers' harsh work conditions and financial struggles, worsened further by rising fuel costs.

The government on Tuesday issued an order for some 2,500 drivers of cement trucks to return to work, saying that their walkout is rattling the national economy. It wasn't immediately clear how many truckers returned to their jobs following the order as their union vowed to continue the strike. Thousands of members of the Cargo Truckers Solidarity union have been striking since last week, calling for the government to make permanent a minimum

freight rate system that is to expire at the end of 2022.

While the minimum fares are currently applied to shipping containers and cement, the strikers also call for the benefits to be expanded to other cargo. That would include oil and chemical tankers, steel and automobile carriers and package delivery trucks under the broader agreement.

Container traffic at ports recovered to 81% of normal levels as of Saturday morning after dropping to around just 20% earlier this week, according to the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport. It said more than 5,000 truckers were actively participating in the strike on Saturday.

Tuesday's order marked the first time a South Korean government exercised its controversial powers under a law revised in 2004 to force truckers back to their jobs.

A failure to comply without "justifiable reason" is punishable by up to three years in jail or a maximum fine of 30 million won (\$22,400). Critics say the law infringes on constitutional rights because it doesn't clearly define what qualifies as acceptable conditions for a strike.



Indian State to Proceed "No Matter What" With Protest-Hit Adani Port

KOZHIKODE (Dispatches) - India's Kerala state will proceed "no matter what" with a \$900 million port project and is open to deploying federal police if needed to protect it from protesters blocking construction, a government minister told Reuters.

The local fishing community, led by Catholic priests, has blocked construction of Vizhinjam port by Adani Group for almost four months, erecting a makeshift shelter at the port's entrance. The protesters say the huge project causes coastal erosion that has undermined their livelihoods, calling for a complete halt on the construction.

Adani Group, led by Asia's richest man Gautam Adani, and the Kerala government, which is shouldering two-thirds of the project cost with the federal government, have denied such accusations. Clashes between police and protesters last weekend injured more than 100 people, including 64 police.

Although the protesters have refused to budge, Kerala's minister of ports, Ahammed Devarkovil, said the government of the southern state was hopeful of resolving the deadlock but there was no chance it would halt construction.

"We want to complete the port project no matter what. No compromise can be made on that," he said in an interview. "Because these are civilians protesting, the government's position is to take this forward without inflicting any harm" on protesters.

Asked for comment on Devarkovil's remarks, a protest leader, Fredy Solomon, said protests would continue as "houses and livelihoods of thousands of fishermen are at stake."

Adani Group did not immediately respond to an email request for comment. The conglomerate has repeatedly urged a state court to authorize having the federal police guard the project so work may resume, saying local police were "mute spectators".

Minister Devarkovil said Kerala remains open to the idea of deploying the federal Central Reserve Police Force. Adani wants to complete the first phase of construction by December 2024, but Devarkovil said his government was hopeful of getting the first vessel to the port by September next year, even as construction continues. It wants to make up for lost time by deploying workers to work extra hours and putting more industrial equipment to use.

Beijing, Shenzhen Scrap Covid-19 Tests For Public Transport

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Chinese authorities on Saturday announced a further easing of COVID-19 curbs with major cities such as Shenzhen and Beijing no longer requiring negative tests to take public transport.

The slight relaxation of testing requirements comes even as daily virus infections reach near-record highs, and follows weekend protests across the country by residents frustrated by the rigid enforcement of anti-virus restrictions that are now entering their fourth year, even as the rest of the world has opened up.

The southern technological manufacturing center of Shenzhen said Saturday that commuters no longer need to show a negative COVID-19 test result to use public transport or when entering pharmacies, parks and tourist attractions.

Meanwhile, the capital Beijing said Friday that negative test results are also no longer required for public transport from Monday. However, a negative result obtained within the past 48 hours is still required to enter venues like shopping malls, which have gradually reopened with many restaurants and eateries providing takeout services.

The requirement has led to complaints from some Beijing residents that even though the city has shut many testing stations, most public venues still require COVID-19 tests. The government reported 33,018 domestic infections in the past 24 hours, including 29,085 with no symptoms.

As the rest of the world has learned to live with the virus, China remains the only major nation still sticking to a "zero-COVID" strategy which aims to isolate every infected person. The policy, which has been in place since the pandemic started, led to snap lockdowns and mass testing across the country.

China still imposes mandatory quarantine for incoming travelers even as its infection numbers are low compared to its 1.4 billion population.

The recent demonstrations, the largest and most widely spread in decades, erupted Nov. 25 after a fire in an apartment building in the northwestern city of Urumqi killed at least 10 people.

That set off angry questions online about whether firefighters or victims trying to escape were blocked by locked doors or other anti-virus controls. Authorities denied that, but the deaths became a focus of public frustration.



Musk's Company Aims To Soon Test Brain Implant in people



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Tech billionaire Elon Musk said his Neuralink company is seeking permission to test its brain implant in people soon.

In a "show and tell" presentation livestreamed Wednesday night, Musk said his team is in the process of asking U.S. regulators to allow them to test the device. He said he thinks the company should be able to put the implant in a human brain as part of a clinical trial in about six months, though that timeline is far from certain.

Musk's Neuralink is one of many groups working on linking brains to computers, efforts aimed at helping treat brain disorders, overcoming brain injuries and other applications.

The field dates back to the 1960s, said Rajesh Rao, co-director of the Center for Neurotechnology at the University of Washington. "But it really took off in the 90s. And more recently we've seen lots of advances, especially in the area of communication brain computer interfaces."

Rao, who watched Musk's presentation online, said he doesn't think Neuralink is ahead of the pack in terms of brain-computer interface achievements. "But ... they are quite ahead in terms of the actual hardware in the devices," he said.

The Neuralink device is about the size of a large coin and is designed to be implanted in the skull, with ultra-thin wires going directly into the brain. Musk said the first two applications in people would be restoring vision and helping people with little or no ability to operate their muscles rapidly use digital devices.

He said he also envisions that in someone with a broken neck, signals from the brain could be bridged to Neuralink devices in the spinal cord.

"We're confident there are no physical limitations to enabling full body functionality," said Musk, who recently took over Twitter and is the CEO of Tesla and SpaceX.

In experiments by other teams, implanted sensors have let paralyzed people use brain signals to operate computers and move robotic arms. In a 2018 study in the journal PLOS ONE, three participants with paralysis below the neck affecting all of their limbs used an experimental brain-computer interface being tested by the consortium BrainGate. The interface records neural activity from a small sensor in the brain to navigate things like email and apps.

A recent study in the journal Nature, by scientists at the Swiss research center NeuroRestore, identified a type of neuron activated by electrical stimulation of the spinal cord, allowing nine patients with chronic spinal cord injury to walk again.

Researchers have also been working on brain and machine interfaces for restoring vision. Rao said some companies have developed retinal implants, but Musk's announcement suggested his team would use signals directly targeting the brain's visual cortex, an approach that some academic groups are also pursuing, "with limited success."

Neuralink spokespeople did not immediately respond to an email to the press office. Dr. Jaimie Henderson, a neurosurgery professor at Stanford University who is an adviser for Neuralink, said one way Neuralink is different than some other devices is that it has the ability to reach into deeper layers of the brain. But he added: "There are lots of different systems that have lots of different advantages."

In New Role as G-20 Chair, India Set To Focus on Climate



BENGALURU (Dispatches) - India officially took up its role as chair of the Group of 20 leading economies for the coming year Thursday and it's putting climate at the top of the group's priorities.

Programs to encourage sustainable living and money for countries to transition to clean energy and deal with the effects of a warming world are some of the key areas that India will focus on during its presidency, experts say. Some say India will also use its new position to boost its climate credentials and act as a bridge between the interests of industrialized nations and developing ones.

The country has made considerable moves toward its climate goals in recent years but is currently one of the world's top emitters of planet-warming gases.

The G-20, made up of the world's largest economies, has a rolling presidency with a different member state in charge of the group's agenda and priorities each year. Experts believe India will use the "big stage" of the G-20 presidency to drive forward its climate and development plans.

The country "will focus heavily on responding to the current and future challenges posed by climate change," said Samir Saran, president of the Observer Research Foundation, a New Delhi-based think tank. The ORF will be anchoring the T-20 — a group of think tanks from the 20 member countries whose participants meet alongside the G-20.

Saran said that India will work to ensure that money is flowing from rich industrialized nations to emerging economies to help them combat global warming, such as a promise of \$100 billion a year for clean energy and adapting to climate change for poorer nations that has not yet been fulfilled and a recent pledge to vulnerable countries that there will be a fund for the loss and damage caused by extreme weather.

He added that India will also use the presidency to push its flagship "Mission Life" program that encourages more sustainable lifestyles in the country, which is set to soon become most populous in the world.

When outgoing chair Indonesia symbolically handed the presidency to India in Bali last month by passing the gavel, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the opportunity to promote the program, saying it could make "a big contribution" by turning sustainable living into "a mass movement."

The impact of lifestyle "has not received as much attention in the global discourse as it should," said RR Rashmi, a distinguished fellow at The Energy Research Institute in New Delhi. He added that the issue "may get some prominence" at the G-20 which would be a success for the Indian government, but critics say the focus on lifestyle changes must be backed by policy to have credibility.

India has been beefing up its climate credentials, with its recent domestic targets to transition to renewable energy more ambitious than the goals it submitted to the U.N. as part of the Paris Agreement, which requires countries to show how they plan to limit warming to temperature targets set in 2015.

Analysts say nations' climate ambitions and actions — including India's — are not in line with temperature targets.

Many of India's big industrialists are investing heavily in renewable energy domestically as well as globally, but the Indian government is also preparing to invest in coal-based power plants at the cost of \$33 billion over the next four years.

At the U.N. climate conference last month, India — currently the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases — proposed a phaseout of all fossil fuels and repeatedly emphasized the need to revamp global climate finance. The country says it cannot reach its climate goals and reduce carbon dioxide emissions without significantly more finance from richer nations, a claim which those countries dispute.



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China Central Bank to Support Growth

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's central bank will focus on supporting the slowing economy, People's Bank of China Governor Yi Gang said, adding that domestic consumer inflation is likely to stay moderate in 2023.

The central bank's accommodative policy will help support China's economic recovery and employment, Yi said in a video speech to the Bank of Thailand-BIS conference in Bangkok.

"Our focus is growth right now," Yi said, adding that China's economic growth is slower than expected due to the impact from the COVID-19 pandemic and other headwinds.

Yi said advanced and emerging-market economies should improve policy collaboration to cope with challenges facing the global economy.



EU Reaches Deal for \$60-Per-Barrel Price Cap on Russian Oil

BRUSSELS (AP) - The European Union reached a deal Friday for a \$60-per-barrel price cap on Russian oil, a key step as Western sanctions aim to reorder the global oil market to prevent price spikes and starve President Vladimir Putin of funding for his war in Ukraine.

After a last-minute flurry of negotiations, the EU presidency, held by the Czech Republic, tweeted that "ambassadors have just reached an agreement on price cap for Russian seaborne #oil." The decision must still be officially approved with a written procedure but is expected to go through.

Europe needed to set the discounted price that other nations will pay by Monday, when an EU embargo on Russian oil shipped by sea and a ban on insurance for those supplies take effect. The price cap, which was led by the Group of Seven wealthy democracies and still needs their approval, aims to prevent a sudden loss of Russian oil to the world that could lead to a new surge in energy prices and further fuel inflation.

Poland long held up an agreement, seeking to set the cap as low as possible. Following more than 24 hours of deliberations, when other EU nations had signaled they would back the deal, Warsaw finally relented late Friday.

"Crippling Russia's energy revenues is at the core of stopping Russia's war machine," Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas said, adding that she was happy the cap was pushed down a few extra dollars from earlier proposals. She said every dollar the cap was reduced amounted to \$2 billion less for Russia's war chest.

"It is no secret that we wanted the price to be lower," Kallas added, highlighting the differences within the EU. "A price between 30-40 dollars is what would substantially hurt Russia. However, this is the best compromise we could get."

The \$60 figure sets the cap near the current price of Russia's crude, which recently fell below \$60 a barrel. Some criticize that as not low enough to cut into one of Russia's main sources of income. It is still a big discount to international benchmark Brent, which traded at \$86.68 a barrel Friday, but could be high enough for Moscow to keep selling even while rejecting the idea of a cap.

There is a big risk to the global oil market of losing large amounts of crude from the world's No. 2 producer. It could drive up gasoline prices for drivers worldwide, which has stirred political turmoil for U.S. President Joe Biden and leaders in other nations. Europe is already mired in an energy crisis, with governments facing protests over the soaring cost of living, while developing nations are even more vulnerable to shifts in energy costs.

But the West has faced increasing pressure to target one of Russia's main moneymakers — oil — to slash the funds flowing into Putin's war chest and hurt Russia's economy as the war in Ukraine drags into a ninth month. The costs of oil and natural gas spiked after demand rebounded from the pandemic and then the invasion of Ukraine unsettled energy markets, feeding Russia's coffers.

Russia's More Gradual Economic Contraction to Extend Into 2023

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's economy is set to shrink by 2.5% next year, on top of a 3% contraction in 2022, a Reuters poll suggested, with stubbornly high inflation giving the central bank only limited room to cut interest rates.

Russia's economic landscape changed drastically after Moscow sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24, triggering sweeping Western restrictions on its energy and financial sectors, including a partial freeze of Russian reserves, and leading scores of companies to exit the market.

After initially dire predictions of a double-digit GDP slump, analysts and officials have gradually been improving forecasts as the Russian economy demonstrates better-than-anticipated resilience.

The average forecast among 15 analysts polled in early December suggested the Russian economy was on track to shrink by 3.0% this year, close to the economy ministry's expectation of a 2.9% drop. A similar poll in early November had predicted a contraction of 3.5%.

But the decline will continue at a similar pace in 2023, with analysts now forecasting a 2.5% drop. Over time, economists have acknowledged that the contraction is likely to be less sudden, but more prolonged than first expected.

Iran's experience shows that sanctions work gradually, Alfa Bank's chief economist Natalia Orlova said at conference in Moscow on Friday, and can trigger economic activity in the first six months as the economy adjusts.

"The downturn is not as big as we all thought at first, but this does not mean that we can go into next year peacefully," Orlova said. "We cannot rule out a deeper contraction next year when compared with 2022, it could be 5-6%."

In February, the Bank of Russia hiked its key rate to 20% from 9.5% in order to mitigate risks to financial stability, before beginning a series of rate cuts to the current 7.5% level.

After a rate hold on Dec. 16, the bank will continue easing monetary policy in 2023, the poll suggested, with the key rate set to end next year at 6.75%.

The rouble is expected to trade at 74.00 against the dollar a year from now, according to the poll, compared with a rate of 77.50 predicted by analysts in early November. Friday's official rate was at 61.15 roubles per dollar.

"The key story for the Russian rouble in the coming months could be the launch of the EU's oil embargo mechanism from Dec. 5 and the imposition of a price ceiling on Russian oil," said Mikhail Poddubsky, asset manager at MKB Investments.



IMF Chief Flags Inflation, China Slowdown as Risks to Asia

TOKYO (Dispatches) - International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva flagged rising inflationary pressures and China's economic slowdown as risks to Asia's economic outlook, calling on policymakers to rebuild their buffers against future shocks.

Asian Development Bank President Masatsugu Asakawa also urged Asia's policymakers to be vigilant to signs of any abrupt capital outflows driven by steady U.S. interest rate hikes.

"We are already seeing the risk of aggressive tightening of U.S. monetary policy to fight inflation, which may trigger abrupt reversals of capital flows or sharp currency depreciation," Asakawa said in a video message broadcast at an ASEAN+3 forum held in Singapore on Friday.

Georgieva said economies comprising the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are a "bright spot" in the global economy, with growth projected at 5% this year and moderating slightly in 2023.

But she warned the outlook was "exceptionally" uncertain and dominated by risks, such as the fallout from Russia's war in Ukraine, global financial tightening and a slowdown in China's growth.

"Another pressing global challenge is inflation. It is expected to average only 4% in Asia this year. But inflationary pressures in the region are rising," Georgieva said.

"We don't know how long this shock will last and whether other shocks may come. But we need to rebuild and preserve buffers and be prepared to fully use our policy tool-kit," she told the same forum.

China's strict COVID lockdowns have weighted on already slowing global growth by dampening domestic economic activity and disrupting supply chains for manufacturers across the world.

The fallout from China's slowdown has been particularly painful in Asia, where factory activity slumped across the region in November.

Some emerging nations have also been forced to raise interest rates to combat capital outflows caused by U.S. rate hikes, at the cost of hurting their fragile economies.

At the forum, Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda said he did not see a significant risk of Asia facing a sudden loss of confidence or a renewed financial crisis.

But he warned against complacency as some Asian countries saw their policy buffers decrease, after deploying big spending packages to counter the COVID-19 pandemic.

"As the recent market turmoil in the United Kingdom has shown, the reaction of market participants to policy decisions and announcements could significantly impact asset prices," said Kuroda, who was formerly head of ADB and Japan's top currency diplomat.

Global Central Banks Extend Rate Hike Push in November



LONDON (Dispatches) - The pace and scale of rate hikes delivered by central banks in November picked up speed again as policy makers around the globe battle decade high inflation.

Central banks overseeing six of the 10 most heavily traded currencies delivered 350 basis points (bps) of rate hikes between them last month.

The U.S. Federal Reserve, the Bank of England, the Reserve Bank of Australia, Norway's Norges Bank, Sweden's Riksbank and the Reserve Bank of New Zealand all raised interest rates in November.

The European Central Bank, the Bank of Canada, the Swiss National Bank and the Bank of Japan did not hold rate setting meetings in November.

The latest moves have brought total rate hikes in 2022 from G10 central banks to 2,400 bps.

"Interest rates will continue to rise," said Alexandra Dimitrijvic at S&P Global Ratings, looking ahead to 2023. "Central banks' determination to bring down inflation suggests that policy rates need to go higher still."

Global financial markets have been on a roller coaster in recent weeks as investors try to gauge how fast and how far the U.S. Federal Reserve and other major central banks are set to raise rates to combat inflationary pressures, while fears over a slowdown in global growth are spreading.

Some nascent signs that inflation could be slowing in the United States have brought cheer to markets in recent days, with Fed officials scheduled to meet on Dec. 13 and 14.

On Wednesday, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said the U.S. central bank could scale back the pace of its rate increases "as soon as December".

Data from emerging market central banks showed a similar pattern. Eight out of 18 central banks delivered a total 400 bps of rate hikes in November - up from 325 bps in October, but some way off the 800-plus bps monthly tallies in both June and July.

Energy Crisis Driving Climate-Friendly Power Savings

PARIS (Dispatches) - Russia's invasion of Ukraine has driven countries across the world to boost energy efficiency, creating "huge potential" to tackle high prices, security and climate change, the IEA said.

Governments have scaled up fossil fuel subsidies to cushion the blow of rising energy costs on households in the wake of the Ukraine conflict, which has disrupted gas supplies and stoked prices.

But a new report from the International Energy Agency found that it had also prompted policymakers and consumers to shrink their power use, causing record investment in energy efficiency measures, like building renovations, and infrastructure for public transport and electric cars.

IEA executive director Fatih Birol said after the oil shocks of the 1970s, governments pushed "substantial improvements" in energy efficiency, particularly in cars, appliances and buildings.

"Amid today's energy crisis, we are seeing signs that energy efficiency is once again being prioritised," he said. "Energy efficiency is essential for dealing with today's crisis, with its huge potential to help tackle the challenges of energy affordability, energy security and climate change."

According to the IEA research, governments, industry and households invested a record \$560 billion this year in energy efficiency measures.

Preliminary IEA data for 2022 also suggests that the global economy used energy two percent more efficiently than it did in 2021, almost double the rate of the past five years.

Annual improvements would need to rise to four percent to meet decarbonisation goals by mid-century, the IEA said.

German Exports Fall More Than Expected

BERLIN (Dispatches) - German exports fell more than expected in October, as high inflation and supply chain snags hit demand in its key trading partners, further raising the specter of recession for Europe's largest economy.

Exports declined by 0.6% on the month, twice as much as analysts had predicted in a Reuters poll, data from the Federal Statistics Office showed on Friday.

October marked the second month in a row of falling exports, after September saw an

unexpected drop of 0.5% on the month.

Shipments to Germany's top export partner, the United States, saw the sharpest fall of 3.9% in October, while exports to other European Union member states were down 2.4%.

Imports were also much weaker-than-expected, posting their sharpest drop since January at 3.7%, leading to a higher trade balance of 6.9 billion euros (\$7.3 billion). Imports had been forecast to drop 0.4%.

The statistics office publishes a detailed table with more economic data.

"Not only German consumers, but also the export industry is facing more difficult times," said DekaBank economist Andreas Scheurle.

"The German export engine is noticeably juddering," said German chambers of commerce and industry (DIHK) trade chief Volker Trier. "High inflation rates and a tight monetary policy in important sales markets are dampening international demand."

DIHK said last month Germany's exports were likely to fall 2% next year due to a sluggish global economy, with nearly half of German companies that sell abroad expecting an economic downturn.

Also last month, German industrial group Thyssenkrupp warned its sales and profit would "nose-dive" next year as high inflation and energy costs are compounded by an expected recession in Europe.

"The decisive thing now is to set positive impulses for strengthening foreign trade," said BGA trade association president Dirk Jandura, calling for strong investments in German and European locations as well as new trade strategies and agreements.

However, data released last week showed the German economy grew slightly more in the third quarter than suggested by preliminary figures, adding to signs that a coming recession may not hit as hard as initially feared.

Near-full gas storage in Germany has eased fears of possible rationing in industry this winter, while the 0.4% growth in the third quarter pointed to a milder recession than many economists first expected.

Iran Plans to Increase Gas production From Persian Gulf

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran plans to increase its natural gas production from fields located in the Persian Gulf, according to an official in Iran's Ministry of Petroleum.

Esmail Amiri, who leads the development projects department at Pars Oil and Gas Company, said on Sunday that the company will invest billions of dollars to develop four gas fields in the

Persian Gulf in the upcoming years.

Amiri said that the fields planned to be developed are Kish, Farzad, Belal and Phase 11 and Phase 14 of the South Pars, the largest gas field in the world that straddles the maritime border between Iran and Qatar. He said that the development projects will increase Iran's gas output by up to 56 million cubic meters per day.



Poorest Countries Owe \$62b on Bilateral Debt

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The world's poorest countries now owe \$62 billion in annual debt service to official bilateral creditors, an increase of 35% over the past year, World Bank President David Malpass said, warning that the increased burden is increasing the risk of defaults.

Malpass told the Reuters NEXT conference in New York that two thirds of this debt burden is now owed to China, providing some details of the development lender's annual debt statistics report due next week.

"I'm worried about a disorderly default process where there's not a system to really address" debts for poorer countries, Malpass said.

Malpass also said he was concerned about a buildup of debt in advanced economies such as the United States, because this is drawing more capital away from developing countries.

"And so as the interest rates go up, the debt service goes up for the advanced economies, and that requires a big amount of capital from the world."

Malpass said that he would join a meeting in China next week with heads of other international institutions and Chinese authorities to discuss the country's approach to debt relief for poorer countries, COVID-19 policies, property sector turmoil and other economic issues.

"China's one of the big creditors, so...it's very important that China engage on this issue and think about where it sees the world going and be responsive to work with what needs to be done to achieve sustainability for the countries."

IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva also will participate in the meeting, which will focus heavily on debt treatments. Among the participants will be officials from China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank of China, two of the country's major bilateral lenders.

Georgieva separately told Reuters Next that changes to the G20 Common Framework on debt restructuring were needed to speed up debt treatments,



freeze debt service payments once a country requested help, and open the process to middle-income countries like Sri Lanka.

"We are concerned that there is a risk for confidence in debt resolution to be eroded at a time when the level of debt is very high," Georgieva said.

"We don't see at this point ... a risk of a systemic debt crisis," she said, adding that countries in debt distress were not large enough to trigger a crisis that would threaten financial stability.

The Same Old...

FROM PAGE 1

The U.S. top Iran official claimed that in August the two sides had almost reached an agreement on the JCPOA deal, but Tehran wanted the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to stop its inspections, and so, they disagreed. Tehran, however, disputed this, saying it had complied with the deal even beyond its obligations, since the 2015 signing of the JCPOA, and the IAEA had witnessed Tehran's commitment to the terms of the deal at least 15 times. Iran turned off several of IAEA's cameras which were functioning outside the Safeguards Agreement since early June after the IAEA Board of Governors passed a resolution that accused the country of not cooperating with the UN body.



Malley claimed the Iranian government as a whole was divided, and not yet concluded on whether they really wanted to come back to JCPOA, or not; and, so each time Tehran was presented with a deal, even deals that were considered fair by other parties such as Germany France and the UK, plus Russia and China, Iran was the one that walked back. He said the deal would be dead when the benefits do not justify or warrant the sanctions relief that the US is ready to offer.

"So we've now [pause], we're in a very different situation today, where we're working the next step with the UK, with France, with Germany, with so many countries around the world. Look at the vote at the IAEA Board of Governors. There is a vast majority of countries today, and not just Western countries, that understand that the pressure has to be put on Iran to stop its nuclear advances, Malley said.

"Now that said, so we'll have the sanctions, we'll have the pressure and has taken offensive position against Tehran but Washington should know that the more it takes offensive position, the more Tehran will become courageous and take offensive rhetoric against Washington.

It seems Malley is suffering from absent-mindedness and has forgotten that the Islamic Republic of Iran has been challenging with the U.S. sanctions since the first day of its existence and it has overcome them although it has a little bit suffered but it has thwarted the sanctions of the U.S.

In recent days that rioters pour into streets, it seems the U.S. has been emboldened and it has once again become rude and has taken offensive position against Tehran but Washington should know that the more it takes offensive position, the more Tehran will become courageous and take offensive rhetoric against Washington.

So the U.S. is better to come to its senses and not to bet on a dead horse of riots as well as bullying Iran because Iran is determined to continue its path and the U.S. and its allies have no option but to follow diplomacy and accepting Iran's logical demands because Iran is now in a strong position so that nobody can dictate its excessive demands on Tehran and the era of bully and dominance has come to its end.

Iran Oil...

FROM PAGE 1

Pourebahimi told the semi-official Fars news agency that Iran's access to funds generated by oil exports to other countries had also improved in the six months to late September.

He said, however, that the Iranian government would seek to increase its exports of petroleum products to compensate for losses suffered in direct oil exports.

"Relying on sales of petroleum products could significantly boost our hard currency revenues," said the lawmaker who chairs the Iranian parliament's economic committee.

Latest market figures show Iran's total production of crude oil is around 2.7 million bpd, some 1 million bpd lower than figures reported before the US imposed its sanctions on the country.

World Food Prices Ease Further In November



PARIS (Dispatches) - The United Nations food agency's world price index fell marginally in November, marking an eighth straight monthly fall since a record high in March after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) price index, which tracks the most globally traded food commodities, averaged 135.7 points last month, down from 135.9 for October, the agency said on Friday.

Lower readings for cereals, meat and dairy products in November offset higher prices for vegetable oils and sugar, the FAO said.

Last month's agreement to prolong a U.N.-backed grain export channel from Ukraine for another 120 days has tempered worries about war disruption to massive Black Sea trade.

The slight decrease in November meant that the FAO food index is now only 0.3% above its level a year earlier, the agency said.

The indicator, however, remains at historically high levels after reaching a 10-year peak in 2021 owing to harvest setbacks and brisk demand led by China.

The FAO warned last month that expected record food import costs in 2022 would lead the poorest countries to cut back on shipped volumes.

In separate cereal supply and demand estimates, the FAO lowered its forecast for global cereal production in 2022 to 2.756 billion tons from 2.764 billion estimated last month.

The forecast was 2% below the estimated output for 2021 and would mark a three-year low, the FAO said.

The downward revision to the global cereal crop projection mainly reflected weak maize (corn) prospects in Ukraine, with the war making post-harvest operations prohibitively expensive, it said.

Projected world cereal stocks by the end of the 2022/23 season were revised down by 1.1 million tons to 839 million tons, 2.2% below the previous season and the lowest level for three years.

The 2022/23 global cereal stock-to-use ratio, often used as a supply indicator, would drop to its lowest since 2013/14, but at a forecast 29.3% it would still represent a relatively comfortable level, the FAO added.

Funny Old World: The Week's Offbeat News

PARIS (Dispatches) - From the impeccable Swiss to the well-watered Welsh... Your weekly roundup of offbeat stories from around the world.

Austrian tourist board bosses pulled a television ad lauding the open-mindedness of the Tyrol region when the local reaction proved the exact opposite.

The paean to the beautiful alpine province -- "Come as you are -- in Tyrol everybody is welcome" -- was judged an "affront to Tyrolean farmers" because it featured -- horror of horrors -- the hipster elixir oat milk.

In the ad a hairy, horned mythical figure called "Percht" is invited into a Tyrolean mountain hut for a warming drink after returning a young girl's glove he found in the snow.

But having the creature order a "latte macchiato with oat milk" was just going too far, farmers frothed. "It can't be that a promotional video for Tyrol features 'oat milk' and not our own genuine Tyrolean milk," said Josef Hechenberger, president of the Tyrolean Chamber of Agriculture.

Canadians on the other hand are highly amoo-sed by the antics of a herd of maverick cows who have given police and even a crack troupe of rodeo cowboys the slip since they escaped from a Quebec farm over the summer.

The 20 or so bovines who made a bolt for freedom in Saint-Barnabe, an hour and a half's drive north of Montreal, have become seasoned outlaws, criss-crossing county boundaries to get away from officials.

But the Quebec agriculture ministry is now sending



in the cavalry to deal with this "complex and unprecedented situation", and is steeking out of the runaway steers.

They are calling it the miracle of Christmas. An elderly mute Swiss man was beside himself when he lost 20,000 Swiss francs (20,300 euros) on the way home from a bank.

But not long after a kindly couple turned up on his doorstep with the cash after finding the envelope in the car park where he had dropped it.

Cue a feelgood glow as warm as a flagon of mulled wine. Who said the World Cup is just an excuse for a booze up. Just ask the Welsh fans who flocked to Tenerife to support their team even though the Spanish island is further from Qatar than Cardiff.

The strange exodus was sparked by Bethany Evans, 25, who was eager to mark her country's first qualification for the finals since 1958. But the steep price of going to Qatar and of alcohol there put her off.

So she suggested Tenerife as an alternative on Twitter "as a joke", and the idea snowballed.

This week travelling Welsh fans packed out pubs on the holiday island to watch their team go out to arch-rivals England.

"I really thought it was just going to be me and a few friends so this is absolutely incredible," Evans told AFP.

A Buddhist temple in central Thailand has been left without monks after all its holy men failed drug tests.

Four including an abbot at a temple in Phetchabun province tested positive for methamphetamine and were defrocked.

Anti-Israel...

FROM PAGE 1

Herzog arrived in Manama on Sunday and was welcomed by Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid al-Zayani and Bahrain's envoy to Israel Khaled Yousif al-Jalalma upon landing in Manama.

As a result of the protests, Herzog's itinerary was changed at the last minute, though Bahraini officials said they would not allow protests to take place during the visit.

He is set to head to al-Qudaibiya Palace, where he will meet King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah over lunch.

Earlier, Herzog had been slated to meet with members of the local Jewish community, and then hold a meeting with the Bahrain Economic Development Board.

Israel's Channel 12 reported on Thursday that the regime's so-called security service, Shin Bet, had decided to boost Herzog's security detail for the trip following an online social media campaign from Bahraini opposition activists.

On Monday, the Israeli president will take off for the United Arab Emirates to meet with his Emirati counterpart Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who is also the Abu Dhabi ruler and known colloquially as MBZ. Herzog will also attend the

Abu Dhabi Space Debate.

Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates signed US-brokered normalization agreements with Israel in an event in Washington in September 2020. Sudan and Morocco followed suit later that year. Palestinians have condemned the deals as a treacherous "stab in the back."

Kashmir Fruit...

FROM PAGE 1

He said the price of a box of high-quality apples this year is between \$6 and \$7.50 (INR 500-600), down from between \$11 to \$13.50 (INR 900-1,100) a year ago.

Digvijay Gupta, joint director of the Jammu and Kashmir Horticulture, Planning and Marketing Department, suggested the growers are overstating the problem. He cited statistics showing just 40,000 metric tons of Iranian apples are reaching Indian markets, compared to 300,000 metric tons of apples from Kashmir.

But the Kashmiri apple growers believe the volume of Iranian apples has grown significantly in recent years and is considerably larger than the official figures indicate.

They also note that their concerns are shared by apple growers in the neighboring Indian states of Himachal and Uttarakhand. At a meeting of the Apple Farmers Federation of India this week, growers from all three states agreed to organize a protest in New Delhi on March 6.

The Kashmiri apple growers' problems have been compounded this year by maintenance and repair work on the main highway connecting the Kashmir Valley with central India during September and October, critical months for shipping their produce to market.

Pele Under Palliative Care Amid Cancer Battle

SAO PAULO (Dispatches) - Brazilian football legend Pele is receiving palliative care after chemotherapy stopped having the expected results as he battles colon cancer, newspaper Folha de S.Paulo reported.

Pele, 82, who is widely considered one of the greatest footballers of all time, was admitted to hospital on Tuesday to re-evaluate his cancer treatment and later diagnosed with a respiratory infection, according to medical reports.

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Inter Milan Open Talks With Chelsea About Lukaku

LONDON (Dispatches) - Inter Milan have opened talks with Chelsea about a new loan for Romelu Lukaku. La Gazzetta dello Sport says Graham Potter's side are not interested in Lukaku returning to Stamford Bridge - with Inter now attempting to extend his loan for a further campaign.

The 29-year-old, for his part, is believed to be keen to stay at the San Siro and is not considering moving to any other club.

IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

MONDAY DECEMBER 5, 2022

James, Davis Propel Lakers past Bucks

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - LeBron James hit another NBA milestone as he and Anthony Davis fueled the Los Angeles Lakers' hard-fought 133-129 win over the Milwaukee Bucks.

James scored 28 points and handed out 11 assists -- passing former Lakers great Magic Johnson for sixth on the NBA's all-time assists list.

Los Angeles weathered a late Bucks surge to emerge with the victory in coach Darvin Ham's return to the city where he won a title in 2021 as an assistant to coach Mike Budenholzer.

It was also close in Boston, where Miami star Jimmy Butler returned from a seven-game injury absence and helped the Heat grab a 120-116 overtime victory that snapped the Eastern Conference-leading Celtics' 10-game home winning streak.

In Milwaukee, the Lakers delivered arguably their best victory of the season.

Davis scored 44 points and grabbed 10 rebounds and Russell Westbrook added 15 points, seven rebounds and 11 assists.

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 40 points and Jrue Holiday added 28 points for the Bucks, who had All-Star forward Khris Middleton for the first time this season after his recovery from off-season wrist surgery.

The Lakers led by 14 in the first half and by 10 in the third quarter, but the fourth quarter was a back-and-forth battle featuring half a dozen lead changes.

A Davis dunk after a James steal put the Lakers up 132-127 with just over a minute remaining.

Brook Lopez pulled the Bucks within three but Grayson Allen and Holiday both missed three-pointers in the waning seconds.

James took his career assists tally to 10,144, moving past Johnson (10,141) on the assists list, which is headed by John Stockton's 15,806.

He also shook off an injury scare, grabbing his left ankle in pain after tangling with Middleton and limping to the bench, but soon returned to the game.

There was drama in Boston, where Celtics star Jalen Brown scored 37 points and banked in a stunning three-pointer to force overtime against Miami.

Two days after dropping a 134-121 decision to the Celtics, the Heat rallied from a 13-point third-quarter deficit, mounting a 26-8 scoring run that put them up by five with 7:16 to play.



Butler's jump shot put Miami up 108-105 in the final minute of regulation. Jayson Tatum then answered with a dunk before Butler struck again -- only for Brown to put the Celtics level at the buzzer.

It was tied with 1:02 left in overtime, but Bam Adebayo made two free throws for Miami and, after Tatum missed a three-point attempt, Butler drained a step-back jump shot that proved the game-winner.

Houston's Jalen Green scored 20 of his 30 points in the third quarter as the Rockets overcame a 16-point deficit to bring down the Western Conference-leading Phoenix Suns 122-121.

The Suns erased a six-point deficit with less than two minutes to play as Devin Booker and Cameron Payne made back-to-back three-pointers.

Green made a free throw with 28.8 seconds left to put the Rockets ahead and the Suns missed four attempts in the final 19 seconds.

Booker led the Suns with 41 points, but missed at the final buzzer.

In Atlanta, Dejounte Murray scored 34 points and rookie A.J. Griffin -- playing in place of late injury scratch Trae Young -- tied his career high with 24 as the depleted Hawks beat the Denver Nuggets 117-109.

Denver's two-time defending Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic scored just four points in the first half before finishing with 24 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists.

The Brooklyn Nets notched a fourth straight victory in dominant style, leading by as many as 36 points on the way to a 114-105 wire-to-wire home win over the Toronto Raptors.

Kyrie Irving scored 27 points and Kevin Durant and Joe Harris chipped in 17 apiece for Brooklyn.

In San Francisco, NBA champions Golden State held on for a 119-111 victory over Chicago, Jordan Poole scoring 30 points off the bench to lead the Warriors.



Ronaldo Denies He Swore At Portugal Coach

AL RAYYAN (Dispatches) - Cristiano Ronaldo denied that he had sworn at Portugal coach Fernando Santos when he was substituted during a dramatic 2-1 defeat to South Korea in the World Cup yesterday, as both teams advanced into the next round.

Ronaldo, Portugal's captain, said the comments he made as he left the field in the 65th minute were in fact aimed at a South Korean player.

Portuguese media said the former Manchester United, Real Madrid and Juventus player, who left the English club last month, appeared to challenge Santos over the decision to substitute him, using vulgar language towards the coach.

"What happened was before my substitution, the South Korea player told me to get off quickly. I told him to shut up as he doesn't have that authority. There was no disagreement (with the coach)," Ronaldo was quoted as saying by Portuguese reporters.

The 37-year-old is seeking to equal the Portuguese record of most World Cup goals held by Eusebio, who racked up nine in 1966 in England, the only World Cup tournament he played in.

Fury, Chisora Bang Forlorn Drum for Disturbing Rematch

LONDON (Dispatches) - "Derek Chisora should retire, end of story," Frank Warren said emphatically earlier this year. "The only way Tyson Fury fights Chisora again is if we were struggling for an opponent or if Tyson insisted on it. Chisora should retire. He shouldn't be allowed anywhere near the ring, let alone in there with Tyson."

Only 11 months later, Warren is promoting the very fight that seemed such a shameful idea in January when Chisora was recovering from a second successive loss to Joseph Parker. Chisora, as always, had fought with great courage against Parker and there was no shame in him suffering his 12th defeat in 45 draining fights which stretched back to his professional debut in February 2007. Yet concern for Chisora intensified as he has endured far too many gruelling bouts in his long career. The damage he has already suffered is obvious and any additional bout could pose a serious threat to his health.

Yet he and Fury, who has already twice beaten Chisora convincingly, have been banging a forlorn drum for their disturbing rematch on Saturday night at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. Fury has insisted that this is a history-making encounter and even claimed it was one of the reasons why he ended his brief "retirement" this year when, after bludgeoning Dillian Whyte to defeat at Wembley Stadium in April, he swore that he would never box again.

Of course no-one believed him and Fury, in announcing that he would defend his WBC world title against Chisora, made the following inaccurate claim: "I've decided to come back because I can be the first heavyweight champion in history to have two trilogies, one with Deontay Wilder and a second one with Derek Chisora. I always said I would fight Chisora again and here we are breaking all records, setting precedents."



Swiss Players Eager to Stretch World Cup Run

DOHA (Dispatches) - Switzerland made it through to the last 16 of the World Cup for a third time in a row after beating Serbia 3-2 in their final Group G game yesterday but their run in this tournament is far from finished, coach Murat Yakin said.

His team, who have now reached the knockout stages in their last five tournaments, including at the Euros, had to dig deep to come back from 2-1 down to snatch second place in their group.

"The players had the goal to make history and this is still not finished," Yakin said. "The team has moved closer together today, it is more experienced. Now we will enjoy the moment. In football we live for these moments."

The Swiss, who next face Portugal in the last 16, scored twice either side of the break with Breel Embolo and Remo Freuler to go back in front after Aleksandar Mitrovic's

glancing header had cancelled out Xherdan Shaqiri's lead and Dusan Vlahovic's low shot had put them briefly ahead. The game became bad-tempered towards the end as the Serbs needed to win and with the referee showing 11 yellow cards.

Man-of-the match Granit Xhaka, born to ethnic Albanian parents from Kosovo who in the previous World Cup had enraged Serbs by making a nationalist gesture when the two sides met, was often in the middle of these spats with Serbian opponents.

"I saw Granit focus on football. It was a fair game. It was a normal exchange with a bit of emotions. It cost us a lot of power and a lot of emotions. We started well, took the lead but then we lost possession twice and fell behind," said Yakin.

"But my players deserve a huge compliment for the way they came back." Switzerland finished with six points, level with Group G winners Brazil but behind on goal difference, and will now turn their focus to their game against Portugal.

"We deserved this win," Yakin said. "Portugal do not like to play against us. They are the favourites but in a knockout stage game anything can happen."

"I think the team is ready for this match and the battle."

Messi Scores As Argentina Beat Australia

DOHA (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi marked his 1,000th professional game with his first goal in the knockout stage of a World Cup, leading Argentina into the quarterfinals with 2-1 win over Australia.

With a flourish of his famous left foot in the 34th minute, Messi put Argentina ahead with his third goal at this year's tournament and ninth in total at the World Cup -- one more than Diego Maradona.

Julián Álvarez pounced on a heavy touch by Australia goalkeeper Mathew Ryan to tap into an empty net for the second goal as Argentina set up a meeting with the Netherlands in the quarterfinals.

Australia scored a 77th-minute consolation goal when Craig Goodwin's shot deflected into the net off Argentina midfielder Enzo Fernandez. Amid late pressure from the Australians, there was a chance in the final seconds for Garang Kuol to send the game to extra time but his shot was smothered by Argentina goalkeeper Emi Martinez.

For Australia's squad of unheralded players, it proved to be a match too far at a World Cup in which the team has exceeded expectations by reaching the knockout stage for only the second time. Australia also lost in the last 16 in 2006, to eventual champion Italy.

Maybe it's an omen for Argentina, which has fully recovered from its shocking loss to Saudi Arabia in its opening group match and won three straight games.

As for Messi, he now has 789 goals in a career that might yet reach a crescendo on Dec. 18 by winning the soccer's biggest trophy in his fifth and likely last World Cup.

The dream is still alive for the seven-time world player of the year and the tens of thousands of Argentina fans who dominated the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, massively outnumbering the small pockets of green-and-gold-clad Australia supporters and making it feel like a match in Buenos Aires or Rosario.



Clinical Netherlands Dispatch USA to Reach World Cup Quarters

DOHA (Dispatches) - A clinical Netherlands ended the United States' World Cup dream, sweeping into the quarter-finals with a ruthless 3-1 victory.

First-half goals from Memphis Depay and Daley Blind and a late strike from Denzel Dumfries sealed a deserved victory as the Dutch handed out a painful lesson in finishing to their American opponents.

The Netherlands, bidding to win their first World Cup after losing in three previous finals, will face Argentina or Australia in the last eight.

Veteran coach Louis van Gaal's men were worthy victors in Saturday's last-16 clash at the Khalifa International Stadium.

Although the USA enjoyed long periods of possession in a bright first-half display, all too often a lack of composure in the final third let them down.

Instead it was the Dutch who calmly bided their time before carving open the Americans with forensic precision.

USA forward Christian Pulisic squandered a golden chance to put his team 1-0 up after only three minutes, when he found himself in space only to see a scuffed shot saved by Andries Noppert.

Buoyed by that early chance, the US remained on the front foot, attacking high up the field. But on 10 minutes the Netherlands took the lead. Superb interplay in midfield saw the ball worked to Inter Milan's Dumfries down the right.

Dumfries picked out Depay, who swept home the finish to cap a majestic 20-pass move that was in the best traditions of the Netherlands' total footballing heritage.

Again the Americans advanced purposefully into Dutch territory through Pulisic, only for the Chelsea player to deliver a cross that fell behind his US team-mates.

