

In a Statement on Monday, the IRGC
Thanked the Judiciary for the Firm
And Quick Response in Convicting
Rioters, Linked With Foreign
Intelligence Services, especially the
Mossad of Zionist Regime

IRAN NEWS

Health Ministry Announced on
Monday That the Number of Deaths
From the Coronavirus Pandemic in
Iran Increased to **144,645** With
Five More Iranians Killed by the
Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

VOL. XXVIII, No. 7654 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

TUESDAY DECEMBER 6, 2022 - AZAR 15, 1401

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Iran Not to Negotiate Under Pressure And Threats

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Ministry spokesman has reiterated the Islamic Republic's commitment to the talks aimed at reviving the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers but made it clear that Tehran is not willing to negotiate under pressure and threats.

Speaking at a weekly press conference on Monday, Nasser Kanaani said American officials know that Iran is not ready to negotiate under pressure and threats.

He said Iran's stance on the talks is "completely clear" and that Tehran is committed to the diplomatic efforts to reach an agreement.

The spokesman noted that reaching an agreement would serve the interests of Iran, the US and European parties to the deal, urging the European countries not to surrender to Washington and its imposed conditions.

He also said Iran had fulfilled its obligations under the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and it was the US that violated the agreement.

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Iran Extends Hand of Friendship to All Balkan States



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has highlighted the importance of development and stability in the Balkans, saying Tehran extends its hand of friendship to all countries in that region.

Speaking to reporters in Belgrade following a meeting with his Serbian counterpart Ivica Dacic on Sunday, Amir-Abdollahian said Iran supports the territorial integrity of all Balkan countries, including Serbia.

"We wish for the growth, development, unity and stability of the entire Balkan region," he said. "Considering the historical record of Iran's relations with the Balkan region, we extend a hand of friendship to all the countries of that region."

Amir-Abdollahian congratulated the 85th anniversary of the establishment of ties between the two countries, saying his visit to Belgrade was taking place at the official invitation of his Serbian counterpart.

Iran and Serbia have maintained constructive relations and seek to further expand ties in all fields, he said.

In talks with the Serbian foreign minister, he continued, a wide range of issues pertaining to bilateral, regional and international cooperation were discussed.

The top Iranian diplomat added that Tehran is ready to host the 16th session of the two countries' joint commission in the near future.

Elsewhere in the presser, Amir-Abdollahian said the United States and some Western countries provoked the recent unrest in Iran to force Tehran to give concessions in the talks to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The Iranian foreign minister emphasized that foreign forces have interfered and abused the riots, but the Iranian people have managed to achieve success in the "hybrid war" waged against their country.

Amir-Abdollahian pointed out that Iran is a democratic country, adding, "We hear and respond to the peaceful demands of the noble Iranian people on various issues but we do not allow anyone to [incite] riots and [carry out] act of terror in our country."

Pointing to his Saturday phone call with European Union Foreign Policy chief Josep Borrell, Amir-Abdollahian once again reiterated the country's stance on achieving an enduring agreement that serves its national interests.

"I talked with Mr. Borrell about the agreement to lift the sanctions and I emphasized that only a deal that works well for the interests of the Iranian nation and is permanent is valuable to Iran," he said.

Meanwhile on Monday, Amir-Abdollahian held talks with Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic.

Referring to the meeting of the presidents of the two countries on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, Amir-Abdollahian emphasized the necessity of implementing the agreements made between the two countries.

He expressed hope that the promotion of cooperation between the two countries will provide the necessary ground for the development of the relations between Iran and Serbia.

Iranian foreign minister also announced the readiness of Iran to hold the 16th round of the cooperation commission between the two countries in Tehran, expressing hope that with the provision of the necessary mechanisms within the framework of this round of the joint commission, the ground for improving relations in various dimensions will be provided.

Referring to the 85th anniversary of relations between the two countries, Ana Brnabic, for her part, emphasized the need to take steps in accordance with the capacities of the two countries in various fields of relations.

The Prime Minister of Serbia considered the field of scientific-academic cooperation, agriculture, and energy to be ready for the promotion of cooperation between the two countries.

She also voiced the readiness of the Serbian government to promote cooperation in the mentioned fields.

Cooperation between the two countries in the fields of culture, parliamentary diplomacy, tourism, science and agriculture were among the other topics raised by Iran's foreign minister and Serbian prime minister.

Iran's top diplomat arrived in the Serbian capital of Belgrade on Sunday evening at the official invitation of his counterpart for holding bilateral talks with the Serbian authorities.

OPEC+ Keeps Steady Policy Amid Weakening Economy

LONDON (Dispatches) - OPEC+ agreed to stick to its oil output targets at a meeting as the oil markets struggle to assess the impact of a slowing Chinese economy on demand and a G7 price cap on Russian oil on supply.

The decision comes two days after the Group of Seven (G7) nations agreed a price cap on Russian oil.

OPEC+, which comprises the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allies including Russia, angered the United States and other Western nations in October when it agreed to cut output by 2 million barrels per day (bpd), about 2% of world demand, from November until the end of 2023.

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Iran First in Mideast Carrying Out Organ Transplants From Dead Patients

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Organ transplants from three deceased persons have been successfully carried out at a hospital in the Iranian capital, the first such known cases in the Middle East, after the donors were declared dead.

Doctor Sam Zeraatian-Nejad Davani, Assistant Professor of Cardiovascular Surgery Department of General Surgery, School of Medicine Hazrat-e Rasool General Hospital affiliated with Iran University of Medical Sciences, explained the procedure in a report published by ISNA news agency on Monday.

Davani said that while organ transplants after cardiac death or brain death have been performed for years in Iran, organ transplants from patients who were confirmed dead was carried out for the first time in Iran and the Middle East in association with a knowledge-based company.

Vital organs including kidney, liver, pancreas, intestines, and heart valve were harvested from three dead donors for transplants, Davani said.

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U.S. Sanctions Preventing Iran From Paying Dues to OPEC

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Oil Minister Javad Owji says the country has been prevented from paying its dues to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) because of U.S. sanctions.

Owji said on Sunday that Iran has been struggling to find a way to pay its membership dues to the OPEC, adding that US restrictions on Iran's banking ties with the rest of the world had made it almost impossible to settle the arrears.

"The unilateral, oppressive American sanctions against our country and restrictions on money transfer have caused problems," he said, adding, "We will move to pay Islamic Republic of Iran's membership dues as soon as we find a solution." The minister made the remarks following a virtual meeting of OPEC members and allies, a grouping known as OPEC+, in which oil producing nations agreed to stick to output cuts of 2 million barrels per day that had been decided in October for implementation from November until the end of 2023.

Iran, a founding member of the OPEC, has been exempt from cuts agreed by the alliance due to restrictions imposed on the country's oil sales by the US.

However, Owji said after the OPEC+ meeting that members of the alliance were unanimous in their decision to stick to output cuts as he insisted that oil producers were still concerned about the impact of a slowing Chinese economy on global demand.



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Gov't Refraining From Inflationary Policies

TEHRA (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi said that refraining from taking inflationary policies is a top agenda of his administration.

Referring to drafting the country's next year budget plan, the president said that the government is making a final review of the budget plan with anti-inflationary approaches.

He also called on the authorities in charge of drafting the budget plan to pay due attention to ensuring access of the Iranian people to cheap food, water, housing, health and car. President Raisi underlined the need for savings in the costs and increasing the productivity in the government.

Vietnamese National Assembly Delegation Visits Tehran

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

HANOI - A delegation of the Vietnamese National Assembly led by its Vice Chairman Senior Lieutenant General Tran Quang Phuong is paying a working visit to Iran from December 2-6.

The delegation held talks with Iran's First Deputy Parliament Speaker Ali Nikzad, who affirmed that Iran has attached importance to fostering relations with countries in Asia, especially nations in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam.

He briefed the guests on achievements Iran has recorded in health care, science-technology and infrastructure construction, and suggested the two countries activate a trade remedy mechanism, hoping for support from the two governments.

For his part, Phuong highlighted the Vietnam-Iran friendship, cooperation and mutual support in their causes of national defense, construction and development, as well as their similarities despite geographical distance.

Vietnam and its legislature always treasure the relationship with Iran, and wish it to grow stronger in all government, parliament and people-to-people exchange channels, he said.

The two sides agreed to coordinate in organizing activities celebrating the 50th founding anniversary of diplomatic ties, step up the exchange of delegations and people-to-people diplomacy, and boost twinned relations between localities.

Phuong said the two countries should facilitate the penetration of their goods into respective markets, organize trade promotion activities and business forums, and strengthen collaboration in telecommunications, IT, digital transformation and other areas where Iran has strengths like nanotechnology, satellite research and space orbit,



along with culture, education, tourism and sports.

Regarding Iran's nuclear issue, the legislator noted his support for the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, and respect for rights of countries to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in line with obligations prescribed in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. He also lauded efforts by relevant sides in addressing the Iran nuclear issue through dialogues and negotiations.

For the bilateral legislative ties, Phuong suggested the two sides increase the exchange of all-level delegations, carry forward the role of the two countries' friendship parliamentarians groups, and improve their people's understanding about the friendship and cooperation.

The two legislatures should continue their close coordination at multilateral forums such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), he added.

Phuong conveyed NA Chairman Vuong Dinh Hue's invitation to the Iranian Parliament's Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf to pay an official visit to Vietnam in 2023 when the two countries celebrate the 50th anniversary of the bilateral diplomatic ties.

Earlier, the delegation met with the staff of the Vietnamese Embassy and representatives of the Vietnamese community in Iran.

Envoy Lambasts U.S. Destructive Role in Afghanistan

TEHRAN (MNA) – Special envoy of the Iranian President for Afghanistan slammed the U.S.'s destructive role in creating instability in Afghanistan, calling for the formation of a government with the participation of all Afghan ethnicities.

Saying that the CIA is still active in Afghanistan, Hassan Kazemi Qomi told in a TV program that the United States still has control over Afghanistan's airspace.

Stressing that during the past year, the US tried hard to flame ethnic and religious wars in Afghanistan, the Iranian envoy added that the US and its allies such as the UK and some Arab countries are trying to create an atmosphere of distrust between the Taliban and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

"The U.S. does not seek the interests of nations. This country does not allow a strong government to form in countries like Afghanistan," Kazemi Qomi continued.

He added that the U.S. wanted to prove that instability and chaos would be created in Afghanistan in case of their absence in the country.

Kazemi Qomi went on to say that Iran's policy toward Afghanistan is supporting the people of this country.

What Iran did during this period was to help restrain terrorism, reduce immigration and create regional convergence in the field of fighting terrorism in Afghanistan, according to the Iranian envoy.

He added that the Islamic Republic of Iran raised the issue of Afghan-Afghan dialogue because it believes that the only way to eliminate terrorism and achieve stability is through the formation of a government with the participation of all Afghan ethnicities.

Western Officials Cheer Riots in Other States, Suppress Domestic Protests

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has lashed out at Western officials for cheering rioters in independent states while suppressing peaceful protesters in their own countries.

"Officials of [Western] regimes who have coups, conspiracies, interventions, and devastating wars with millions of deaths in their history are now pretending to be defenders of human rights in other countries," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said in a post on his Twitter account.

Despite their false gestures of advocating human rights, they have not been successful in hiding their anti-human rights nature, he added.

Referring to Western countries' hypocritical behavior vis-a-vis protests in Iran and their own states, Kanaani sarcastically said that apparently the protests in Britain, Germany, France, Canada, and Australia are bad and deserve severe confrontation but riots in their targeted

countries are good and deserve support.

Attached to his tweet was British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's announcement of "giving the police new powers" to allow them to clamp down on "illegal protests."

"This afternoon I sat down with all the police chiefs to make it clear that they have my full support in acting decisively to clamp down on illegal protests," Sunak said on Thursday.

"It is completely unacceptable that ordinary members of the public are having their lives disrupted by a selfish minority," he said. "My view is that those who break the law should feel the full force of it, and that's what I am determined to deliver."

Kanaani, pointing to a Persian proverb that says death is good but for the neighbor, said, "After dividing terrorism into good and bad, the heads of these regimes also provide their own definition of riot and protest."

Minsk, Tehran Should Stand Up to Unjust Sanctions

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador to Belarus Saeed Yari has called for bilateral efforts in the face of cruel sanctions imposed by the Western powers on the two countries.

According to Tass, the Iranian diplomat made the remarks in an interview with ONT on Sunday night, saying that the Islamic Republic backs Belarus to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The Iranian ambassador went on to say that today the relationship between Minsk and Tehran is at its highest level.

The SCO is a very important economic, political and security player in the region, he said, adding that Belarus has started the process of joining the organization and Iran will support the accession bid.

We are friendly states and we should seize such opportunities to confront Europe and the U.S., Yari noted. Countries like India, China, Pakistan, Russia and Iran can cooperate in all fields to stand up to the West, he added.

The ambassador also underlined that Minsk and Tehran should support each other in the fight against unjust foreign sanctions.

Iran Warns Against Any Aggression On Its Territory in Persian Gulf

TEHRAN (IFP) - The chairman of Iran's Joint Chiefs of Staff has warned the US forces in the Persian Gulf against taking any hostile action against the Islamic Republic.



Brigadier General Mohamad Bagheri said the U.S. forces know too well that if they try to harm Iran's interests in the Persian Gulf or its coast or oil rigs, they will be confronted by the forces of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps.

General Bagheri noted that the capabilities of the IRGC's naval forces including the quality and quantity of its warships, missile launchers and precision missiles are not comparable with the past.

He however said in the past couple of cases, when US patrols entered Iran's territorial waters by mistake, they were arrested and released out of compassion by Iran.

General Bagheri said the U.S. forces promised not to trespass into Iran's maritime territory, and they have kept their word thus far.

Iran has repeatedly warned foreign adversaries including the US against any aggression on its territory, saying such a move will be met with a crushing response.

Iran and India Relations Cordial and Friendly

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran has accused some Western countries of running a propaganda operation to defame and malign the image of this Islamic country.

A high-level delegation led by Allama Mehdi Mahdaviur, representatives of Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei in India visited Kashmir where it held a detailed discussion with several groups.

While talking to reporters at Gund Hasibhat Srinagar, Allama Mehdi Mahdaviur said that there is peace in Iran while Western media is running a propaganda operation to present Iran in bad light. He said some goons are not happy with the Islamic Revolution and are creating problems but overall, the situation is normal and the majority of the people are reposing their trust in the government.

He was replying to a question about 'Hijab Row' in Iran as per media reports.

In response to another question, Allama Mehdi Mahdaviur said that there are cordial relations between Iran and India.

"Relations between Iran and India are not cordial and friendly when it comes to the political sphere, but these relations are better culturally and economically as well," he said.]

Tehran to Press Ahead With 60% Enrichment

TEHRAN (IFP) - An Iranian MP has said the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran will press ahead with its current policies including 60 percent enrichment until sanctions against the country are lifted.

Shahriar Heydari, a member of parliament's national security commission noted that 60% uranium enrichment has always been a policy of the Islamic Republic.

Heydari added that the AEOI and the International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA, are cooperating with each other and the 60% enrichment is not unconventional and is in line with parliament's Strategic Action Law.

According to the lawmaker, the legislative body approved the law to safeguard the Iranian people's interests and get the sanctions removed.

Heydari however warned that Iran's adversaries could use the 60% enrichment as a pretext against the country. He said the higher the enrichment's grade, the sooner Iran will enter the cycle of different needs.

A key need, the MP noted, pertains to health and treatment.

Heydari maintained that Iran is not supposed to stop and see what the JCPOA signatories want, what decisions they make and when they will hold a meeting.

He said when those countries want to hold a meeting that would lead to a decision and action, Iran is ready.

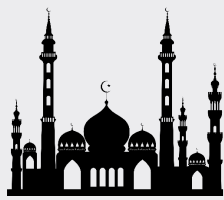
Iran to Give Residence Services to Eligible Afghan Refugees

TEHRAN (IFP) - The Iranian Interior Ministry says Tehran will give residence services to the eligible Afghan refugees who took part in the 2016 and 2017 censuses.

Sadeh Rezadoust the ministry's director general for the affairs of foreign nationals and migrants also pointed to this year's census for foreign nationals, saying the validity papers in non-prohibited cities for those who received green or white census papers in 2022, have been extended for three months and there is no need to get them extended.

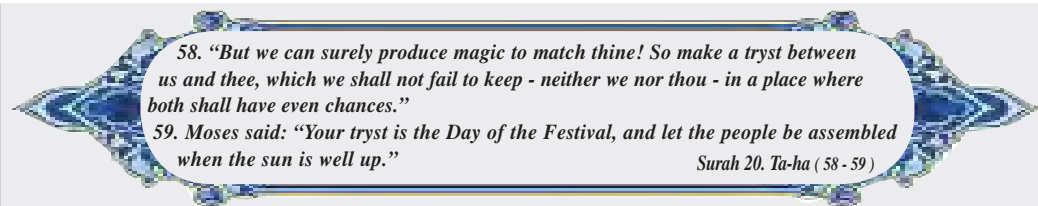
Iran is hosting four million Afghan refugees without any substantial international aid.

The Islamic Republic has multiple times complained about the matter to the UN, but it says the world body has failed to take any meaningful action to assist Tehran in hosting the refugees. The August 2021 Taliban takeover of Afghanistan made matters worse and sent another huge influx of asylum seekers into neighboring countries including Iran.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:55
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:10
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:31
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:00



Tehran-Dushanbe Trade Exchanges Post 300% Growth

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Energy Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian said that the trade and economic volume exchanged between the two countries of Iran and Tajikistan registered a considerable 300% growth in 2022 as compared to a year ago.

Speaking in the inaugural ceremony of the 15th edition of the Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Cooperation Commission, held in Tehran on Monday, he expressed hope that the bilateral trade and economic exchanges would be further expanded in the coming months and years.

The trade and economic delegations between the two countries should be more activated in order to witness further economic growth, Mehrabian emphasized.

Iran and Tajikistan have so far held 14th commissions, he said, adding that a number of 17 cooperation documents were inked in the latest visit of Tajik officials to Iran.

After the 13th government took power, President Raisi made his maiden trip to Tajikistan and in a joint meeting with the Tajik president, eight cooperation documents were signed between the two countries, in which, Iran managed to be an official member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), he said.

With the activation of economic sectors between the two countries, bilateral economic exchanges have been doubled, he underlined.



He then pointed to the economic activities exchanged between the two countries in 2013 and stated that bilateral economic exchanges exceeded in 2013 but after this year, these exchanges decreased.

Therefore, the economic sectors of Iran and Tajikistan must make their utmost efforts in line with developing trade ties more than before, Mehrabian noted, adding that the private sectors of the two countries should be more activated.

Tajik Minister of Energy and Water Resources Daler Juma, for his part, pointed to the constructive cooperation that has begun between the two countries, saying that the cooperation should be continued within the framework of organizing exhibitions and also investing in different industrial sectors.

Relations between the two countries have not been confined to the economic sector, rather, Iran and Tajikistan have taken giant strides in boosting cultural and historical fields, based on which, 17 cooperation documents have been inked in this regard, Daler Juma added.

Iran's Gasoline Is Standard

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) says currently gasoline with Euro 4 standard is produced and distributed in 8 metropolises and there is no problem and it means no problem in the quality of the produced fuel has happened.



Speaking to ILNA and reacting to halt in distribution of supercarburant (four-star petrol) in gas stations, Jalil Salari said that continuous overconsumption of gasoline and implementing emergency and overhaul programs in two refineries of Imam Khomeini (R) of Shazand and Isfahan has led to the halt in supercarburant production temporarily but after the overhaul and repairs and controlling the consumption, the production and distribution of high octane gasoline will resume.

He reiterated the major fuel distributed in the country is in accordance with the Euro 4 standard in terms of allowed level of benzene, sulfur and aromatic compounds and olefin.

He stressed that all distributed gasoline in 8 metropolises is in accordance with the Euro4 standards.

On the halt of distributing supercarburant in the gas stations, he said that every year the consumption in the first half of the year was high because of the vacations and travels in the summer and the consumption used to fall in the second half but this year the amount of consumption in the second half has not declined and the daily consumption is over 100m liters.

Salari noted that gasoline consumption should be controlled and the country should be able to meet the gasoline demands of the people.

Iran Soon To Recover From South Pars Phase 11

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) says works for accelerating the trend of completion of important and strategic projects especially developing the joint fields are underway, adding that the maximum volume of operation in the joint South Pars field for producing gas is underway.



Speaking in a ceremony, Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr said that the country is on the eve of entering the winter and his colleagues in the company do their best and produce over 1b cubic meters of gas per day and there is maximum readiness to bring relative comfort for the people in this winter.

He added that development of South Azadegan Oil Field is underway with full speed, adding that one of the important priorities of the company is maximum production and fast development in all joint oil and gas fields.

He also said that some of the EPD and EPC projects are in the exploitation phase, adding that last week recovery from Esfand and Sivan fields started with daily recovery of 16,000 barrels and they are ready for official exploitation.

Khojasteh-Mehr went on to say that some other projects will officially be exploited in February, adding that these days they witness the maximum volume of operation in the joint South Pars gas field and last week a valuable experience was gained and one of the biggest gas platforms of South Pars was removed with maximum precision and this 4,000-ton platform will be soon installed in B11 position and this is considered a symbolic act from the company.

He then pointed to several operations are underway in Assalouyeh and the Persian Gulf, adding that drilling of four wells of the development project of Phase 11 of joint South Pars gas field is in the final stage and its offshore pipelines have been completed and soon gas recovery from the Phase 11 will start.

He also said that the pipeline of the Phase 16 of South Pars is being completed. He went on to say that drilling of 70 wells in the South Pars field is of the major prioritized plans of the company.

On boosting the pressure of the gas fields in South Pars, he said that the studies for it have started with cooperation of a foreign company and Iranian companies are advancing the engineering activities of the project.

Iran Unveils First Home-Made Euro-6 Vehicle

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's manufacturer of commercial vehicles the Iran Khodro Diesel Company (IKDC) has unveiled a first home-made diesel vehicle with the Euro-6 emissions technology.

Reports in local media on Sunday showed images of Foton Tunland, a 235-horsepower, V-6 pickup truck that IKDC officials said would hit the markets in the next three months.

The truck is the first Iran-made vehicle that passes the latest Euro 6 emission standard as well as 85 other requirements set by Iranian standard bodies. It is equipped with an automatic transmission and other advanced features.

A report by the IRIB news said the IKDC will manufacture 3,000 units of Foton Tunland per month when it scales up production of the model.

The unveiling comes amid reports suggesting there has been major boom in the home-grown car industry in Iran

in the months that have passed since the start of the calendar year in March.

Figures by Iran's ministry of industries published earlier this week showed that vehicle output in the country hit a five-year record of 122,000 units in the calendar month to November 21.

The European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA) also said in a report last week that car output in Iran had surged by 31.2% year on year in the nine months to September 2022 to reach a total of 949,817 units.

The figures come as Iranian automotive companies have sought to diversify their products and boost their local parts manufacturing capacities.

Those efforts intensified after the United States imposed sanctions on Iran in 2018 and made it difficult for local manufacturers to access parts supplies from abroad.

Diplomat Hails Reviving Iran-Pakistan Preferential Trade

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's consular general in Karachi said that the country's recent move to remove the ban on the list of goods with preferential trade agreement is a positive signal to facilitate trade exchanges and reinforce bilateral cooperation.

Hassan Nourian called for removing obstacles on Iran-Pakistan trade like lack of an official banking channel and tariff roadblocks.

He urged Iranian and Pakistani businesses to use this opportunity to strengthen relations, especially in border markets.

Elaborating on Iranian government's efforts to increase understanding of the commercial capacities of the two countries, he said Iran's exclusive exhibition is supposed to be held in Karachi on January 16, 2023.

Over 850 Idle Industrial Units Revived in 8 Months

TEHRAN (MNA) - As announced by the head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), 858 idle industrial units have been revived in the country during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21).

The mentioned units returning to the production cycle created jobs for 16,222 persons, Ali Rasoulia stated.

Referring to the planning for the revival of 1,987 stagnant production units in the present year, the official said: "With the return of 858 industrial units to the production cycle since the beginning of this year, the plan for the revival of idle small and medium industries inside and outside the industrial parks and zones of the country have been materialized by 43 percent".

He further said that 693 units out of the total number of revived units were inside the industrial parks and zones and 165 other units were outside the mentioned areas.

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

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

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

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

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

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

He stressed that reviving idle production units is the main approach that the government is currently following in the industry sector.

UNESCO Ranks Iran 6th in Terms of Intangible Heritage

TEHRAN (IP) - The Director General of Registration and Preservation of Spiritual and Natural Heritage Office of the Iranian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicraft reported that Iran was ranked 6th in UNESCO's registry of intangible heritage.

The 17th meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage began on November 28 in Rabat of Morocco and wrapped up on December 3.

In this edition of the committee, Iran presented 6 intangible cultural heritages common with other countries, four of which are registered globally; building and playing lute common with Syria, Yalda Night common with Afghanistan, Turkmen Needlework common with Turkmenistan, and silkworm breeding and traditional silk production common with Afghanistan.

Mostafa Pourali said that with Iran's 21st intangible cultural heritage being registered in the UNESCO World List, Iran promoted one stage and was ranked sixth among the countries with registered heritage in this list.

Iran and Croatia each have registered 21 works of intangible cultural heritage in the world list and are jointly in sixth place.

IRISL Adds 3 New Exporting Destinations in Russia



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Three more ports in Russia have been added to the exporting destinations of the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line (IRISL).

In line with the policies of the 13th government for broadening foreign trade with Russia and Caspian Sea countries, three ports of Makhachkala, Olya and TVS plus Salianka will serve Iran's foreign trade and therefore the exporting destinations of the IRISL in the Caspian Sea has become more divers.

According to the public relations of the IRISL Group, IRISL in compliance with the policy of the government for broadening foreign trade with the Caspian Sea states has increased its exporting destinations in Russia and has added Makhachkala, Olya and VST ports to Salianka Port in Russia.

This decision of the group will accelerate load and unload operations as well as the plies of ships to Russian ports and it will help the amount of exports and transit of good increase.

It is expected by adding these three ports to the list of IRISL, the pace of plies and maximum using from the Russian ports as well as speed of load and unload will increase.

The addition of three ports will boost exports to Russia and it will also boost productivity of Caspia Sea shipping fleet which is very effective.

Indonesia’s Mount Semeru Erupts

LUMAJANG (Dispatches) - Indonesia’s Mount Semeru erupted spewing hot ash clouds a mile high and rivers of lava down its side while sparking the evacuation of nearly 2,000 people exactly one year after its last major eruption killed dozens.

The burst from the highest mountain on Indonesia’s main island of Java, around 800 kilometers (500 miles) southeast of the capital Jakarta, prompted authorities to raise the alert status for the volcano to the highest level. Villages around Semeru were being battered by a mix of volcanic ash and monsoon rains. Videos shared with AFP by a local rescue group showed a huge black cloud rising from the volcano, engulfing the sky and blocking the sun.



Venezuela Opposition Demand Date to Talks With Maduro

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuela’s opposition asked President Nicolas Maduro’s government to set a date to resume political talks in Mexico that could alleviate the county’s long-running political and economic crises.

Government and opposition delegates met in Mexico City on Nov. 26 after more than a year of hiatus, and signed a “social agreement”, but did not announce a date to meet again. The opposition later said they would meet with the ruling party in December.

The government “sets new conditions to advance on (the) political issue,” the opposition said in a statement on Twitter Saturday afternoon, but did not give details of what the new official requirements were.



U.S. Intelligence Expects Slower Pace of Ukraine War to Continue



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The slowed pace of fighting in Ukraine is set to continue over the next several months and the United States sees no evidence that Ukraine’s will to resist Russia has diminished, despite Moscow’s crippling attacks on the Ukrainian power grid, a senior U.S. intelligence official said. Avril Haines, director of national intelligence in the Biden administration, also said on Saturday that she believed Russian President Vladimir Putin had been surprised that his military had not achieved more in its war on Ukraine. “We’re seeing a kind of a reduced tempo already of the conflict ... and we expect that’s likely to be what we see in the coming months,” Haines told the annual Reagan National Defense Forum in California. The Ukrainian and Russian militaries will attempt to refit and resupply to prepare for counteroffensives after the winter, but there was a question as to whether the Kremlin could achieve that objective, she said. “We actually have a fair amount of skepticism as to whether or not the Russians will be in fact prepared to do that. I think more optimistically for the Ukrainians in that timeframe,” she said. Putin is beginning to realize the challenges his military is faced with, Haines said. “I do think he is becoming more informed of the challenges that the military faces in Russia. But it’s still not clear to us that he has a full picture at this stage of just how challenged they are ... we see shortages of ammunition, for morale, supply issues, logistics, a whole series of concerns that they’re facing,” she said.

The Atlantic Council, a U.S. think tank, said recently that winter conditions in Ukraine may favor Russian defensive tactics and allow the Russians to bring in newly-mobilized forces to positions held east of the Dnipro River and near Crimea in the south. “It may be Russia’s tactic to force a stalemate through the winter from more entrenched positions with the intent to begin rotating newly trained and equipped mobilization forces to the front as spring approaches,” the council said. Haines said Putin’s political objectives in Ukraine did not appear to have changed, but US intelligence analysts thought Putin may be willing to scale back his near-term military objectives “on a temporary basis with the idea that he might then come back at this issue at a later time”. She also said Russia appeared to be depleting its military stockpiles “quite quickly”. “That’s why you see them going to other countries effectively to try to get ammunition ... and we’ve indicated that their precision munitions are running out much faster in many respects,” she said. “It’s really pretty extraordinary, and our own sense is that they are not capable of indigenously producing what they are expending at this stage.” Asked about the effects of Russian attacks on Ukraine’s power grid and other civilian infrastructure, Haines said Moscow’s aim was partly to undermine the will of Ukrainians to resist, adding: “I think we’re not seeing any evidence of that being undermined right now at this point.” Russia was also looking to affect Ukraine’s capacity to prosecute conflict and Kyiv’s economy had been hit hard.

El Salvador Sends 10,000 Troops To Capital Suburb

SAN SALVADOR (Dispatches) - The government of El Salvador sent 10,000 soldiers and police to seal off a town on the outskirts of the nation’s capital Saturday to search for gang members.

The operation was one of the largest mobilizations yet in President Nayib Bukele’s nine-month-old crackdown on street gangs that long extorted money from businesses and ruled many neighborhoods of the capital, San Salvador. The troops blocked roads going in and out of the township of Soyapango, checking people’s documents. Special teams went into the town looking for gang suspects. “Starting now, the township of Soyapango is completely surrounded,” Bukele wrote in his Twitter account. He posted videos showing ranks of rifle-toting soldiers.

More than 58,000 people have been jailed since a state of emergency was declared following a wave of homicides in late March. Rights groups have criticized the mass roundups, saying they often sweep up young men based on their appearance or where they live.



Tigray Forces Withdraw 65% of Fighters From Frontline

ADDIS ABABA (Dispatches) - The commander-in-chief of the Tigray rebel forces has said that 65 percent of his forces have “disengaged”, a month after a ceasefire agreement over Ethiopia’s war-torn northern region.

“We have started disengagement and relocation of our forces from battlelines... out of our forces, 65 percent of them have passed through this process, disengaging from battlelines and moved to designated places,” General Tadesse Worede, chief of staff of Tigray’s fighters, told reporters.

Tigray’s authorities had been resisting central rule for months when Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed accused their leadership of attacking federal army camps and sent troops into the region in 2020.

The conflict between the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) and pro-Abiy forces — which include regional militias and the Eritrean army — has caused an untold number of deaths, forced more than two million people from their homes and driven hundreds of thousands to the brink of famine.

The two parties signed a peace deal in South Africa in November that agreed to a cessation of hostilities and unfettered aid into Tigray, as well as the disarming of TPLF fighters and re-establishment of federal authority over Tigray.

But Tadesse said there were still “forces in the areas that don’t want peace”, apparently referring to Eritrean soldiers and other regional Ethiopian militia.

“The problems they are creating and the abuses they’re committing on the population isn’t secret, so we’ve paused to some extent (our disengagement) in some places (to prevent) them from entering into new areas and continuing their atrocities on the population.”

His troops would not “100 percent” disengage until the threat was reduced, he added.

The ceasefire makes no mention of the presence on Ethiopian soil or any possible withdrawal of Eritrean troops, who have backed Abiy’s forces and been accused of atrocities.

Colombia Says Agreement Made With ELN Rebels on Displaced People

BOGOTA (Dispatches) - Colombia has reached an agreement in peace talks with the ELN rebel group to allow the Indigenous Embera community to return to its lands in the west of the country, President Gustavo Petro said.

The pact is the first significant success achieved at peace negotiations taking place between the government and the left-wing National Liberation Army (ELN), the country’s largest remaining rebel group. The talks, aimed at ending the country’s decades-long conflict, resumed last month in Venezuela after being suspended in 2019.

“The first point of agreement that we reached with the ELN — in barely a week of these dialogues — is the return of the Indigenous Embera people ... to their reservations,” Petro said on Saturday in a public appearance in Dabeiba, a town in northwestern Colombia.

Petro did not say when the Embera would return to their lands in the departments of Choco and Risaralda in western Colombia. They had fled violence between drug gangs, outlawed right-wing armed groups and the ELN.

Many of the displaced Embera now live in Colombia’s capital and hold highly visible protests in parks, clashing frequently with police.

As of Saturday, ELN delegates to the talks had not made any statements directly related to the humanitarian agreement on the Embera.

The push for peace negotiations came from Colombia’s new first-ever left-wing President Gustavo Petro, who was a former member of the M-19 rebel movement.

After taking office in August, the president engaged the ELN as part of his “total peace” policy and the negotiations resumed even though no ceasefire between the two parties has been reached yet.

Nevertheless, the ELN had pledged to allow “humanitarian relief processes” as part of a peace talks framework its leaders signed with the government of then-President Juan Manuel Santos in 2016.

That year, Santos signed a historic peace deal with Colombia’s largest and oldest rebel group, the FARC. The FARC and the ELN operated in different parts of the country.

Previous attempts at negotiations with the ELN, which accounts for approximately 2,500 combatants according to peace-building civic group Indepaz, have not advanced partly because of dissent within its ranks.

ELN leaders say the group is united, but it is unclear how much sway negotiators hold over active units. The group is primarily active in the Pacific region and along the 2,200km (1,370-mile) border with Venezuela.

Talks between the ELN and Santos were called off in 2019 by Santos’s successor, Ivan Duque, after the ELN bombed a police academy in Bogota.



UK Could Use Military To Ease Strikes

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain’s government is looking at bringing in the military to help keep public services running if key workers, including in the state-run National Health Service, take strike action, the chairman of the governing Conservative Party said.

Britain is already grappling with industrial action in a range of sectors, but now faces strikes by thousands of nurses in England and ambulance workers in England and Wales who plan to walk out later this month over pay and conditions.

The government has repeatedly called on workers to halt strike action, saying it could not afford pay rises to cover inflation and that, even if it could meet their demands, such increases would further fuel inflation.

“Our message to the unions is to say ‘this is not a time to strike, this is a time to try and negotiate’. But in the absence of that, it is important for the government... to have contingency plans in place,” Nadhim Zahawi told Sky News.

“We’re looking at the military, we’re looking at a specialist response force... a surge capacity,” he said, adding that the military could be brought in to drive ambulances.

Alex Baldock, chief executive of British electricals retailer Currys, said his company would not use Royal Mail “for now” to reduce any strike impact.

Workers at post and parcel company Royal Mail have held several rounds of strikes this year in a dispute over pay and working conditions and more strikes are planned this month.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, in power for just over a month, faces a raft of problems, including what could prove to be a lengthy recession in the run-up to an election that opinion polls suggest the Conservatives will lose.

The Sunday Times newspaper reported that Sunak could revive plans to curb the right to strike for public sector workers, including NHS staff, teachers and firefighters, while the Sunday Telegraph said pharmacists could be drafted in to help patients if health workers strike later this month.



Divisions Remain On Plastics Treaty As UN Talks Close in

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The first round of negotiations on a global treaty to halt plastic pollution has ended in a split on whether goals and efforts should be global and mandatory, or voluntary and country-led.

More than 2,000 delegates from 160 countries met in Uruguay for the first of a planned five sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), a UN negotiating body aimed at crafting the first legally binding agreement by the end of 2024.

Negotiations in the coastal city of Punta del Este that ended on Friday pitted a “High Ambition Coalition” against countries that have the world’s top plastic and petrochemical companies, including the United States and Saudi Arabia.

The High Ambition Coalition of more than 40 countries, including EU members, Switzerland, host Uruguay and Ghana, pushed for the treaty to be based on mandatory global measures, including curbs on production.

“Without a common international regulatory framework, we will not be able to address the global and increasing challenge of plastic pollution,” Switzerland said in its position statement.

The opposing camp wants the pact to resemble the structure of the Paris climate agreement, where countries set their own greenhouse gas reduction goals and action plans.

They argue national plans allow governments to prioritize the most important sources and types of plastic pollution.

“The United States is committed to working with other governments and stakeholders throughout the INC process to develop an ambitious, innovative and country-driven global agreement,” a US State Department spokesperson said in a statement. Industry representatives at the talks touted the essential role of plastics in daily life, calling for the treaty to focus on tackling waste rather than measures to sap production.

“At the end of the day, we hope the committee comes to the same conclusion we do, which is that increasing recycling offers the best solution to reducing plastic waste,” said Matt Seaholm, the president and CEO of the Plastics Industry Association.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres sent the opposite message, urging nations to crack down on the production of plastics, which are “fossil fuels in another form.”

“I call on countries to look beyond waste and turn off the tap on plastic,” he wrote on Twitter.

Plastics are fossil fuels in another form & pose a serious threat to human rights, the climate & biodiversity. As negotiations towards an agreement to Beat Plastic Pollution continue, I call on countries to look beyond waste and turn off the tap on plastic.

Environmental group Greenpeace said that without a strong treaty, plastic production could double within the next 10 to 15 years, and triple by 2050.

Nature conservation group WWF expressed concerns that a voluntary, country-led approach would fail to produce real change.

“Although in the minority, there are some powerful opponents of global rules and standards, which risk potentially weakening obligations on countries to take action,” Eirik Lindebjerg, WWF global plastics policy lead, said.

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee was established by the United Nations Environment Assembly to develop the text of a global agreement on plastic pollution.

The move followed a meeting in Nairobi in March when UN members adopted a historic resolution to end plastic pollution.



U.S. Unveils High-Tech B-21 Stealth Bomber

PALMDALE (Dispatches) -The United States unveiled the B-21 Raider, a high-tech stealth bomber that can carry nuclear and conventional weapons and is designed to be able to fly without a crew on board.

The slickly choreographed ceremony at B-21 manufacturer Northrop Grumman’s facility in Palmdale, California opened with the US national anthem as older bombers roared over a crowd that included top U.S. officials.

Dramatic music played and lights flashed as the doors of a hanger holding the new aircraft slowly opened, and the crowd applauded as the cloth covering it was pulled away to reveal a sleek grey bomber that is on track to cost nearly \$700 million per plane.

“The B-21 Raider is the first strategic bomber in more than three decades. It is a testament to America’s enduring advantages in ingenuity and innovation,” US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in remarks at the ceremony.

Many specifics of the aircraft are being kept under wraps, but the plane will offer significant advances over existing bombers in the US fleet, which Austin highlighted in his remarks.

He hailed its range -- “no other long-range bomber can match its efficiency” -- and its durability, saying it is “designed to be the most maintainable bomber ever built.”

Like the F-22 and F-35 warplanes, the B-21 features stealth technology, which minimizes an aircraft’s signature through both its shape and the materials it is constructed from, making it harder for adversaries to detect.

“Fifty years of advances in low-observable technology have gone into this aircraft,” Austin said. “Even the most sophisticated air defense systems will struggle to detect the B-21 in the sky.”

The plane is also built with an “open system architecture,” which allows for the incorporation of “new weapons that haven’t even been invented yet,” he said.

Amy Nelson, a fellow at the Brookings Institution think tank, told AFP ahead of the unveiling that the B-21 is “designed to evolve.”

“The ‘open architecture’ allows for the future integration of improved software (including for autonomy) so the aircraft doesn’t become obsolete as quickly,” she said.

“The B-21 is much fancier than its predecessors -- truly modern. Not only is it dual-capable (unlike the B-2), which means it can launch nuclear or conventionally armed missiles, it can launch long- and short-range missiles,” Nelson said.

Not mentioned during the ceremony was the plane’s potential for uncrewed flight. US Air Force spokesperson Ann Stefanek told AFP the aircraft is “provisioned for the possibility, but there has been no decision to fly without a crew.”

The first flight by a B-21 -- “the backbone of our future bomber force” -- is expected to take place next year, and the Air Force plans to buy at least 100 of the aircraft, Stefanek said.

Northrop Grumman said six of the planes are currently in different stages of assembly and testing at its facility in Palmdale.

The bomber will be a key part of the U.S. “nuclear triad,” which consists of weapons that can be launched from the land, air and sea.

“For nuclear deterrence, the bomber fleet provide flexibility to US nuclear posture, and redundancy should any of the other legs fail,” Nelson said.

The “Raider” portion of the aircraft’s name honors the 1942 US bomber raid on Tokyo led by then-lieutenant colonel James Doolittle -- the first American strike on Japan’s homeland following the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor the previous year.



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MARKETING

MARKET ANALYSIS

ONLINE

DISSEMINATION

STRONG

TECHNOLOGY

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Pakistan Repays \$1b Int'l Bond

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan repaid a \$1 billion international bond, the central bank spokesman said on Friday, amidst growing uncertainty about the country's ability to meet external financing obligations. The South Asian nation's economy has been beset by multiple crises, including the fallout of devastating floods that killed 1,700 people, low foreign exchange reserves and decades high inflation. "The payment (was) made to Citibank New York," State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) spokesman Abid Qamar told Reuters in a message. The bond repayment, which matures on Dec. 5, totals \$1.08 billion, the central bank chief said last week.



U.S. Labor Market Shrugs Off Recession Fears

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. employers hired more workers than expected in November and increased wages, shrugging off mounting worries of a recession, but that will probably not stop the Federal Reserve from slowing the pace of its interest rate hikes starting this month.

Despite the strong job growth, some details of the Labor Department's closely watched employment report on Friday were a bit weak, which economists said could be flagging upcoming labor market weakness. Household employment decreased for a second straight month. About 186,000 people left the labor force, keeping the unemployment rate unchanged at 3.7%.

Labor market tightness and strength keeps the Fed on its monetary policy tightening path at least through the first half of 2023, and could raise its policy rate to a higher level where it could stay for sometime. It also underscores the economy's resilience heading into what is expected to be a tough year.

"November's labor market report was clearly bad news for the Fed's war on inflation," said Jan Groen, chief U.S. macro strategist at TD Securities in New York. "The Fed has no other choice than to remain in tightening mode for the near future, with 50 basis points hikes in December and February."

Nonfarm payrolls increased by 263,000 jobs last month. Data for October was revised higher to show payrolls rising 284,000 instead of 261,000 as previously reported. Monthly job growth of 100,000 is needed to keep pace with growth in the labor force.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast payrolls increasing 200,000. Estimates ranged from 133,000 to 270,000. Employment growth has averaged 392,000 per month this year compared with 562,000 in 2021.

Hiring remains strong despite announcements of thousands of job cuts by technology companies, including Twitter, Amazon and Meta, the parent of Facebook.

Economists say these companies are right-sizing after over-hiring during the COVID-19 pandemic, noting that small firms remain desperate for workers.

There were 10.3 million job openings at the end of October, with 1.7 openings for every unemployed person, many of them in the leisure and hospitality as well as healthcare and social assistance industries.

The gains in employment last month were led by the leisure and hospitality sector, which added 88,000 jobs, most of them at restaurants and bars. Leisure and hospitality employment remains down 980,000 from its pre-pandemic level.

There were 45,000 jobs added in healthcare, while government payrolls increased 42,000. Construction employment increased by 20,000 jobs despite the housing market turmoil, while manufacturing added 14,000 jobs.

But retail trade employment fell by 30,000 jobs, with most of the losses in general merchandise stores. Transportation and warehousing payrolls decreased by 15,000 jobs. Temporary help jobs, a segment normally considered a harbinger of future hiring, decreased by 17,200. "The labor market might encounter some bumps in the road next year, but it's heading into 2023 cruising," said Nick Bunker, head of economic research at the Indeed Hiring Lab.

Brazilian Economy Slows

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Brazil's economic growth slowed to a weaker-than-expected 0.4 percent in the third quarter, according to official figures released, as the central bank's aggressive interest-rate hikes put the brakes on Latin America's biggest economy.

The figure was slightly below the 0.6 percent average forecast of analysts polled by business daily Valor, showing the complicated economic picture facing leftist president-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva when he takes over from far-right President Jair Bolsonaro on January 1.

Brazil's economy grew 1.3 percent in the first quarter of the year and one percent in the second, according to revised figures, but now faces what could be a prolonged slowdown.

Brazil's central bank waged one of the earliest and most hawkish monetary tightening campaigns in the world as the global inflation crisis started, rapidly raising its key interest rate from an all-time low of two percent in March 2021 to 13.75 percent currently. That has helped curb annual inflation, from a painfully high 12.13 percent in April to 6.47 percent today.

But it has also slowed economic growth.

"The weaker-than-expected GDP growth figure... highlights that the weakening global economy and higher interest rates are bringing the recent period of strong growth to an end," said William Jackson, chief emerging markets economist at consulting firm Capital Economics.

Brazil's economy has been hit hard by the inflation crisis fueled by the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, as well as factors closer to home, including political paralysis created by Bolsonaro and Lula's divisive election showdown.

Lula, who previously led Brazil from 2003 to 2010, and his transition team are scrambling to pass a constitutional amendment that would temporarily exempt an expanded version of Brazil's main welfare program from the government spending cap.

But the move is making markets nervous over the incoming government's commitment to fiscal discipline.

Thursday's figures showed particular weakness in Brazil's key agricultural sector, which led the slowdown with a contraction of 0.9 percent. The services sector expanded by 1.1 percent, and industry by 0.8 percent.

Despite Brazil's unemployment rate falling from a pandemic high of 14.9 percent to 8.3 percent currently, consumer spending also showed a slowdown, from 2.1 percent growth in the second quarter to one percent in the third.



Turkey Extends Export Record Streak

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's exports remained buoyant in November, while imports jumped at an even faster pace, propelled mainly by costly energy inbound shipments that continue to widen the country's trade deficit.

One of the main drivers of Turkey's economic growth this year, exports hit record-high volumes throughout the first 11 months of this year. Yet, a global slowdown has put a drag on foreign demand, notably among Turkey's largest trade partners, spearheaded by Europe.

Outbound shipments rose 1.9% year-over-year to \$21.9 billion (TL 408.17 billion) in November, Trade Minister Mehmet Muş said Friday, while imports jumped 14% from a year earlier to \$30.7 billion, driven mainly by steep rises in energy and commodity prices.

Turkey is almost completely dependent on imports to cover its energy needs, which leaves it vulnerable to rising costs that skyrocketed following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"Our energy imports increased by 17.4% to \$7.7 billion and accounted for a quarter of our total imports," Muş told an event in the southern province of Adana.

Muş also stressed the impact of soaring gold imports that rocketed by 2,500% from a year ago to \$2.6 billion last month.

These pushed the trade deficit in November to leap over 61% year-over-year to \$8.8 billion, the official data showed. Foreign trade volume rose 8.6% from a year ago to \$52.51 billion.

"The latest data announced by the World Bank show that there was a 70.2% increase in energy prices in the first 10 months of 2022 compared to the previous year. The increase in commodity prices increases the imports of our country, which imports a high amount of energy, especially for the manufacturing sector, as in all countries that are net commodity importers," Muş said.

Exports from January through November jumped 14% from a year ago to \$231 billion, while imports were up 36.6% to nearly \$331.1 billion, the data showed. Foreign trade volume was up 26.3% to \$562.35 billion.

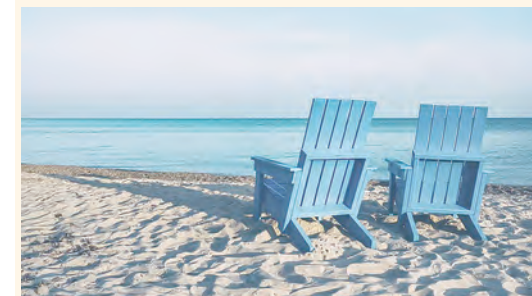
Foreign trade deficit leaped 153.6% to nearly \$100 billion, as surging gold and energy imports continued to widen the shortfall.

Muş said gold imports jumped by 242% year-over-year to \$17.8 billion in the January-November period. He also said the trade shortfall would have been \$3 billion lower in the first 11 months had there not been the negative effect of the foreign exchange parity.

Automotive imports also gained pace after bottlenecks and disruptions related to supply chains and semiconductors. Muş said motor land vehicle imports rose 40% in November to \$1.9 billion.

"Therefore, there is a share of the significant increase in energy, gold and automotive items in our foreign trade deficit this month."

These Are the Best Countries to Retire in



LONDON (Dispatches) - Our global population is getting older. By 2050, the OECD predicts that 30% of people worldwide will be aged 65 or over.

While some countries are relatively prepared to handle this increase in the elderly demographic, others are already feeling the squeeze and struggling with the challenges that come with a rapidly aging population.

Which countries are the best equipped to support their senior citizens? This graphic uses data from the 2022 Natixis Global Retirement Index to show the best countries to retire in around the world, based on several different factors that we'll dig into below.

When people consider what makes a place an ideal retirement location, it's natural to think about white sand beaches, hot climates, and endless sunny days. And, in truth, the right net worth opens up a world of opportunity of where to enjoy one's golden years.

The Global Retirement Index (GRI) examines retirement from different, more quantitative perspective. The annual report looks at 44 different countries and ranks them based on their retirement security. The index considers 18 factors, which are grouped into four overarching categories:

Using these 18 metrics, a score from 0.01 to 1 is determined for each country, which is then converted to a percentage. For a more detailed explanation of the report's methodology, explore Appendix A (page 72) of the report.

With an overall score of 81%, Norway comes in at number one as the most retirement-friendly country on the list. Norway is at the top of this year's ranking for several reasons. For starters, it achieved the highest score in the Health category, largely because of its high average life expectancy, which is 83 years old, or 9 years longer than the global average.

Norway also has the highest score of all the countries for Governance, a category gauged by assessing country corruption levels, political stability, and government effectiveness, and is in a three-way tie with Japan and Luxembourg in the Health category.

European Jobs Market Remains Strong As Recession Looms

LONDON (Dispatches) - The European jobs market is defying expectations and holding up well despite experts expecting the bloc to tip into a tough recession, fresh figures out today show.

The proportion of people unemployed in the 19 countries using the euro dropped to a record low 6.5 percent in October from 6.6 percent in September, according to Eurostat.

Joblessness in the eurozone continued to fall despite countries such as Germany, Italy and France suffering from a historic energy crisis that is cooling economic activity.

European countries have historically relied on cheap Russian gas to power their businesses and provide low cost energy to households.

However, Moscow has sucked supplies out of the market in response to tough economic sanctions designed to hobble the Russia economy after Putin invaded Ukraine.

European countries have scrambled to find alternative suppliers, pushing up gas and electricity prices. Energy costs have fallen recently, but they are still much higher compared to their historic trend.

Europe has filled nearly all its storage, although capacity could be raided rapidly during the colder winter months as households use heating more often.

Analysts said unemployment is likely to rise in the coming months as consumers cut spending in response to raging inflation knocking their living standards.

"The currency bloc's economy is faced with a mounting set of economic challenges," Benjamin Trevis, an economist at the Centre for Economic and Business Research (CEBR), said.

India to Keep Purchasing Russian Oil After Sanctions Go Into Effect

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India said that it would continue to purchase Russian crude oil even after the embargo and price cap go into effect on December 5, an official in the Indian Oil Ministry said.

India has consistently stated its intention to continue to purchase whatever crude oil makes the most financial sense for the import-heavy country. The Indian Oil Ministry official, cited by Attaqa, said that the sanctions placed on Russian oil—specifically on Western shipping and insurance services—won't apply to India because they intend to use non-Western services to transport seaborne Russian crude oil into India.

With Poland finally on board, the EU agreed to cap the price of Russian crude oil at \$60 per barrel—higher than the levels at which Russia's Urals are currently trading. Russia has promised to stop shipments to any country employing the price cap. But the price cap only applies to countries hoping to use Western ships and Western insurers—which means it won't apply to India.

The \$60 per barrel G7 price cap and EU embargo on Russian crude oil will go into effect on Monday, December 5. An embargo on crude oil products will follow in February.

Analysts are mixed in their forecasts on how the crude oil price cap and embargo will affect the oil markets. With India and possibly China continuing to purchase Russian crude without the help of Western services, it will water down the effect of the sanctions. But industry insiders have also noted that there are a limited number of non-Western ships and insurers that can bring Russian oil to markets.

Last week, both China and India were purchasing crude oil from Russia at a massive \$33.28 discount to Brent, meaning they are already purchasing well underneath the price cap.

Iran, Saudi Arabia To Ink MOU on Hajj

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization announced at the meeting of the Minister of Hajj and Umrah of Saudi Arabia and the head of the Islamic Republic of Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization the two sides agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding next month

The public relations of Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization announced in a statement that the initial negotiations between Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization

and the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah of Saudi Arabia are aimed at taking the necessary measures and arrangements to hold Hajj next year as well as possible and provide decent services to the Iranian pilgrims it was held as a webinar on Sunday.

This statement adds that in these negotiations, both parties emphasized the necessity of interaction regarding the issues raised in order to provide decent services to Iranian pilgrims.



Europe Can't Look to U.S. Shale to Fill Any OPEC Gap

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - U.S. shale oil drillers turned from scrappy wildcatters into multi-millionaires over the past two decades, propelling the United States to become the world's largest producer, but now they are running out of runway.

Oil output gains are slowing and executives from some of the largest firms are warning of future declines from overworked oilfields and less productive wells.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is to meet to decide whether to hold the line or cut its output, no longer afraid that their policy decisions might provoke a surge in shale production in the way they did in the years before the pandemic.

The sidelining of U.S. shale means consumers around the world may face a winter of higher fuel prices. Russia has threatened to block oil sales to countries supporting a European Union price cap, and the United States is winding down releases from emergency oil stockpiles that helped cool energy inflation.

U.S. shale production costs are soaring and there is no sign that tight-fisted investors will change their demands for returns rather than investment in expanding drilling.

During a decade of stunning growth, shale consistently defied production forecasts, and opposition from environmentalists, as technology broke open more and more shale plays and revolutionized the global energy industry.

But there appears to be no new industry-transforming technologies in the works or cost-savings that could change the picture this time around. Inflation has pushed up costs by up to 20%, and less productive wells are crimping the industry's ability to produce more.

Research and engineering spending at top oilfield firm SLB this year dropped to 2.3% of revenue through September, from 2.4% in the same period a year ago. At Helmerich & Payne, one of the largest drilling contractors, its R&D budget will rise only \$1 million, from 2022's \$27 million.

Industry spending on new oil projects, said analysts last week at Morgan Stanley, "is modest at best and the absolute level of investment is still historically low."

Shale has proven naysayers wrong in the past. After the 2014-2016 OPEC price war put hundreds of oil companies into bankruptcy, shale innovated with less expensive ways of operating. Their subsequent gains gave the United States by 2018 the title of world's largest crude producer, a distinction it still holds.

Investors have put dividends and share buybacks ahead of more production gains in the past few years, said executives.

That has changed the ability of shale producers to react to spikes in international oil prices, said Bryan Sheffield, who sold producer Parsley Energy and now runs an energy-focused private equity fund.

"Shale can't come back to become a swing producer," Sheffield said, because of the investors' unwillingness to finance growth. The demand for payouts and repeated price busts have forced oil producers and service companies "to cut back on science projects" that fed past production breakthroughs, he added.

Technology development that led to innovations such as multi-stage hydraulic fracturing "will slow down and has slowed down," said Richard Spears, a vice president at researcher Spears & Associates. "If you want to advance how far you can drill out and how fast, that now becomes a problem."

The industry also has less time to regain its former leadership, said Hess Corp CEO John Hess. He estimates rivals have about a decade of running room before they fizzle out. Shale is "no longer in the driver's seat" with OPEC regaining control over the market, said Hess.

The U.S. government expects overall oil production to reach a new peak next year, but it has several times this year cut its forecasts. It recently slashed 2023 production growth outlook by 21%, to a gain of about 480,000 barrels per day (bpd), to 12.31 million bpd. That could mean less growth compared to the mere 500,000 bpd gain this year - which is already well short of lofty expectations of an about 900,000 bpd gain this spring.

Shale's waning influence is clear in North Dakota. Once the vanguard of the U.S. shale oil industry, poor well productivity in the state's Bakken region and labor shortages have left it far from its boom days.



About 4% of its shale drilling inventory remains high producing, or Tier 1, locations, down from 9% at the start of 2020, according to production technology firm Novi Labs, which focuses on oil and gas well returns.

As the number of prime drilling locations decline across all shale fields, the outlook is grim. Shale production declines rapidly after peaking compared to conventional oil wells, falling about 50% after the first year.

"It's kind of a canary in the coal mine for what's going to happen in the other unconventional oil plays," said Ted Cross, director of product management Novi Labs and a former oil company geologist, referring to North Dakota.

The Permian Basin of west Texas and New Mexico, the largest and most important U.S. oilfield, is the only U.S. shale region to exceed its pre-COVID-19 pandemic oil production levels, according to U.S. Energy Information Administration data.

Even that field is showing signs of stress.

"There are a bunch of underlying causes, but frac sand is so expensive now, tight labor markets make last-mile logistics difficult, and public producers are generally more willing to miss on production than on capex," said Matt Hagerty, a senior analyst for FactSet's BTU Analytics.

Initial production rates on a new well in the Central Midland basin section of the Permian averages about 790 barrels per day of oil, according to researcher BTU, down from 830 bpd just six months ago. Its outlook for initial output in another shale field, the eastern Eagle Ford, is down to 778 bpd from 828 bpd.

"We're going to go into 2023 with a serious workforce shortage," said North Dakota Department of Mineral Resources Director Lynn Helms. The northern state has historically had difficulty attracting workers, and the tight labor market has worsened the problem.

Attracting laborers for crews needed to run frac fleets and rigs has been stubbornly difficult, Helms said, adding that more drilling rigs have moved south to the Permian.

The number of oil and gas extraction workers in North Dakota fell by 12% between 2019 and 2021, the most recent annual Bureau of Labor Statistics data show, compared to New Mexico's 9.6% drop.

Lower production rates are "a longer-term prospect," said Mike Oestmann, chief executive of shale producer Tall City Exploration. Other issues depressing potential shale gains: a lack of regulatory clarity and the U.S. government's desire to shift away from fossil fuels, he said.

With producers determined to put limited resources into the best drilling prospects, "we won't be able to keep this up forever," said Kaes Van't Hof, finance chief at Diamondback Energy, in a recent earnings call.

The U.S. Energy Department has been cutting forecasts for U.S. crude production all year after slower-than-expected increases in output.

Iran Not to Negotiate...

FROM PAGE 1

The European parties to the deal also did not fulfill their commitments and could not compensate the US unilateral withdrawal from the deal, he added.

Asked about a draft resolution aimed to expel Iran from the UN Commission on the Status of Women, Kanaani said, "Any misuse of the internal developments in Iran to exert political pressure on our country is condemned and unacceptable."

The Iranian spokesman also said that the U.S. and certain European countries are behind that "political and illegal" draft resolution and that they are seeking to exert pressure on independent countries to pass it.

He said the U.S. move is "an action against the free vote of countries in international organizations and structures."

"There are member countries of the UN Security Council or the Human Rights Council and human rights assemblies that committed countless crimes against governments and independent nations throughout their history, and now use human rights tools to exert pressure," he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Kanaani said the Saudi-funded Iran International TV channel plays a role in fomenting chaos in Iran, noting that Iran has taken legal actions against it.

He also condemned the misuse of the internal developments in Iran by some foreign parties that pursue their political interests.

Tehran considers the improvement of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia to be in the interest of the two sides and the region, Kanaani said, answering a question about Iran's position on boosting ties with the Persian Gulf country.

The Iraqi government has made constructive efforts regarding the Tehran-Riyadh talks and Iran welcomes any measures to complete this process, the Iranian senior diplomat stressed.

The Spokesman also spoke about the issues discussed between Iran and Iraq during Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani's visit to Tehran.

Tehran attaches great importance to the issue of border security and in this meeting, the Iraqi government promised to implement some commitments regarding security issues, he said.

The Iraqi government is determined to deploy forces to the Iran-Iraq border, especially along Iran's border with the Kurdistan region of Iraq, he said, adding that this measure will be a positive step in establishing security and stability on the borders of the two countries.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Kanaani touched upon Iran's ties with China, saying that the relationship between Iran and China is a growing relationship and a good example of successful cooperation between the two countries in a bilateral relationship.

The process of implementing bilateral agreements between Iran and China through the comprehensive 25-year cooperation program and other bilateral agreements is on the right track, he noted.

Iran First in Mideast...

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While after death both the quantity and quality of organs available for transplant will be adversely affected due to an inflammatory response, as Davani said by using a haemoperfusion cartridge, which helps to remove pro-inflammatory cytokines in cytokine storm and other cellular inflammatory markers the donors organs remain viable for transplant.

The procedure is approved by the Middle East Society for Organ Transplantation, he added.

A research program is designed to introduce the procedure using a haemoperfusion cartridge (HA380) to other universities of medical sciences in the country to save the lives of people who are on transplant waitlists, he added.

According to the Iran University of Medical Sciences public relations over the past five years, some 700 transplant surgeries were performed in the university's transplant centers.

IRGC Forces Close...

FROM PAGE 1

He explained that the IRGC has a lot of intelligence regarding the terrorists' activities, adding, "We target them when attacked. Our forces are fully capable of deterring the terrorists coming from the Kurdistan Region."

"If the IRGC did not bolster their positions in this region, the terrorists would have violated it," Ranjibarzadeh said. He added that the Iraqi forces had pledged to send reinforcements to the region to provide security.

Iran has on countless occasions warned Iraqi Kurdistan's local authorities that it will not tolerate the presence and activity of terrorist groups along its northwestern borders, saying the country will give a decisive response should those areas become a hub of anti-Islamic Republic terrorists.

Sri Lanka Ends Resort Blackouts to Woo Back Tourists

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka said it was reorganizing its blackout-prone electricity grid to guarantee power to tourist resorts, in an effort to lure back foreign travelers after a bruising economic crisis.

Months of food, petrol and pharmaceutical shortages brought widespread misery to the island nation this year, along with power cuts that reached 13 hours a day at their worst.

The unprecedented financial shock sparked months of angry protests, culminating in July when a crowd stormed the compound of then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa and forced him to flee the country.

But the crisis has since eased and the government that took charge after his departure is eager to jumpstart the tourism industry, a crucial source of revenue.

"We will have a good winter season," tourism minister Harin Fernando told reporters in Colombo. "The situation has improved and it is safe for holiday-makers."

The energy ministry announced that designated tourist areas would be exempt from national blackouts still in force for 2.5 hours each night.

Those areas include Sri Lanka's lush southern coastal beaches and the hill region around Ella, home to nature reserves famed for their elephant herds.

Sri Lanka has been unable to meet its energy demand after struggling to pay for imported fuel for power plants.

But the ministry said recent rains had filled dam reservoirs for hydroelectricity and eased pressure on the grid.

Sri Lanka's worst economic crisis since independence from Britain in 1948 began when the country ran out of foreign exchange to pay for vital imports.

OPEC+ Keeps...

FROM PAGE 1

Washington accused the group and one of its leaders, Saudi Arabia, of siding with Russia despite Moscow's war in Ukraine.

OPEC+ argued it had cut output because of a weaker economic outlook. Oil prices have declined since October due to slower Chinese and global growth and higher interest rates, prompting market speculation the group could cut output again.

But on Sunday the group of oil producers decided to keep the policy unchanged. Its key ministers will next meet on Feb. 1 for a monitoring committee while a full meeting is scheduled for June 3-4.

On Friday, G7 nations and Australia agreed a \$60 per barrel price cap on Russian seaborne crude oil in a move to deprive President Vladimir Putin of revenue while keeping Russian oil flowing to global markets.

Moscow said it would not sell its oil under the cap and was analyzing how to respond.

Many analysts and OPEC ministers have said the price cap is confusing and probably inefficient as

Moscow has been selling most of its oil to countries like China and India, which have refused to condemn the war in Ukraine.

Neither an OPEC meeting on Saturday nor the OPEC+ meeting on Sunday discussed the Russian price cap, sources said.

Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said on Sunday Russia would rather cut production than supply oil under the price cap and said the cap may affect other producers.

Sources have told Reuters several OPEC+ members have expressed frustration at the cap saying the anti-market measure could ultimately be used by the West against any producer.

The United States said the measure was not aimed at OPEC.

JP Morgan said on Friday that OPEC+ could review production in the new year based on fresh data on Chinese demand trends and consumer compliance with price caps on Russia crude output and tanker flow.

Iran No Longer...

FROM PAGE 1

In the first eight months of 2022, between January and August, exports of tea from India increased by 14.8 per cent year-on-year (YoY) to 140.28 million kilograms, according to Tea Board data. During the January-August period in 2021, the shipments stood at 122.18 million kilograms (mkg).

However, tea shipments to Iran failed to increase due to economic sanctions imposed by the US on Iran, a report by PTI said earlier in November. Exports to that country marginally increased to 16.40 mkg in the January-August period as compared to 16.06 mkg in the corresponding period last year.

Tea exports rose marginally in other countries also, due to higher shipping and container costs which skyrocketed due to the war between Russia and Ukraine.

Lawrence Recovers to Win South African Open

JOHANNESBURG (Dispatches) - Local Thriston Lawrence surrendered a five-shot lead with five holes remaining before winning the South African Open by one stroke a day after celebrating his 26th birthday.

He carded a final round 74 at the Blair Atholl Golf & Equestrian Estate, 52 kilometers (32 miles) northwest of Johannesburg, for a total of 273 in the DP World Tour (European Tour) event.

Lawrence triumphed for the third time on the circuit by finishing one stroke ahead of Clement Sordet, who finished with a 73 as he chased a maiden title.

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ISSN 1024-6053

P.O. Box: 15875-8551

Address: No 13, Pajouhesh St., Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzdaran Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Printed by:Honar Sarzmin Sabz

Distributed by:

Cities of Iran Cultural and Artistic Institute

Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

Meronk Claims Australian Open Title

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Adam Scott's hopes of a second Australian Open crown crumbled in the heat and wind on Melbourne's 'Sandbelt' as Polish trailblazer Adrian Meronk coolly closed out a five-stroke win in style at Victoria Golf Club.

With the title sewn up, Meronk drained a 40-foot eagle putt from off the 18th green in a four-under 66 to finish with a 14-under total of 268 in the A\$1.7 million (RM5 million) tournament co-sanctioned with Europe's DP World Tour.

Warriors Shoot Down Rockets, Mavs Beat Knicks

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Andrew Wiggins scored a season-high 36 points as the NBA champion Golden State Warriors got off to a hot start and made it hold up Saturday in a 120-101 victory over the Houston Rockets.

Wiggins drained a career-high eight three-pointers, five of them in the third quarter when he scored 17 points.

Warriors superstar Stephen Curry also had eight treys on the way to 30 points and Jordan Poole added 21 points as the Warriors notched a 10th straight home win.

But Warriors coach Steve Kerr said the defending champions still have room for improvement after letting a 25-point lead midway through the second quarter slip.

The Rockets, led by 20 points from Kevin Porter Jr., had sliced the deficit to four points with 6:59 left in the game.

The Warriors pulled away again, but Kerr said they need to find a way to keep teams from making a run.

"It was a phenomenal first 18 minutes," Kerr said. "I thought that was maybe the best stretch we've had all year to start the game.

"We were defending, rebounding, doing everything right, and then we just lost our focus.

"That's our biggest challenge right now, trying to maintain our focus long enough not to give up leads and allow teams back in," Kerr added.

Elsewhere, Dallas star Luka Doncic and Tim Hardaway Jr took it to the New York Knicks in the third quarter on the way to a 121-100 NBA victory at Madison Square Garden.

Doncic scored 30 points and Hardaway added 28 against his former team, the two combining for 36 points in the third quarter alone when the Mavs outscored the Knicks 41-15 to take control of the contest.

Doncic, the league's leading scorer, had a lackluster 11 points in the first quarter but turned up the heat after the interval.

Jalen Brunson, who departed Dallas for the Knicks in free agency after last season, finished with just 13 points.

The Milwaukee Bucks earned a bounce-back win despite the absence of two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Giannis Antetokounmpo, beating the Hornets 105-96 in Charlotte.

Socceroos Say

World Cup Run Puts

Australian Football on Map

DOHA (Dispatches) - Australia's World Cup heroes hope their surprise run to the last 16 will transform football at home after they went down fighting in a 2-1 defeat to a Lionel Messi-inspired Argentina.

It was only the second time that the Socceroos had got this far at the tournament and there was a sense of pride after being edged out in Qatar on Saturday to one of the pre-World Cup favourites.

Attacking midfielder Riley McGree, who plays in England with second-tier Middlesbrough said: "Just be proud, hold our heads high with what we've done here and hopefully inspired generations to come."

"To do what we've done, you could say it's ground-breaking and moving forward it's only going to be good for the sport in the country," the 24-year-old added.

Graham Arnold's squad matched the "golden generation" from the 2006 World Cup of Harry Kewell and Mark Viduka in reaching the last 16.

Their 1-0 group-stage wins over Tunisia and European semi-finalists Denmark were the first time Australia had won successive games at a World Cup.

Messi scored the opener and then a defensive blunder put Argentina 2-0 up, but an Australia team strong on togetherness and hard work pegged them back with a deflected shot by Craig Goodwin 13 minutes from time.

The Socceroos then had chances to equalise late on, with Aziz Behich bursting from full-back on a mazy run which took him deep into the Argentina area before a last-gasp Lisandro Martinez challenge.

Teenager Garang Kuol also had a golden chance in the remaining seconds.

Goodwin admitted to "mixed emotions". "Disappointed to go out at this stage but to push Argentina to the very end... we gave it everything we've got and we had a couple of chances with Aziz and Garang and could have taken it into extra time.

"But we're proud of what we've done and everything we've achieved.

"The biggest thing for us is we hope we've inspired the next generation of Australian boys and girls to do even better than what we've achieved here.



A day after a hard-fought 133-129 home loss to the Los Angeles Lakers, Antetokounmpo and Jrue Holiday were inactive, as was Khris Middleton -- whose return from off-season wrist surgery is still being carefully managed.

Antetokounmpo, who scored 40 points against the Lakers, sat out with a sore left knee. Holiday was listed as out with a left knee contusion.

Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said he held them out considering "the quick turnaround and with the back-to-back, a little bit of an early game, and just taking into account the big picture."

Bobby Portis stepped up to lead the Bucks with 20 points. Jordan Nwora added 17 points and Brook Lopez and Jevon Carter scored 14 apiece.

Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 33 points to lead seven Thunder players in double figures in a 135-128 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves in Minneapolis.

Josh Giddey added 21 points and 12 rebounds for the Thunder, who trailed by four going into the fourth quarter after the Timberwolves erupted for 44 points in the third period.

D'Angelo Russell led Minnesota with 27 points and Anthony Edwards added 26. Timberwolves center Rudy Gobert was ejected in the second quarter for a flagrant foul after he tripped Oklahoma City's Kenrich Williams.

The two had tangled under the basket, Gobert tripping over the fallen Williams. Gobert fell himself and when Williams extricated himself and rose Gobert stuck his legs out and tripped him. Williams's angry reaction drew a technical foul.

In Los Angeles, Sacramento center Domantas Sabonis connected on 10 of his 11 shots from the field on the way to a game-high 24 points, as the Kings whipped the Clippers 123-96.



more fancied sides are wary of slipping up.

Australia came close to taking Argentina to extra-time on Saturday and Carvalho is staying cautious ahead of Portugal's match.

"I'm sure we will be facing a Switzerland team with lots of ball possession, and we're forewarned about that," the Real Betis midfielder told a press conference Sunday.

"There have been really big surprises, that's a fact, so we need to be focused from the

Carvalho Aiming Not to Be Next World Cup Shock Victims

DOHA (Dispatches) - Portugal midfielder William Carvalho is determined to help his team avoid becoming the victims of another World Cup shock against Switzerland in the last 16 today.

After Saudi Arabia beat Argentina and Japan won against both Germany and Spain, among other surprise results, the

very first minute to the last so that things go our way."

Portugal lost their final group match 2-1 against South Korea, but had already qualified for the knockouts and remained in top spot.

"Nobody likes to lose, we have to analyze the match and learn our lessons so that doesn't happen in the future," said Carvalho.

"I think Portugal need to play like we did in the first two matches, united from start to end.

"We know that we are up against a very tough opponent. The details will make all the difference. We need to be ready."

Carvalho scored as Portugal routed Switzerland 4-0 in June in the Nations League, but a week later they fell to a 1-0 defeat against the same opponent.

"We lost and we won, so we know they will be a tough opponent, but what I can tell you is Switzerland will face a totally focused Portuguese team and we will do our utmost to win the game," he added.

England Subdue Senegal to Reach World Cup Quarters

DOHA (Dispatches) - England set up a titanic World Cup quarter-final against holders France as Jude Bellingham's masterclass inspired a 3-0 win against Senegal in the last 16.

Gareth Southgate's side survived a nervous start at the Al Bayt Stadium before Jordan Henderson and Harry Kane put Senegal to the sword with a pair of clinical finishes before half-time.

Bukayo Saka scored England's third, but it was Bellingham's prodigious work-rate and burgeoning quality in possession that allowed them to turn the tide.

Bellingham set up Henderson's opener and the Borussia Dortmund midfielder was involved again when England captain Kane bagged his first goal in this World Cup.

Kane has now netted 11 times at major tournaments, overtaking Gary Lineker as England's all-time top scorer in those competitions.

But at the tender age of 19, it is Bellingham who has emerged as England's driving force.

He is the first teenager to assist in a World Cup knockout stage game since 1966, having already announced his arrival on the global stage by netting his first England goal in the 6-2 rout of Iran in their group opener.

Just two years after he was playing in the English second tier with Birmingham, the precocious Bellingham was totally unfazed against Senegal in the biggest game of his life.

England will need another command performance from Bellingham if they are to extend their stay in Qatar beyond the last eight. Eyeing a third successive semi-final appearance at major tournaments, England will return to the Al Khor desert on Saturday to take on the red-hot Kylian Mbappe and company after France brushed aside Poland 3-1 on Sunday.



Giroud, Mbappe Guide France Into World Cup Quarters

DOHA (Dispatches) - Kylian Mbappe set up a history-making goal for Olivier Giroud and then scored two himself as holders France eased into the quarter-finals of the World Cup with a 3-1 win over Poland.

Giroud's opening goal a minute before half-time was his 52nd for his country, allowing him to pass Thierry Henry and become France's all-time record marksman.

Mbappe's lethal strike in the 74th minute killed off any prospect of a Poland comeback and he netted again at the death to move to nine goals in just 11 World Cup appearances, the second-most for a French player at the tournament.

At the other end the threat of Robert Lewandowski was snuffed out by the French defense although the 34-year-old Poland captain did get the consolation of scoring a stoppage-time penalty.

France, though, march on to the quarter-finals and remain on course to become the first team to successfully defend the World Cup since Brazil 60 years ago.

France were overwhelming favorites against a Poland side who had limped through the group stage, but the memory of their exit from Euro 2020 served as a warning.

France had been 3-1 up and cruising in that last-16 tie against Switzerland only to concede two late goals and end up losing on penalties, with Mbappe missing the crucial spot-kick.

Mbappe returned on Sunday as one of nine changes following their inconsequential defeat by Tunisia, with goalkeeper and captain Hugo Lloris also returning to win his 142nd cap.

That saw him equal the record for most France appearances held by Lilian Thuram, whose son Marcus came off the bench here.



DOHA (Dispatches) - Arsene Wenger said that teams who focused on football rather than "political demonstrations" fared better in the opening round at the World Cup.

The former Arsenal manager is now working for FIFA as its head of global football development and made the remark unprompted during a press conference looking at trends during the now-concluded group stage in Qatar.

"When you go to a World Cup you know you must not lose the first game," said the 73-year-old, saying teams with World Cup experience such as holders France won their opening matches.

Wenger then added: "And the teams as well who were mentally ready, who had the mindset to focus on the competition and not on political demonstrations."

Germany's players covered their mouths for the team photo before their opening match against Japan in protest at FIFA's refusal to allow the captains of seven European sides to wear rainbow-themed armbands.

The four-time champions lost the game 2-1 and eventually exited in the group stages.

This World Cup has been overshadowed by several controversies both on and off the pitch, especially when it comes to gay rights.

Homosexuality is illegal in Qatar.