

Health Ministry Announced on Tuesday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **144,648** With **3** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Intelligence Ministry in a Statement Announced That Security Forces Have Disbanded Several "Operational Cells" Affiliated With the Terrorist MKO Grouplet Across the Country

VOL. XXVIII, No. 7655 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

www.irannewsdaily.com

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 7, 2022 - AZAR 16, 1401

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West Sets 4 Conditions for Not Supporting Riots in Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) - Several Western countries supporting recent riots in Iran set some conditions for not supporting the rioters.

In an interview with Al-Alam, a security official confirmed the large-scale support of several Western countries for the recent riots in Iran, saying that these countries have announced that they will stop supporting the rioters in Iran if their four conditions are accepted by Iran.

According to the security official, several countries that intervened in the recent riots in Iran have announced that they will stop supporting the rioters if Iran provides the global market with its oil and gas unconditionally, accepts the West's viewpoints on the nuclear deal (JCPOA), compromises with Saudi Arabia in regional-related issues and not cooperating with Russia.

The conditions announced by the western countries indicate that these countries have considered the rioters as tools to put pressure on Iran through their human rights claims.

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National Interests Iran's Red Line in JCPOA Revival Talks

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian says Iran would only accept a 'sustainable agreement' that would secure its red lines in the course of talks to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, which was unilaterally abandoned by the United States three years after its conclusion.

"We do not seek an agreement that is not sustainable and fails to benefit Iranians. Our red lines are definitely nothing but guaranteeing the interests of the Iranian nation," Amirabdollahian said in a meeting in Belgrade with Iranian nationals residing in Serbia.

He also said despite the West's unfair sanctions, Iran is in a good condition regarding its oil and non-oil exports.

The talks to salvage the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), kicked off in the Austrian capital of Vienna in April last year with the intention of examining Washington's seriousness in rejoining the deal and removing anti-Iran sanctions.

The talks remain stalled since August, while Washington has continued to insist on its hard-nosed position of not removing all sanctions slapped on the Islamic Republic by the previous US administration.

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Sokhan Gostar Institute

IRAN NEWS

PRIVATE ENGLISH NEWSPAPER IN IRAN

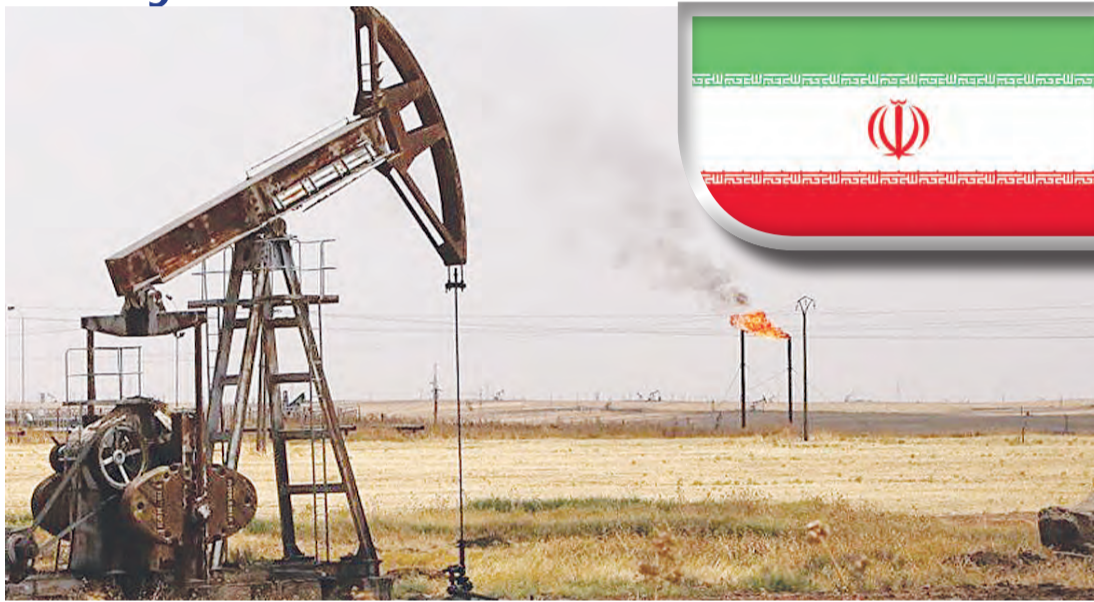


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Iran Discovers New Oil Reserves In Hydrocarbon-Rich Southwest



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran has discovered new oil reserves in the country's southwest, the details of which will be announced by Minister of Petroleum Javad Owji in the near future, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) says.

Iranian experts have also carried out well-logging on an offshore exploratory block in the Persian Gulf with gas reserves estimated at 30 trillion cubic feet, director of exploration at NIOC Mehdi Fakour announced on Tuesday.

"For the first time, we have achieved the method of aerial magnetometry which is used up to a depth of 7,000 meters below the surface of the earth to identify reservoirs and hydrocarbon fields," the official said.

The technique involves using unmanned aircraft and magnetometers equipped with georeferencing systems and other navigation instruments to perform magnetic scans.

Fakour said the design of the aircraft was carried out by Iranian scientists, and the plane is currently being used to collect data. "One tenth of the area of the country is to be surveyed by this plane," he said.

"Few people in the world have the ability to fly such an aircraft, which must be flown at a low altitude - 600 meters above ground - under special conditions. A 30-year-old Iranian, trained domestically, will do this grave task in the Zagros mountains," Fakour added.

Most of Iran's oil and gas fields lie in a belt running along its maritime boundary in the Persian Gulf and the foothills of the Zagros Mountains - an extensive folded zone which is geologically the result of the Arabian plate's collision with the central Iranian plateau.

The collision has trapped thick layers of ancient limestone and sandstone and turned them into some of the world's biggest oil and gas accumulations.

The Zagros basin covers more than 550,000 square kilometers, stretching from Turkey and Syria through the Iraqi Kurdistan into Iran where its sediments are ideally up to 12,000 meters thick.

Some 23 Iranian hydrocarbon fields lie in border areas and are shared between Iran and adjacent countries, including Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar, Bahrain, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Turkmenistan.

The Islamic Republic has kicked off cooperation with four countries, including Tajikistan, in implementing exploring studies, he said.

Some 14 exploration blocs have been defined in Iran, but none of them have been handed over or invested in due to cruel sanctions on the country, he noted.

According to the director, Iran cooperates with an Asian country and five European ones to follow up on research projects, and an offshore bloc comprised of 30 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of gas reserves is located in the Persian Gulf, which can play a key role in upgrading industrial level in the country.

He further underlined that another method is geobotanical prospecting, which refers to prospecting based on indicator plants like metallophytes and the analysis of vegetation, and that an Iranian knowledge-based company in collaboration with a university paved the ground for locating the first well explored by use of the method.

The budget for exploration increased 31 percent, he said, adding that the exploration projects in Iran need 1.5 billion dollars within a five-year period.

The Exploration Department of the National Iranian Oil Company is holding negotiations with three Iranian firms for outsourcing three blocs worth 2.5 billion dollars, the official note.

Iran's proven oil reserves of at least 160 billion barrels account for almost 10 percent of the world total and rank it fourth after Venezuela, Saudi Arabia and Canada. The country also sits on the world's largest proven gas reserves of almost 34 trillion cubic meters, or 18 percent of the global total.

Iran's oil and gas resources are also some of the exceptionally most attractive in the world from an economic point of view. They are trapped in large, conventional reservoirs with excellent geological properties that make them highly productive at a low cost.

UNSC Urged to Deal With Syria Chemical File Objectively

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Syria's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations has called on the UN Security Council to change its approach vis-à-vis his country's chemical file, deal with the related developments objectively, and preserve its technical nature by standing away from any politicization.

Speaking at a UNSC meeting on "The situation in the Middle East" in New York, al-Hakam Dandi said Syria has voluntarily acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention, destroyed all stockpiles of chemical weapons and their production facilities, and agreed to extend the Tripartite Agreement for six months.

He argued that certain Western countries insist on flouting the Security Council's resources and time instead of discussing pressing issues about maintaining international peace and security and upholding the goals and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

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Iran Green-Lights Poultry Imports From Russia

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Several major Russian poultry and meat manufacturers have reportedly gotten license to access the Iranian market.

Five Russian poultry farms have received permission from the Iranian veterinary authorities to supply broiler meat to the country, the Russian veterinary watchdog says.

Rosselhoznadzor listed several major Russian poultry and meat manufacturers which have gotten license to access the Iranian market, local news outlets reported.

According to Konstantin Korneev, executive director of the Russian consulting firm Rincon Management, Russian poultry companies had long been interested in the Iranian market.

He touched on the evolving geopolitical dynamics in Iran-Russia relations, saying he expected all logistics and financial issues pertaining to poultry exports to be solved quickly.

"The Iranian market remains closed for some of the world's key poultry exporters, so the price dynamics there have lower dependence on the actions of foreign companies," Korneev was quoted as saying.

Currently, virtually all Russian poultry exporters are in talks about making their way into the Iranian market, he added.

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Iran Trade With Turkey Crosses \$4b in 10 Months

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran and Turkey traded \$4.49 billion worth of goods during the first 10 months of 2022 to register a 20.45% year-on-year rise, the latest data released by the Turkish Statistical Institute show.

Iran's exports stood at \$2.5 billion, up 29.85% while imports grew by 10.41% to \$1.99 billion.

Bilateral trade stood at \$417.14 million in September, down 7.13% YOY, with Turkish exports at \$228.48 million, up 7.13% YOY, and Iranian exports at \$228.48 million, registering a 25.64% decline YOY, Financial Tribune reported.

Iran and Turkey traded \$4.77 billion worth of goods in 2021 to register a 69.12% rise compared with the preceding year. Iranian exports stood at \$2.52 billion, up 145.18% year-on-year, while imports grew by 25.5% to \$2.25 billion.

Lavrov Urges Swift, Irreversible Lifting of Sanctions Against Iran

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov says the United States must swiftly and irreversibly remove all "illegal" sanctions it has imposed on Iran.

Lavrov made the remarks while addressing the participants at the Moscow Conference on Nonproliferation in a video message on Monday.

"Washington has not given up on the policy of 'maximum pressure' in relation to the nuclear deal with Iran," the Russian foreign minister said, referring to former US President Donald Trump's policy vis-à-vis Iran after he unilaterally withdrew from the 2015 nuclear accord, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The top Russian diplomat added that Moscow strongly urges the American side to "lift all illegal sanctions against Iran as soon as possible and irreversibly and ensure the strict implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231" which endorsed the JCPOA.

He emphasized that the lifting of illegal sanctions would pave the way for Tehran's reciprocal "defrosting" of its voluntary commitments under the nuclear deal.

The Iran nuclear deal was signed in 2015 between Tehran and the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia and China under the presidency of Barack Obama.

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IRGC Busts Network Tied to German, Dutch Saboteurs

ARAK (IRNA) - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has arrested members of a sabotage network that were instructed by anti-Revolution elements based in Germany and in the Netherlands.

A Tuesday statement by the public relations office of IRGC's local branch in Iran's central province of Markazi said that 12 saboteurs had been arrested in one of the cities of the province. The statement said members of the group were planning to carry out actions against national security by making use of war-grade weapons.

Iran Achieved All Modern Military Technologies

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran has achieved all modern military technologies, the chief commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said, adding that the country has accumulated the strength to defeat the enemy.

Addressing the national conference on the role of science and technology in the Sacred Defense, Major General Hossein Salami stressed the necessity of combining the science of politics and geography in order to manage wars.

Salami also emphasized the role of sociology in arranging military designs and psychological operations.

During the Imposed War (1980-1988), the Americans were orchestrating the political management of the war, he said, adding that in fact, at that time, all the world power were united to counter Iranians.



"Today, however, we have achieved all the military technologies in the world," General Salami also pointed out.

"This technology has been developed in all units and we have accumulated the strength to defeat the enemy," he added.

The chief commander of the Iranian Army, Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi also spoke about the role of the Air Forces of the Iran Army in the early days of the Imposed War. In the early days of the war, Iran's Air Force, with two major operations, managed to stop the Iraqis and foil all of Saddam's calculations.

Iran Has Near Four Decades of Experience in Building Drones

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri highlighted domestic capability for making unmanned aerial vehicles and said the country has 39 years of experience in designing and building drones.

From design to flight, the drones are today built inside the country, General Baqeri said at a national conference on the role and position of science and technology in the Sacred Defense.

And having this capability is a big achievement, Baqeri underlined.

Iran calls the eight years of the imposed Iraqi war on the country as Sacred Defense (1980-88).

In his remarks, the General censured the Western states for speaking about human rights while they were developing forbidden chemical weapons and testing them on "our dear ones" during the imposed war.

Science, Wisdom; Key to Solve Problems

TEHRAN (IP) - The advisor and senior aide for armed forces affairs to Iran's Leader stressed that by means of the same experiences of sacred defense and practical application of science, problems can be solved through science and wisdom.

Speaking at a conference titled "The Status of Science and Technology in Sacred Defense," advisor and senior aide for armed forces affairs to Iran's Leader, Major-General Yahya Rahim Safavi, said that as a whole, about nine hundred scientific papers were submitted for this conference and one third of them were accepted, and today we will hold a specialized meeting in various fields.

Iran's top military official added: "Today, we hope that in the summary of the papers that will be presented, we will be able to examine to some extent the status of science and technology and its effect on the victories of the Sacred Defense and the sacred defense itself."

Senior Aid for the Leader of the Revolution said: "We emerged victorious in the sacred war period, whose honor is that its Leader is a completely eligible authority of the Islamic law, who ruled both the war and the world. The influence of his words sent two million to the fronts. Undoubtedly, the military knowledge of our commanders was higher than the Iraqi commanders."

We were able to win big operations like Khorramshahr, which showed the genius of the commanders, not at the level of higher commanders, but in the commanders of the divisions, he added.

Just as we have won eight years of holy defense with science and technology, let us use the same experiences of sacred defense and practical application of science to solve the country's problems through science and wisdom, he noted.

West Acting Dictatorially Under Name of Women's Rights

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs Ensiyeh Khazali has criticized the U.S. over its push for removing Iran from the UN Commission on the Status of Women, saying that they are acting dictatorially under the name of women's rights.

The official was speaking in a meeting with students at Sharif University in Tehran on Monday.

She said that Iran was selected as a member of the UN commission last year.

But now, she added, the U.S. is pushing for the removal of Iran from the commission following trumped-up claims by foreign media that attributed the killing of women to the government during the recent unrest in Iran.

They claimed that they are acting in defense of women's rights, but they are in fact violating those rights and preventing women from raising their issues through pushing for the removal of Iran from the UN commission, the official said.

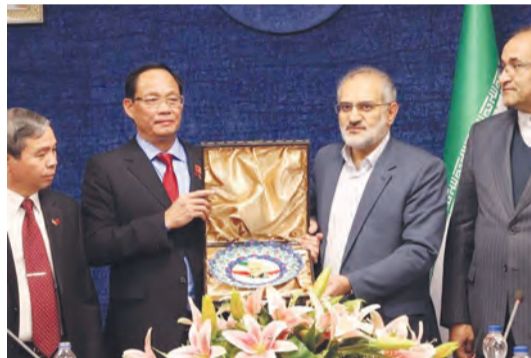
The 54-member UN Economic and Social Council will vote on December 14 whether to oust Iran from the commission, according to news outlets.

Arrogant Powers Not Allowed to Use Human Rights as a Tool

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Vice-President for Parliamentary Affairs Mohammad Hosseini on Monday said that arrogant countries, which are opposed to independence and development of other nations, should not be allowed to use human rights as a tool to advance their goals.

The Iranian official made the comment during talks with Tran Quang Phuong, the vice chairman of Vietnam's National Assembly and his accompanying delegation in Tehran.

Hosseini said that Iran is a free and independent country where people participate in the nation's affairs. But, he added, certain countries, notorious for their crimes against



humanity, are leveling accusations against Iran under different excuses including human rights.

Having faced such conditions, the official said, the Islamic Republic expects independent countries like Vietnam to stand up against those stances at international bodies.

Hosseini and the top Vietnamese lawmaker also discussed ways to expand relations between the two countries in different fields.

Tran Quang Phuong said his country welcomes expansion of ties with the Islamic Republic and hailed Iran for the progress it has made over the past years despite sanctions.

Iran, China Iron-Willed to Bolster Mutual Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of the Iran-China friendship association Allaedin Boroujerdi said that Iran and China always have been iron-willed to expand bilateral relations.

Boroujerdi attended the Chinese Embassy on Monday and signed the memorial book of the Former President of the People's Republic of China Jiang Zemin and expressed condolences of the Iran-China friendship association to the people and government of the People's Republic of China to the ambassador of China to Iran Chang Hua.

Referring to the existing iron-willed between Iran and China, Boroujerdi called for strengthening bilateral relations.

Pointing to the deep-rooted relations between Iran and China, he highlighted that today's friendly and strategic ties between the two countries are a continuation of the path and objectives of the policies of Jiang Zemin's presidency, and relations between the two states have been expanding since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in the past decades.

Iran and China's relations are stable, he said, adding that the 25-year strategic agreement between the two states has entered a new phase of relations.

It Is Time for Iran, Afghanistan to Increase Economic Trade

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Iranian deputy ambassador to Kabul and Taliban's acting Minister of Foreign Affairs discussed the promotion of trade ties between Iran and Afghanistan.

Seyed Hassan Mortazavi met with Amir Khan Muttaqi, Taliban's acting Foreign Minister to discuss Afghanistan's most important issues, including the development of economic relations.

Muttaqi said in the meeting that it is time for Iran and

Afghanistan to increase economic trade with each other. He also called on the Iranian side to facilitate trade and the transit of goods.

Referring to the arrival of the winter, the Taliban foreign minister emphasized the country's need to import essential goods and needed items from Iran.

Mortazavi also promised Afghanistan to provide the necessary cooperation regarding the growth of trade between Tehran and Kabul.

Iran Always Supported Territorial Integrity of B&H

TEHRAN (MNA) - Bosnian top diplomat Bisera Turković appreciated Iran's policy toward her country during a meeting with Iran's foreign minister.

"I am very pleased to host the Iranian delegation today," Bisera Turković told Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian who arrived in Sarajevo on Tuesday morning. Iran and Bosnia and Herzegovina are on the verge of celebrating the 30th anniversary of the establishment of friendly relations, she added.

"Iran has always been an honorable and friendly country for us and has supported our territorial integrity and understood the political conditions of our country," the top Bosnian diplomat stressed.

She went on to say that her country eyes on joining the European Union, but it will respect the principles.

Getting the membership title of the European Union and joining NATO is a priority for Bosnia, according to Turković. Amirabdollahian also in meeting with Turković in Sarajevo discussed bilateral relations.

Meanwhile Iran's top diplomat was also to meet with the speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bakir Izetbegović, the first deputy Speaker of the House of People of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Earlier, Iran's foreign minister visited Serbia and had talks with the president, foreign minister, and speaker of the Serbian parliament on Sunday.



Enemy Aware of Iran Capabilities, Seeking to Prevent Progress

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Saying that Iran today builds missiles with a range of 1000 km to defend the Persian Gulf, the IRGC Navy commander stressed that the enemies are aware of Iran's capabilities, seeking to prevent its progress.



Stating that before the Islamic Revolution, the highest missile in Iran was the Harpoon missile with a range of 40 kilometers, Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsir said, "Today, we are proud to build missiles from 10 to 1000 km in the IRGC Navy to defend the Persian Gulf."

"Our vessels, missiles, and drones are domestic-built," the IRGC commander continued.

"The enemy has understood what we are capable of and wants to prevent our progress," Tangsir stressed, adding that today, Iran is not dependent on any country regarding supplying military weapons.

1200 Rioters Freed

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Judiciary Spokesman said that with the order of the head of the judiciary to release the people who had been arrested in the recent riots, 1,200 people were released.

Masoud Setayeshi, in his press conference held on Tuesday, added that of course, these people were not the leaders of the riots and those leaders will be dealt with.

Setayeshi stated that the judiciary is sensitive to any bloodshed in the recent riots and emphasized that the justice system will pursue the causes of the deaths of 200 people in the recent riots.

The spokesman of the judicial system added that the head of the judicial branch, thanks to Islamic kindness and amnesty, ordered the release of people who did not commit major violations in the recent riots and returned to their families with remorse.

He said that the separatist media introduce rioters as protesters and encourage violent actions to disrupt the security of Iranian citizens.

He went on to say that sad that the case of the assassination of Martyr Soleimani is being pursued from both criminal and legal aspects.

Setayeshi further said that this case is being investigated in the special court of international affairs in Tehran and the final ruling is being issued.

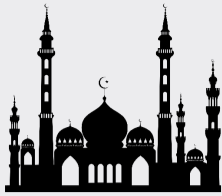
He also announced that the U.S. efforts to turn the Iranian universities into political hangouts for the enemies are doomed to failure.

Marking the National [University] Student Day on December 7, the spokesman said the day recalls anti-arrogance moves and the university students' resistance against the aggressive United States regime.

Launching coups over and over, causing unrest in order to make the governments dependent, and encouraging others to deny justice under the shadow of human rights, freedom and democracy is the US method, he underlined.

Setayeshi further expressed sympathy over the death of 200 Iranians who as he underlined lost their lives as a result of provocative measures taken by some foreigners and their media.

The Judiciary emphasizes the difference between protestors and rioters.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:55
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:10
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:32
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:01

60. So Pharaoh withdrew: He concerted his plan, and then came (back).

61. Moses said to him: Woe to you! Forge not ye a lie against Allah, lest He destroy you (at once) utterly by chastisement: the forger must suffer frustration!"

Surah 20. Ta-ha (60 - 61)

Sanctions Have Not Affected Iran Gas Exports

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Former head of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) says sanctions have not affected Iran's gas exports too much but it has definitely affected system of transferring money and the issue of exporting gas to Pakistan is not serious for now.

Speaking to ILNA, Ali Kar said that raising issues related to Iran's sanctions is actually for getting concession or discount or for getting concessions in deals with other countries.

He noted that sanctions have not affected gas exports too much but it has created problem in retrieving money for the exports and some try to use it for getting concessions from Iran or in deals with other states.

On export of gas to Pakistan, Kar said that export of surplus gas production to neighboring states like Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and the Persian Gulf states should be prioritized and it is very important in terms of energy strategy. He touched upon gas export to Pakistan and said that Pakistan was keen Iran to finance the construction of the gas pipeline as the exporting country but Iran's financial resources do not let it happen and actually the project has remained suspended.

He noted that Pakistan is not in good economic condition for now and it gets its energy demands from other countries with getting considerable discounts and if it does not want to get gas from Iran it will replace Iran gas with Turkmenistan gas but in this case it will have to pay much more cost as Islamabad has to get past the gas through Afghanistan and it will inflict financial and security cost on this country. He added that if Pakistan constructs some 400 kilometers of gas



pipelines, it can receive natural gas from Iran for its power-consuming cities.

Kar then pointed to talks with India for exporting gas to this country and said that some projects were not implemented but they are on the agenda. He admitted that Pakistan currently is getting LNG from Qatar and the issue of exporting gas to Qatar is not serious for now.

On the role of Russia in Iran's gas exports projects, he said that what is clear is that Iran and Russia are two main gas rivals and each tries to maintain its market and to prevent rivals from entering it. He then pointed to the long distance with Europe for gas exports and said although Russians created some hurdles, the truth is that Iran has less chance for export to Europe because of its infrastructures and Tehran should prioritize gas export to neighboring countries while Europeans are working to reduce energy consumption and they want to replace fossil energies with renewable and atomic energy, and gas consumption in those countries is facing downward trend.

Kar reiterated that gas export to Europe will cost Iran very high and it is not logical to focus on it and it should focus on exporting gas in Asia and especially to countries like China, Japan and South Korea.

He noted that Iran's contract with Pakistan for gas export is based on the take-or-pay system and Iran can take the issue to the international arbitration court but politically it is not logical and Iran should not burn such contracts and should let them remain valid and it will have also positive affect on the relation between the two states.

Gas Usage Hits New Record

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Natural gas usage in Iran hit a new high on December 6 as freezing temperatures swept across the country.

A statement by the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) issued late on Monday said that gas consumption by households and businesses had reached 530 million cubic meters (mcm) per day, up 6% from the previous day.

The statement said household and business usage has accounted for 64% of the total gas supplied to Iran's national grid.

The rise in consumption came as temperatures dropped by an average of 5 to 8 degrees Celsius across Iran, said the NIGC. That came as temperatures dropped to zero in the capital Tehran on Monday.

Country's Income Increases \$10b Due to Transits Projects

TEHRAN (MNA) - A senior Iranian lawmaker has said that due to the implementation of the North-West to South-East transit projects, the preliminary estimates suggest that the country's income will increase \$10 billion.

Mohammad Reza Pour Ebrahimi Davarani, Chairman of the Economic Commission at the Iranian parliament said on Monday that "Today, if we talk about the North-West to South-East transit, it is because, according to preliminary expert estimates carried out in the Economic Commission, the implementation of those projects will increase the country's income \$10 billion annually."

Pour Ebrahimi added that the money that Iran has spent on those projects will return to the country within 6 months after its implementation.

He added that the income from the projects is durable as the countries in the north of Iran are in dire need of implementing these routes.

Urmia-Sero Highway to Facilitate Iran-Turkey Road Link

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran is to inaugurate Urmia-Sero Highway in the northwest that facilitates cross-border road transit through Turkey.

The construction of the Urmia-Sero Highway in the West Azarbaijan Province in Iran as part of the country's west road network plays an important role in developing economic transactions and freight and passenger transit between Iran and Turkey.

This transit route cost 15,000 billion IRR and is completed after 27 years. It would form the road gateway to Europe and the shortest route to Turkey for Iran.

The 51 km long highway is expected to be inaugurated soon.

Infrastructural investments in the Sero border terminal have also been considered for increased economic transactions.

Noteworthy, the rail link between Iran and Turkey is via ECO freight train along the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) Corridor which successfully resumed its operation in December 2021. During the 11th Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Ministerial Meeting on Transport hosted virtually by Turkey in February 2022, the ECO meeting acknowledged the activation of the ITI Corridor and emphasized the removal of the impediments to the regularization of this Corridor.

Iran Air Reports Major Surge In Int'l Flights



TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior official from Iran's transportation ministry says the country's flag carrier Iran Air increased the number of its international flights by more than 60% in the calendar year to late March.

Mehdi Nourayi said that the number of seats offered by Iran Air to international travelers had also increased by 135% over the past calendar year. Nourayi said, however, that the airline had experienced a drop of around 21% in its domestic flights over the same period.

He said Iran Air has continued to report consistent growth in international flights this year.

The announcement comes despite the fact that Iran's national airline has been barred from accessing new planes and parts from foreign suppliers because of American sanctions on the country.

The company has also faced restrictions to expand its international destinations because of continued US pressure on countries involved in trade and economic ties with Iran.

Nourayi said Iran Air's current active fleet consists of 55 aircraft. He added that the airline could recover from financial problems suffered because of the coronavirus pandemic and the US sanctions by relying on increased revenues from international flights.

Iran Air had placed orders for dozens of new aircraft from international plane manufacturers like Boeing and Airbus after Iran and world powers signed a landmark deal on Iran's nuclear program in 2015.

However, the supply of the planes were suspended after a handful of deliveries in 2018 and after the United States withdrew from the nuclear deal and threatened international companies with sanctions if they engage in transactions with Iran.

An Iran Air spokesman said last month that five aircraft will be added to the airline's fleet by March.

Implementing PTA With Pakistan to Boost Iran's Exports

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) said that implementation of Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Pakistan will significantly boost Iran's exports to this country.

Alireza Payman-Pak the Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade said on Monday evening and emphasized that the issue of tariffs within the framework of PTA and Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is one of the tools for promoting trade with the target countries.

TPOI chief then pointed to the Preferential Trade Agreement with Pakistan and said that PTA had been inked between the two countries in the past for about 400 items, so that Iran and Pakistan can increase bilateral trade by providing customs discounts.

If PTA is implemented with Pakistan, Iran's exports to this country will dramatically be increased, Payman-Pak added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the deputy industry minister said that the PTA and FTA with China are subject to revision, adding that launching Preferential Trade Agreement and Free Trade Agreement with Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)'s member states would cause Iran to have multi-billion-dollar worth of trade with those countries.

Iran and Pakistan signed a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) in August 2006 and the PTA, which came into effect in September that year, was expected to "create a new climate for economic and regional cooperation between the two countries" as stated in the agreement, however, nearly 17 years after the mentioned deal, the two countries annual trade is still under \$2 billion dollars.

Iran, Tajikistan to Supply Electricity in Central, South Asia

TEHRAN (MNA) - Tajik Minister of Energy and Water Resources Daler Juma said that Iran and Tajikistan enjoy a high capacity to supply the electricity in the Central and South Asian region.

Speaking on the sidelines of the 15th Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Cooperation Commission in Tehran on Monday, he expressed hope that the two countries would further expand their ties in the relevant field.

Turning to the economic cooperation between Iran and Tajikistan, Juma stated that, in addition to boosting economic exchanges between the two countries, his country would strengthen its relations with Iran in cultural, political, industrial, and tourism fields as well.

Tajikistan had a good investment experience with

Iranian companies, he said, adding that Sangtuda Hydroelectricity Power Plant in Tajikistan will be constructed with the cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He reiterated that the two countries of Iran and Tajikistan enjoy high capacities and capabilities to meet the electricity demand in the Central and South Asian regions.

In addition to strengthening its cooperation with Iran in the field of energy, Tajikistan has also devised a comprehensive plan for the next five years in the field of the foreign investment industry, he said and expressed hope that Iranian and Tajik investors would enhance the level of their cooperation in all areas.

Gov't Urged to Focus on Economic Stability in 7th NDP

TEHRAN (MNA) - Economic experts and scholars with the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) have called on the government to set economic stability and development as priorities in drafting the country's seventh five-year National Development Plan (NDP).

Members of the ICCIMA Department of Commissions, Assemblies, and Councils on Monday held a meeting with the head of the Seventh National Development Plan Secretariat at the Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) to discuss the process of preparing the plan, the ICCIMA portal reported.

In the meeting, the attendees reviewed a report on the shortcomings and challenges of the sixth National Development Plan by the ICCIMA Research Center and made some constructive proposals for the preparation of the new plan.

Speaking in this gathering, ICCIMA Deputy Head for Commissions, Assemblies and Councils Affairs Ali Cheraghvand also mentioned a report by the parliament research center on the implementation of the last six national development plans, saying that only 10 percent of the goals set in those plans have been realized.

"These statistics and information about the implementation of development plans show that, unfortunately, instead of a comprehensive plan, so far, we have only compiled some notebooks on our wishes and hopes," the official said.

Referring to the process of preparing the seventh National Development Plan he called on the government to try to place more attention to its main beneficiaries, the private sector, in this plan, considering the special conditions governing the social, economic and political aspects of the country.

Value of Sales of Oil Products Reaches \$6b in 8 Months

TEHRAN (IFP) - The head of the Iranian Parliament's Program and Budget Commission says the value of Iran's exports of oil products reached 6 billion dollars over the past eight months, despite the draconian US sanctions in place against the country's energy sector.

Hamidreza Hajibabaei said Iran succeeded in exporting \$6 billion worth of oil products in the first eight months of the current Persian calendar year, which will end on March 20, 2023.

This is while the country used to import the same products previously, he added.

The figure is expected to reach \$9 billion by the year end, but "I personally think it would hit \$10 billion," he added.

Hajibabaei criticized exports of crude oil, saying the Iranian administration must double its efforts to blunt the impact of sanctions and facilitate the entry of the private sector into the field of oil and refinery sector with the goal of decreasing crude sales and increasing exports of oil products instead.

At Least 27 Killed in Colombia Landslide

BOGOTA (Dispatches) - At least 27 people were killed when a landslide engulfed a road in northwest Colombia, trapping people in a bus and other vehicles, said President Gustavo Petro on Monday.

"It is with sadness that I must announce that, so far, 27 people, including three minors, have lost their lives in the tragedy" that struck on Sunday in a remote area of the Pueblo Rico municipality, Petro wrote on Twitter.

On Sunday evening, the president reported three dead, as dozens of rescue workers searched for survivors.

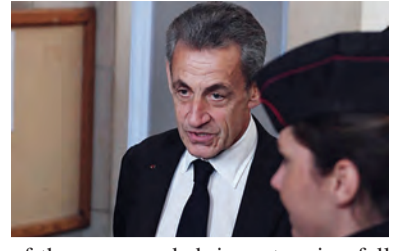


Sarkozy Seeks to Overturn Corruption Conviction

PARIS (Dispatches) - Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy sought to convince a Paris court to overturn his March 2021 conviction for bribery and influence-peddling in an appeal hearing that started on Monday.

The initial trial saw Sarkozy sentenced to three years in prison, two of them suspended, in a stunning fall from grace for a man who served as president from 2007 to 2012 but is now facing a string of judicial investigations and trials.

The 2021 ruling found that Sarkozy, 67, had tried to bribe a judge after leaving office, and to peddle influence in exchange for confidential information about an investigation into his 2007 campaign finances.



Russia Unleashes Air Strikes Across Ukraine



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine said Russia had destroyed homes in the southeast and knocked out power in many places with a new round of missile attacks as the West imposed a price cap on Russian seaborne oil to try to limit Moscow's ability to finance its invasion.

A new barrage had been expected for days and came on a day when emergency blackouts were due to end, with previous damage repaired. The strikes plunged parts of the country back into freezing darkness with temperatures across Ukraine now firmly below zero.

They followed reported explosions at two air bases inside Russia overnight, both hundreds of miles from Ukraine. One of them, the Engels base in Saratov region, houses bomber planes that are part of Russia's strategic nuclear forces.

Three people were killed when a fuel tanker exploded at the air base in Ryazan, 185 km (115 miles) southeast of Moscow, state news agency RIA said.

Saratov regional governor Roman Busargin reassured residents they were safe after what he called reports on social media of a "loud bang and a flash" at the Engels air base.

"Information about incidents at military facilities is being checked by law enforcement agencies," he said, without elaborating.

The Engels base, about 730 km (455 miles) south of Moscow, is one of two strategic bomber bases housing Russia's air-delivered nuclear capability, comprising 60-70 planes.

Previous mysterious blasts have damaged arms stores and fuel depots in Russian regions near Ukraine and knocked out at least seven warplanes in Crimea, annexed by Russia from Ukraine in 2014.

President Vladimir Putin drove a Mercedes across the bridge linking southern Russia to Crimea on Monday, less than two months since that too, was hit by an explosion.

Kyiv has not claimed responsibility for any of the blasts, saying only that such incidents are "karma" for Russia's invasion.

"If something is launched into other countries' airspace, sooner or later unknown flying objects will return to (their) departure point," Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak wrote on Twitter on Monday.

Moscow has been hitting Ukraine's energy infrastructure roughly weekly since early October as it has been forced to retreat on some battlefronts. This time, police in neighbouring Moldova were reported to have found missile fragments on its soil.

In Ukraine's southern Zaporizhzhia region, at least two people were killed and several houses were destroyed, the deputy head of the presidential office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, said.

Air strikes also hit energy facilities in the regions of Kyiv and Vinnytsia in central Ukraine, Odesa in the south and Sumy in the north, officials said.

Forty percent of the Kyiv region was without electricity, regional governor Oleksiy Kuleba said, praising the work of Ukrainian air defences for what he said appeared to be a lack of "critical consequences" of Monday's attacks.

People take shelter inside the metro station amid Russian missile attacks in Kyiv, Ukraine

Air defenses shot down most of the Russian missiles fired on Monday and energy workers had already begun work on restoring power supplies, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.

Ukraine had only just returned to scheduled power outages from Monday rather than the emergency blackouts it has suffered since widespread Russian strikes on Nov. 23, the worst of the attacks on energy infrastructure that began in early October.

Sudan's Military, Civilian Factions Sign Deal Seeking to End Crisis

KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - Sudan's military and civilian leaders signed an initial deal aimed at ending a deep crisis caused by last year's military coup, prompting skeptical protesters to cry betrayal.

Army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan seized power in October 2021, derailing a rocky transition to civilian rule that began after the 2019 ouster of veteran autocrat Omar al-Bashir.

The past year has seen near-weekly protests and a crackdown that pro-democracy medics say has killed at least 121, a spiralling economic crisis exacerbated by donors slashing funding, and a resurgence of ethnic violence in several remote regions.

Divisions among civilian groups have deepened since the coup, with some urging a deal with the military while others insist on "no partnership, no negotiation".

The deal was signed by Burhan, paramilitary commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo and multiple civilian groups, most notably the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) -- the main civilian faction that was ousted in the coup.

As the key players put pens to paper, hundreds of citizens rallied in Khartoum to protest against the deal. "The settlement is betrayal" and the FFC "sold our blood," demonstrators cried. "We reject this deal as it overlooked street demands for justice for the people killed since the coup," said one of those protesters, Mohamed Ali.

If the deal plays out as planned, the civilian signatories will agree on a prime minister who will steer the country through a 24-month transition.

"The ceremony today is a culmination of the sustained efforts of Sudanese stakeholders over the past year to find a solution to the political crisis and restore constitutional order," said UN special representative Volker Perthes.

The initial deal was described as "welcome" by the United States, Britain, Norway, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates -- all key players in Sudan -- in a joint statement by the US State Department.



North Korea Fires Artillery Barrage in Warning to South Korea

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea fired a barrage of artillery shells into a maritime buffer zone, the latest in a series of provocative military moves that have angered South Korea.

About 130 artillery rounds were simultaneously fired at 14:59pm (05:59 GMT) from two separate sites -- one on North Korea's east coast and one on the west coast, the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement on Monday.

North Korea's military said it was a warning against ongoing South Korean artillery exercises near the inland border town of Cheorwon, and blamed the South for worsening tensions.

Seoul's military said the barrage was a "clear violation" of the 2018 agreement between the North and the South that established the buffer zone in a bid to reduce tensions. It said none of the shells crossed the Northern Limit Line, the de facto maritime border between the two countries. The military said it had issued "several warnings" over the barrage, without giving any further details.

"Our military is strengthening its readiness posture in preparation for emergencies while tracking and monitoring related developments under close cooperation between South Korea and the United States," it added.

North Korea's military said it fired artillery rounds as a "tit-for-tat" warning in response to South Korea firing dozens of projectiles earlier in the day, state-run KCNA news agency reported. "We severely warn the enemy side to be prudent, not kindling the flame of escalation of tension unnecessary in the area around the front," an unidentified spokesperson was quoted as saying.

At a summit in Pyongyang in 2018, former South Korean President Moon Jae-in and the North's leader Kim Jong Un agreed to establish buffer zones along land and sea boundaries in a bid to reduce tensions.

But since talks collapsed in 2019, Kim has doubled down on his banned weapons programs, and experts say he may now be testing South Korea by violating the buffer zone agreement.

UK's Labour Vows to Abolish House of Lords

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain's opposition Labour party vowed to scrap the unelected and "indefensible" House of Lords as part of a constitutional revamp to redistribute economic growth after Brexit.

Labour looks set to take power in the next election, due by January 2025, streaking far ahead of the governing Conservatives in opinion polls after a tumultuous period politically and economically.

Labour leader Keir Starmer promised "the biggest ever transfer of power from (the UK parliament in) Westminster to the British people", arguing that many voters in 2016 opted to quit the European Union because of a sense of lack of democratic control.

The party's blueprint for reform, drafted by former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, envisions new devolution to the UK's regions and countries including Scotland, where the nationalist government is pressing for a new referendum on independence.

Brown, who led the successful 2014 campaign for his fellow Scots to stay in the United Kingdom, proposed greater devolution, with the Edinburgh parliament included in international agreements that involve Scottish areas.

Addressing an audience in Leeds, northern England, Starmer said a "failure of economic growth over the past 12 years" under Conservative rule was caused in part by the UK failing as a whole to power growth,

relying too much on London and southeast England.

The blueprint is not yet Labour policy. It now goes to a public consultation, with agreed changes set to be incorporated into the party's next election manifesto.

Starmer said he hoped to push through the eventual reforms within the first five years of a Labour government, possibly including the redeployment of 50,000 civil service jobs out of London.

Tackling widespread public disgust with perceived malpractice in parliament, the proposals would clamp down on MPs holding second jobs and create a new anti-corruption commissioner.

The 40-point plan's centerpiece is to scrap the upper house of parliament in its current guise -- which is a mixture of political appointees, hereditary peers and Church of England bishops.

"I think the House of Lords is indefensible. Anybody who looks at the House of Lords would struggle to say that it should be kept," Starmer told BBC television.

"So we want to abolish the House of Lords and replace it with an elected chamber that has a really strong mission."

Brown proposed a new assembly comprising members drawn from the UK's regions and countries -- a "smaller, more representative and democratic" chamber, although details will be left to the consultation.



S. Africa's Ramaphosa Makes Legal Bid in Face of Impeachment

CAPE TOWN (Dispatches) - Embattled South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has filed court papers challenging a damning report that could lead to his impeachment for possible misconduct.

Monday's announcement that Ramaphosa was taking legal action came as the country's ruling African National Congress (ANC) party warned that it would not back any motion at an upcoming parliamentary debate that could lead to a vote for removing Ramaphosa, under fire over a burglary scandal. "Should parliament proceed tomorrow [Tuesday], the ANC will not support that vote," the party's interim secretary-general, Paul Mashatile, told reporters after day-long talks among party leaders.

A panel of experts found preliminary evidence Ramaphosa may have committed misconduct and violated the constitution.

The parliamentary inquiry relates to findings that large sums of foreign currency were hidden at Ramaphosa's private game farm and that he failed to report the money missing when it was stolen in 2020.

The existence of the cash at the Phala Phala game farm and his failure to report the theft to police only surfaced in June in a scandal dubbed "Farmgate" by the media.

The case, which has piled pressure on the president amid heightened tensions within the governing ANC, stems from a police report filed by former national spy boss Arthur Fraser last month. In June, he was heckled in parliament by opposition legislators.

Ramaphosa has denied wrongdoing and has not been charged with any crimes. He said the stolen money was the proceeds of the sale of buffaloes and far less than the millions of dollars alleged when the theft came to light.

Having received firm backing from his allies within the party, Ramaphosa has vowed to fight on, with his spokesman saying the panel's findings would be challenged.

A copy of court papers filed by Ramaphosa's lawyers in the constitutional court showed that the president wanted the panel report "reviewed, declared unlawful and set aside".

Ramaphosa also wants any steps taken by the lower house of parliament, the National Assembly, over the panel report to be declared unlawful and invalid, the papers showed.



U.S. Company Turns Air Pollution Into Fuel, Bottles and Dresses



CHICAGO (Dispatches) - At LanzaTech's lab in the Chicago suburbs, a beige liquid bubbles away in dozens of glass vats.

The concoction includes billions of hungry bacteria, specialized to feed on polluted air — the first step in a recycling system that converts greenhouse gases into usable products.

Thanks to licensing agreements, LanzaTech's novel microorganisms are already being put to commercial use by three Chinese factories, converting waste emissions into ethanol.

That ethanol is then used as a chemical building block for consumer items such as plastic bottles, athletic wear and even dresses, via tie-ins with major brands such as Zara and L'Oreal.

"I wouldn't have thought that 14 years later, we would have a cocktail dress on the market that's made out of steel emissions," said microbiologist Michael Kopke, who joined LanzaTech a year after its founding.

LanzaTech is the only American company among 15 finalists for the Earthshot Prize, an award for contributions to environmentalism launched by Britain's Prince William and broadcaster David Attenborough. Five winners will be announced Friday.

To date, LanzaTech says it has kept 200,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, while producing 50 million gallons (190 million litres) of ethanol.

That's a small drop in the bucket when it comes to the actual quantities needed to combat climate change, Kopke concedes.

But having spent 15 years developing the methodology and proving its large-scale feasibility, the company is now seeking to ramp up its ambition and multiply the number of participating factories.

"We really want to get to a point where we only use above ground carbon, and keep that in circulation," says Kopke — in other words, avoid extracting new oil and gas.

LanzaTech, which employs about 200 people, compares its carbon recycling technology to a brewery — but instead of taking sugar and yeast to make beer, it uses carbon pollution and bacteria to make ethanol.

The bacteria used in their process was identified decades ago in rabbit droppings.

The company placed it in industrial conditions to optimize it in those settings, "almost like an athlete that we trained," said Kopke.

Bacteria are sent out in the form of a freeze-dried powder to corporate clients in China, which have giant versions of the vats back in Chicago, several meters high.

The corporate clients that built these facilities will then reap the rewards of the sale of ethanol — as well as the positive PR from offsetting pollution from their main businesses.

The clients in China are a steel plant and two ferroalloy plants. Six other sites are under construction, including one in Belgium for an ArcelorMittal plant, and in India with the Indian Oil Company.

Because the bacteria can ingest CO2, carbon monoxide and hydrogen, the process is extremely flexible, explains Zara Summers, LanzaTech's vice president of science.

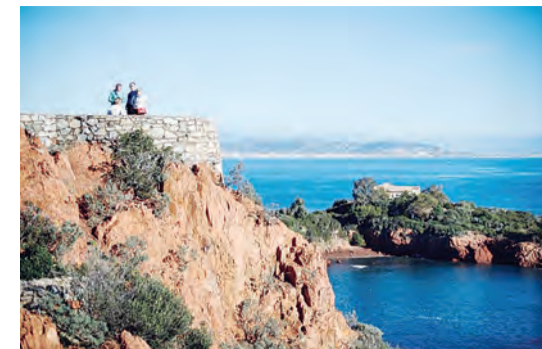
"We can take garbage, we can take biomass, we can take off gas from an industrial plant," said Summers, who spent ten years working for ExxonMobil.

Products already on the shelves include a line of dresses at Zara. Sold at around US\$90 (RM394), they are made of polyester, 20 per cent of which comes from captured gas.

"In the future, I think the vision is there is no such thing as waste, because carbon can be reused again," said Summers.

LanzaTech has also founded a separate company, LanzaJet, to use the ethanol to create "sustainable aviation fuel" or SAF.

French Fishing Ban Unites Fishermen, Biodiversity Activists



CAP ROUX (Dispatches) - A local fishing ban off the southern French coast has won praise from environmentalists and fishermen alike, a rare example of biodiversity protection dovetailing with business interests.

Almost two decades after the ban, Cap Roux, a coastal tip of the Esterel mountain range near the resort of Saint-Raphael on the Mediterranean coast, is a biodiversity haven.

It stands in stark contrast to many other places on the Cote d'Azur where unbridled construction, overfishing and heavy shipping traffic have spoiled the once-pristine natural environment.

More than 80 species of marine life thrive off Cap Roux, attracted by meadows of seagrass and so-called "living rock" beneath the waves, a fusion of coral and algae.

Fishing here has been forbidden since 2004, a ban covering 450 hectares.

Surprisingly to some, local fishermen called for the restriction, saying fish needed a safe place to breed and grow to renew stocks.

"Fishermen were worried about their future, and said 'let's find a space for a nursery that will replenish the surrounding waters,'" said Christian Decugis, Saint-Raphael's first fishing mediator.

The fish sanctuary lies in the heart of an EU-protected reserve, chosen because it is a relatively unspoiled natural spot, far from the coast's commercial ports.

"There would have been no point creating a reserve in an area that's already been messed up," said Decugis.

The ban has resulted in "many more fish and bigger fish, and an abundance of species", he said, an observation backed by scientific studies and experiments.

Evidence shows the haven status has helped protect populations of grouper and corb, with scorpion fish and sea bream doing particularly well.

A 2017 study by APAM, an association promoting sustainable fishing, said that income for fishermen was "significantly higher" near the sanctuary than in zones farther away.

Beyond financial benefits, the new system also improves the reputation of the fishing community, which is often accused of having little concern for the consequences of relentlessly exploiting the sea's resources.

"The image of a profession that is getting a handle on things and that thinks about tomorrow is very motivating for the fishermen," Decugis said.

Not everyone is so protective of the restricted zone, with poachers tempted to plunder its healthy and plentiful fish supplies.

"It's like an open treasure chest", Decugis said.

Julia Toscano, co-manager of the reserve, regularly goes out on a boat between May and September to check the no-fishing zone.

She calls police if she notices anything suspicious. Soon, she hopes there will be cameras to make the job easier.

Many violations are carried out by tourists who go fishing unaware of the rules, but Toscano said this is "still poaching".

Regular campaigns inform visitors of the regulations and explain why the rich fishing grounds are off-limits. But it's a growing challenge: the number of tourists has shot up over the last three years.

Many come on big pleasure boats, typically over 24 meters long.

The abundance of fish and colorful reefs also attract divers, who generate €500,000 in income each year for local diving clubs, according to Fabien Rozec, who runs the region's marine life watchdog.



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Air Pollution Hurts Bangladesh GDP

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Air pollution in Bangladesh is robbing the South Asian nation of economic growth as well as causing premature death and illness, the World Bank said.

Pollution sapped gross domestic product by 3.9% to 4.4% in 2019 and was the second-biggest cause of death and disability, the global lender said in a report.

That year air pollution caused 78,145 to 88,229 deaths, the World Bank estimated, with the capital Dhaka the most polluted in the country. "Ambient air pollution puts everyone at risk," from children to the elderly, said Dandan Chen, acting country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan. "Addressing air pollution is critical for the country's sustainable and green growth and development."



Non-Dollar Trade Gains Pace as Use of Turkish Lira More Than Doubles

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The exports Turkey conducted using the Turkish lira more than doubled in November from a year ago, according to official data, adding to Ankara's drive to expand the share of the national currency in foreign trade.

Turkey has long sought to expand non-dollar international trade and has been promoting greater use of national currencies in mutual settlements, particularly with its major partners, including China, Russia, Iran and Gulf countries.

Outbound shipments made using the lira leaped by 114% year-over-year in November to TL 15.68 billion (\$841 million), according to the Trade Ministry data, maintaining a trend that has gained momentum this year.

Imports rose at an even faster pace, surging to TL 35.63 billion last month. The total volume of lira used in the November foreign trade reached TL 51.31 billion.

The January-November exports using the national currency jumped 94% year-over-year to TL 113.7 billion, the data showed, while imports rose to TL 234.8 billion, pushing the total trade volume to TL 348.5 billion. The drive gradually expanded throughout this year and gained further momentum as of August. Exports and imports made with lira in January stood at TL 7 billion and TL 12.1 billion, respectively, according to the data.

They reached TL 10.36 billion and TL 23.82 billion in August and jumped to TL 16 billion and TL 28 billion a month later, respectively. The volume of lira in foreign trade rose from TL 19.15 billion at the beginning of 2022 to TL 34.19 billion in August, before leaping to TL 44 billion in September.

Some 7,182 companies opted for the national currency in exports to about 162 countries in November, according to the official data. The number of firms stood at 6,894 in October.

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 in November, while imports jumped 14% from a year earlier to \$30.7 billion, driven mainly by steep rises in energy and commodity prices after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Foreign trade volume rose 8.6% from a year ago to \$52.51 billion.

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.

Meanwhile, some of Turkey's major trade partners that are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) agreed in September to take steps to increase the use of national currencies in trade between their countries.

The group comprising China, India, Russia and Pakistan alongside four Central Asian states said "interested SCO member states" had agreed on a "roadmap for the gradual increase in the share of national currencies in mutual settlements," and called for an expansion of the practice.

Saudi Arabia Extends Term for \$3b Deposit in State Bank of Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) announced that Saudi Arabia has extended its term for a \$3 billion deposit in the central bank through the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) in support of the country's economy.

According to a press release, the decision was an implementation of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud's royal directives. In November last year, the SBP had signed an agreement with the SFD to receive \$3bn, which would be placed in the central bank's account with an aim to improve its foreign exchange reserves.

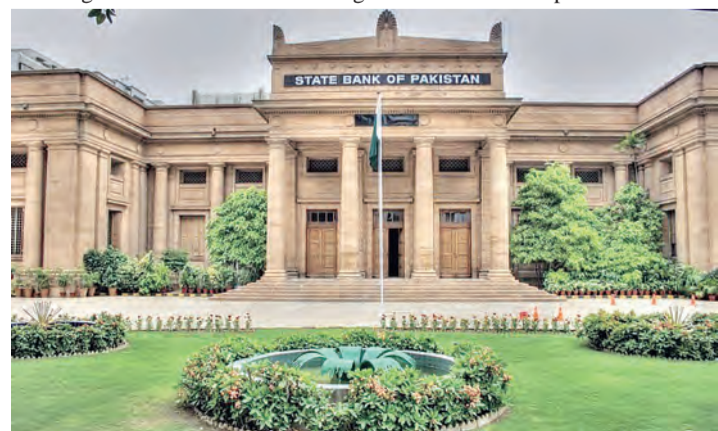
The SBP's statement today added that the extension in the term "contributed to meet external sector challenges and achieve sustainable economic growth for the country."

"The extension of the term of the deposit is a continuation of the support provided by the Saudi Arabian government to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan," the statement concluded. "The deposit aimed to shore up the foreign currency reserves in the SBP and help Pakistan in facing the economic repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic."

In September, the SFD had confirmed the rollover of a \$3bn deposit for one more year. The deposit was set to mature on December 5.

In the last week of October 2021, Saudi Arabia had agreed to revive its financial support to Pakistan, including about \$3bn in safe deposits and \$1.2bn worth of oil supplies on deferred payments.

The agreement was reached during the visit of former prime minister Imran Khan to the kingdom the same month.



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has welcomed the extension, saying that it would help improve Pakistan's economic situation.

"Pakistan's economic self-reliance is the first national agenda for which political stability and a balanced economy are the need of the hour," he said in a statement issued on Friday.

The premier thanked the Saudi government and Prince Abdulaziz Bin Salman. "We deeply appreciate the love Prince Salman has for Pakistan."

PM Shehbaz went on to say that the kingdom had, once again, played the role of an "elder brother".

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar also announced the extension on Twitter, ending it with "Long live Pak-Saudi friendship!"

Morocco Enjoys Record Revenues Thanks to Fertilizer Supply Shock

PARIS (Dispatches) - A global fertilizer supply shock deepened by Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brought boom times for Morocco, the North African phosphate superpower, and earned the kingdom new diplomatic capital.

Rabat is using the leverage especially in the decades-old fight over the disputed desert territory of Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony also claimed by Algeria-backed rebels, analysts say.

Morocco is set to chalk up record revenues for a second year running as farmers worldwide scramble for phosphate, made scarce by sanctions against top world producer Russia and a Chinese ban on exports.

Phosphate is a key ingredient of artificial fertilizers, which are vital for industrial agriculture and global grain supplies despite the long-term damage they inflict on soil and groundwater.

"It's a strategic mineral for the future because it's crucial for global food security," said Abderrahim Handouf, an agricultural policy expert.

"As populations grow, fertilizers are the most effective way to increase farm productivity."

According to Morocco's state-owned phosphates firm OCP, the kingdom controls around 31% of the international trade in the substance.

The OCP, which holds a national monopoly in the trade, is on track to record more than 131 billion dirhams (\$12.4 billion) in revenue this year, up 56% on 2021 - already a bumper year.

Even before the start of the year, prices had been edging higher as the world emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic and market leaders like China imposed export restrictions, said sector expert Mounir Halim.

Then as Western powers imposed sanctions on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine, prices of fertilizer shot up.

That made Morocco a vital alternative supplier. The kingdom's exports of phosphates and their derivatives jumped by two thirds year-on-year in the first nine months of 2022, according to the latest official figures.

Morocco has around 70% of the world's phosphate reserves and has been mining four sites since 1921, including in the disputed Western Sahara.

Morocco's OCP has ramped up its production capacity by a factor of four since 2008, hitting 12 million tons last year, on target to reach 15 million by the end of 2023.

That makes it a major player in a global market fearful of further supply shocks.

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization warned in a report this year that "fertilizer supplies remain restricted, stocks are depleted and geopolitical tensions could spark additional supply restrictions at short notice."

Meloni May Water Down Cash Payments Plan After EU Talks



ROME (Dispatches) - Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said that she may water down plans to make it easier to settle small payments with cash rather than cards, following talks with the European Commission over the issue.

Meloni's right-wing government has presented a 2023 budget that scraps fines for retailers who refuse cards for payments under 60 euros (\$63.23), in a move seen as going against the spirit of commitments taken with the EU.

"Until 60 euros, we would like not to force retailers to accept electronic payments. But let's say that the 60-euro threshold is indicative, for me it could even be lower," Meloni said in a video posted on Facebook.

"Besides, there are obviously discussions on this with the European Commission, because the issue of electronic payments is one of the issues of the [EU recovery plan], so we have to see, we'll see how the discussions end," she added.

Italy is the biggest recipient of the EU's post-pandemic recovery fund, standing to receive around 200 billion euros through 2026. But in return, it has to comply with a series of reform "targets and milestones."

One of them, hammered out under the former administration of Mario Draghi, was the introduction of sanctions for retailers who refuse card payments, as part of measures to fight tax evasion.

Meloni insisted that making it easier to pay cash was not a backhanded way of helping tax dodging - an endemic problem in Italy, where more than 100 billion euros are evaded each year, according to Treasury data.

She said the same about another controversial proposal from the draft budget, which has yet to be approved by parliament: raising the cap on cash payments to 5,000 euros, from a limit of 1,000 euros that was due to kick in on Jan. 1.

Iraq Announces Cash Reserves Exceed \$90b

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - The Central Bank of Iraq (CBI) confirmed on Friday that the cash reserves exceeded \$90b, according to the Iraqi News Agency (INA).

CBI advisor, Ihsan Al-Yasiri, mentioned in a statement that the new level the Iraqi cash reserves reached indicates the recovery of the economy and represents a great support for the value of the Iraqi currency.

Al-Yasiri pointed out that the value of the Iraqi currency exceeded 160 percent, as the value of the Iraqi dinar exceeded one and a half dinars.

Al-Yasiri elaborated that the Iraqi currency is now witnessing a significant rise and recovery, as it is considered one of the strong currencies.

The CBI advisor explained that the government and the Ministry of Finance have an opportunity to allocate part of these funds, in 2023 budget, to support the poor, those with limited income and retirees.

Al-Yasiri indicated that the CBI shifted from its traditional policy represented in maintaining stability and the issuance of banknotes, and became a large development institution, as it launched an 18 trillion Iraqi dinar (nearly 12.38 billion USD) development fund.

This fund contributed to bridging the government funding gap caused by security and economic challenges and the successive declines in oil prices since 2014, Al-Yasiri clarified.

Regarding the issuance of a new denomination of 20 thousand dinars, Al-Yasiri stressed that it will play a role in redrawing the structure of banknotes, noting that this denomination will have high security specifications.

Al-Yasiri added that the issuance of a new denomination of 20 thousand dinars is not related to the budget, since the CBI has an independent budget, but it is related to the printing procedures, the selection of colors and security marks.

Al-Yasiri added that the issuance of the new denomination most probably will take place at the end of 2023.

German, French Central Bankers Say Inflation Will Return to Goal

LONDON (Bloomberg) -- European Central Bank officials from the region's two biggest economies said they're determined to bring record inflation back to their 2% target.

Speaking in a joint television interview on German channel Phoenix, Bundesbank President Joachim Nagel and Bank of France Governor Francois Villeroy de Galhau said the ECB's tightening push will eventually tame price growth that's currently running at five times its goal.

"We'll bring inflation back to 2% by the end of 2024 or 2025," Villeroy said. "This isn't just a forecast, a projection. It's a commitment."

The ECB has raised borrowing costs by 200 basis points since July and is less than two weeks away from its next policy meeting. Officials are expected to enact another interest-rate hike and agree on the modalities for reducing the roughly €5 trillion (\$5.3 trillion) in bonds on their balance sheet.

Several officials have said they're still undecided between a third straight 75-basis point move and a half-point step. Nagel said the decision will be guided by the latest data.

"We'll have new projections for 2023, 2024 and for the first time for the year 2025. This will be the basis for our decision," Nagel said. "It's clear that rate increases must continue."

Asked how long borrowing costs will rise, Villeroy said "for as long as necessary."

Governments have meanwhile used hundreds of billions of euros to shield companies and households from surging energy costs, which central bankers have said may undermine their efforts to stamp out inflation. Nagel and Villeroy urged a return to more balanced budgets soon.

"A special situation is a special situation, but at some point it's over," Nagel said. "The signal from fiscal policy must clearly be a return to the debt brake" and an adherence to European fiscal rules, he said.

Soil Protection Stressed in 7th National Development Plan

TEHRAN (MNA) - Agriculture minister has said special importance will be placed on the soil and watershed sector in the seventh National Development Plan (2022-2026). "By popularizing this sector, we will try to move towards sustainability in watersheds within 10 years," Javad Sadati-Nejad said on Monday. The official noted that there are good laws in the country regarding soil protection, saying: "Protecting soil is the duty of all institutions and people, so

over the last 10 years, FAO has come to the conclusion that people's capacities are the most valuable factor in soil protection." "Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization is responsible for the protection of soil and prevention of erosion, and in the seventh National Development Plan, we will dedicate an important chapter to the protection and preservation of the soil," Sadati-Nejad added.



Oil Buyers Don't Want to Boost Imports Next Year

KUWAIT CITY (Dispatches) - Kuwait's state energy company said customers are reluctant to increase oil imports next year, signaling that the market's being suppressed by global economic weakness.

"We're really nervous about where demand is going over the next few months and the next year, especially if there is a recession," Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah, chief executive officer of Kuwait Petroleum Corp., said to Bloomberg TV. "We're talking to our customers. They're saying that they either require the same amount of oil, or they're asking for slightly less next year."

The OPEC member exports about 2 million barrels a day of crude, most of it to Asian countries such as China, South Korea, Japan, and India.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, including de facto leader Saudi Arabia, have said that oil consumption is being affected by slowdowns in the US, Europe, and China. The group and its allies, known as OPEC+, decided to cut production during a meeting in early October. That angered the US, which wants lower oil prices.

Kuwait has invested tens of billions of dollars upgrading and building new refineries in recent years. That will enable it to boost exports of diesel and jet fuel to Europe in 2023, Sheikh Nawaf said.

Those shipments will go a small way toward replacing flows of refined oil from Russia, which the European Union is set to ban from February as part of measures to punish Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine.

Kuwait exported its first jet fuel from the new Al-Zour refinery last month. The facility is designed to be able to process 615,000 barrels a day, making it one of the biggest refineries in the world. It is meant to be finished early next year, taking Kuwait's total refining capacity to about 1.5 million barrels a day.

"It's not going to be so much crude as product when it comes to sales to Europe,"



the CEO said. An increase in Middle Eastern exports of diesel and other products to Europe is likely to be "permanent," he said, with Russia forced to focus more on Asian markets.

Kuwait believes oil will remain a key source of energy for the global economy even as countries transition to cleaner fuels and renewables, he said.

"It's not something that's going to happen overnight -- it's not an energy switch," Sheikh Nawaf said. "In any transition, oil's going to be there."

As part of Kuwait's aim to neutralize planet-warming emissions within its borders by 2050, it will invest in solar power and carbon-capture technology. That will enable it to lower the emissions-intensity of its oil production, he said.

"We want to take that carbon intensity essentially down to zero," he said.

West Sets 4 Conditions...

FROM PAGE 1

Sporadic protests erupted in Iran on Sept. 16 over the death of Mahsa Amini, who lost her life due to previous illnesses record while in morality police custody.

In the past two months, and using the protests as a cover, rioters, and thugs — many of whom were later found to have links with foreign parties — have been on a rampage, engaging in savage attacks on security officers, vandalism, desecration of sanctities, and false-flag killings of civilians to incriminate the Iranian police.

The riots also set the scene for terrorist attacks across the country.

In a statement published on Saturday, the Security Council of the Interior Ministry said the enemy waged a hybrid war against the Islamic Republic to weaken national solidarity and hinder the country's progress, stressing that some 200 people lost their lives in the riots sparked by separatist and terrorist groups since the outbreak in September.

National Interests...

FROM PAGE 1

On Monday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani reiterated the Islamic Republic's commitment to the JCPOA revival talks but made it clear that Tehran is not willing to negotiate under pressure and threats.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Amirabdollahian said his two-day visit to Serbia aimed to accelerate the improvement of mutual relations. He expressed hope that a new chapter would open in bilateral ties after a scheduled visit by the Serbian president to Tehran.

Iran's "balanced" foreign policy is based on shifting toward neighboring and Asian countries, the foreign minister said, emphasizing that Tehran is present wherever its national interests are preserved.

"We are present in the West and East proportionate to our interests," the top Iranian diplomat said.

Pointing to the unrest in Iran, which was sparked by the death of a young Iranian woman in police custody over two months ago, Amirabdollahian raised serious doubts about claims by the United States and the West to care about her death.

He said a Western national was arrested in Iran who claimed that he had been tasked by his country's intelligence services to spread chaos across Iran to force Tehran to accept the West's conditions in the negotiations to revive the JCPOA.

"Peaceful demands must be met within the framework of Iran's duties and the Constitution," the top Iranian diplomat emphasized.

He also said 67 Iranian police forces have been killed and thousands of others injured by American and Israeli weapons since the outbreak of the riots because the police were not allowed to use lethal weapons.

Iran Green-Lights...

FROM PAGE 1

According to Korneev, Russian poultry exports could presumably help Iran fill the gap in the domestic market where demand is predicted to drop in 2022 owing to skyrocketing feedstuff prices.

Last month, poultry production in Iran dropped 19% year on year, the Iranian Statistical Center (ISC) said.

The international prices of livestock inputs, which have almost tripled in value, have left Iran's meat and poultry producers faced with major dilemmas.

According to ISC figures, the average costs of red meat and poultry increased by 61.7 percent in 12 months by March 2021, while chicken prices alone almost doubled.

Since the beginning of its term, the Iranian government has sought to improve the agricultural sector and ensure the country's food security, including through farming overseas. One of Iran's aspirations has been self-sufficiency in strategic agricultural products such as wheat, oilseeds and livestock inputs, which requires sufficient water resources, but successive droughts in recent years and the lack of water resources have made it far-fetched of a goal.

Some private Iranian investors have started growing grains and greenhouse gardening in Georgia, Ukraine, Tajikistan and African countries, but the size of their operation is small.

In May, Russia offered to provide 100,000 hectares of land to Iran for cultivation when a business delegation from the country visited the Islamic Republic.

India Capable of Sustaining Economic Growth of 9% for Many Years



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India is capable of sustaining an economic growth of 9 per cent for many years, Economic Advisory Council member Sanjeev Sanyal said on 4 December, although asserting that a high sustained GDP growth rate is key for the world to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The economist said, while speaking at a side event of the first Sherpa meeting under India's G20 presidency, that India has a per capita income of only \$2,200 and that has been achieved after several years of very high growth rate.

"Particularly for the Global South, sustaining high GDP growth rate is critical to achieving SDGs and without that, all we are doing will be re-distributing poverty," news agency PTI quoted Sanyal as saying.

"Even for relatively advanced countries, most of them have very high debt levels. For them also, sustained high level of GDP growth will be very important," Sanyal said.

Despite the recent global crises, the GDP growth rate has been good for India, said Sanyal, adding that there was still a scope to do better.

"We can sustain a growth rate of 9 per cent for many years. But it is not only about India. From the perspective of the Global South, a lot needs to be done," he said.

As per the latest data, India's economic growth slowed to 6.3 per cent in the September quarter of 2022-23 on account of contraction in output of manufacturing and mining sectors, but the country continues to remain the fastest-growing major economy ahead of China which registered an economic growth of 3.9 per cent in July-September 2022.

Sanyal is currently a member of the prime minister's Economic Advisory Council. Earlier, he was the Principal Economic Adviser to the finance minister for five years till February 2022.

The EAC member was speaking at the first side event of the India's G20 presidency and the topic was "Transforming lives: Accelerating implementation of SDGs".

The SDGs, adopted in 2015 by the UN General Assembly, are a collection of 17 global goals "for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future" that are intended to be achieved by 2030.

The goals include: no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure and reduced inequalities.

The remaining goals are: sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace, justice and strong institutions and partnerships for the goals.

Art of Noise: UK Project Aims to Save Lost Sounds

LONDON (Dispatches) - The mostly defunct red phone boxes no longer attract much attention in London except from tourists. But Stuart Fowkes is thrilled to stumble upon one still in working order.

Its ring is one of the world's disappearing noises that his pioneering "obsolete sounds" project is dedicated to preserving.

He whips out a hand-held recording device and swings into action, explaining, "I've always had sonic curiosity."

"New sounds are appearing faster than at any time in history but they are also changing and disappearing faster than ever before."

Over the past five years Fowkes' Cities and Memories website has collected and remixed more than 5,000 sounds from 100 countries which are being archived by the British Library.

Now, his latest project aims to preserve sounds that are "just on the edge of memory".

These sounds that we are "just about forgetting" are the ones that have the "greatest emotional resonance", he told AFP.

"What I have been struck by is how people have responded emotionally to some of the recordings."

The sounds include London Underground trains and the click of the cassette in a Sony Walkman personal stereo "You've got people who heard the sound of a Super 8



film camera and this reminded them of being in their living room in 1978 with their dad showing them home movies for the first time."

The "obsolete sounds" project features more than 150 recordings collected from around the world, and also includes remixes of those sounds by musicians and sound artists.

Billed as the biggest collection of its kind, it includes everything from Walkman personal stereo cassette players and old video game consoles, to steam trains and vintage racing cars, as well as sounds that evoke the rapidly changing natural environment, such as crumbling glaciers.

"Before the industrial revolution, our sound environment -- bells and horses' hooves and manual industry -- would not have changed much for hundreds of years," says Fowkes.

"Today, the pace of change is ridiculous. Things that are only a few years old, like ring tones on mobile phones, already sound dated."

Moving below street level down into London's Underground train network, Fowkes gets to work again.

A bit like the "trainspotters" who were once a familiar sight on the platforms of UK railway stations, Fowkes is a dedicated "soundspotter".

But to him, there is nothing dull or uninteresting about the screeching of the train's wheels scraping against the curves in the metal tracks or the clunk of the doors opening and closing.

"I've always been someone who listens to the world. As soon as I have a recording device in my hand I start to listen to the world kind of differently and hear things that other people wouldn't necessarily notice or listen to," he says.

The digital consultant launched Cities and Memories in 2015 and has drawn in some 1,000 collaborators across the globe.

"Every morning I wake up to emails with recordings from somewhere completely unexpected, like a beach in Bali or even the metro in Pyongyang," he says.

Field recordings are "having a moment", he adds, with artists such as ethereal Icelandic singer Bjork using them in their music.

"It used to be seen as very niche, even trainspotter-like behavior, but now anyone can make a decent recording on their phone and it's becoming increasingly mainstream."

UNSC Urged to...

FROM PAGE 1

Dandi dismissed accusations leveled by certain Western countries against Syria, saying such false claims are rooted in unprofessional and non-objective reports that come out as a result of the political pressure being exerted on the technical secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its various teams.

Syria, he noted, also renews its demand on the OPCW to rectify its course of action and stay clear of any politicization, which has dominated its activities and adherence to the principles of professionalism and impartiality.

Dandi reiterated Syria's categorical condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, at any time or place and under any circumstances.

On April 14, 2018, the United States, Britain, and France carried out a string of airstrikes against Syria over a suspected chemical weapons attack on the city of Douma, located about 10 kilometers northeast of the capital Damascus.

That alleged attack was reported by the White Helmets group, which published videos showing them purportedly treating survivors.

Leaked OPCW documents later showed that the investigators of the Douma incident had found "no evidence" of a chemical weapons attack.

However, the organization censored the findings under pressure from the US and its allies to conceal **evidence undermining the pretext of the US-led bombing of Syria days after the alleged attack.**

Lavrov Urges Swift...

FROM PAGE 1

However, Obama's successor, Donald Trump, abandoned the JCPOA in May 2018 and slapped cruel sanctions on Iran. The incumbent US President Joe Biden had vowed during his election campaign to resume talks to revive the deal and remove the harsh US sanctions. Two years into his presidency, Biden has failed to keep his promise and is now threatening to take military action.

Iran maintains that it is necessary for the other side to offer some guarantees that it will remain committed to any agreement that is reached.

The talks to salvage the agreement kicked off in the Austrian capital city of Vienna in April last year, with the intention of examining Washington's seriousness in rejoining the deal and removing anti-Iran sanctions.

The talks remain stalled since August, as Washington continued to insist on its hard-nosed position of not removing all sanctions that were slapped on the Islamic Republic by the previous US administration.

Sterling to Return Home From World Cup

LONDON (Dispatches) - Raheem Sterling will return home from England's World Cup camp in Qatar with doubts over whether he will return in time for Saturday's quarter-final against France.

The English Football Association confirmed the Chelsea forward was left out of Sunday's 3-0 win over Senegal to deal with "a family matter". According to reports in the British media, Sterling's home was broken into by armed intruders while his family were in the property on Saturday night.

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ISSN 1024-6053

P.O. Box: 15875-8551

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

Printed by: Honar Sarzmin Sabz

Distributed by:

Cities of Iran Cultural and Artistic Institute

Managing Director: Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

Saudi Arabia Set to Host 2027 Asian Cup

KUALALUMPUR (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia is the sole remaining bidder to host the 2027 Asian Cup after India's federation withdrew its bid, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said.

The AFC's executive committee shortlisted bids from India and Saudi Arabia in October after Qatar pulled out of the process following their successful bid to host the 2023 edition in place of original hosts China. The bid from the Saudi federation (SAFF) will be the only one presented to the AFC Congress in February next year, when they meet in Bahrain to decide the host.

Davis Propels Lakers Past Wizards

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Anthony Davis dazzled in the Los Angeles Lakers' 130-119 NBA victory over the Washington Wizards, scoring 55 points with 17 rebounds in his 10th straight game of at least 20 points.

Davis added three blocked shots as he followed up a 44-point performance in the team's triumph over the Milwaukee Bucks on Friday -- Davis saying after that game that he believed the team was turning a corner after a rocky start to the season.

With injury troubles behind him, Davis said, he's finding his rhythm.

"I've been feeling really good, confident in all my shots, playing with a great pace," said Davis, who connected on a blistering 22 of his 30 attempts from floor.

That included two of three from three-point range, and he made all nine of his free throw attempts in a devastatingly efficient performance.

He's the first Laker since Kobe Bryant in 2013 to record back-to-back 40-point games.

"Guys are doing a great job of finding me," Davis said. "It's a team effort... all these guys are putting me in position to be successful. I think our entire team mindset is just coming out with effort on both ends of the floor."

Lakers superstar LeBron James scored 29 points, Lonnie Walker IV added 20 and Westbrook added six points with 15 assists as the Lakers won their third straight and eighth in their last 10 games.

It wasn't all smooth sailing, however, as the Lakers saw a 29-point lead midway through the third quarter dwindle to nine points with six minutes to play.

"They were playing desperate basketball," James said. "They were just jacking it and getting up and down the floor, it caught us on our heels a little bit. But we played a great game."

The Boston Celtics, whose scorching start to the season is a stark contrast to the Lakers' rebounded from an overtime loss to the Miami Heat with a 103-92 home win over the Brooklyn Nets.

Jaylen Brown scored 34 points and Jayson Tatum added 29. Malcolm Brogdon



scored 13 off the bench as the Celtics reserves outscored Brooklyn's bench 24-15.

Kevin Durant led the Knicks with 31 points, seven rebounds, five assists, two steals and two blocked shots.

Kyrie Irving added 18, but Brooklyn's four game winning streak was halted.

In New Orleans, Pelicans guard Jose Alvarado drilled eight three-pointers on the way to a career-high 38 points in the hosts' 121-106 victory over the Denver Nuggets.

The 24-year-old from Puerto Rico notched the most points by any player coming off the bench this season.

"It's amazing," Alvarado said of the chants of "Jose, Jose, Jose" from Pelicans fans.

Pels star Zion Williamson added 25 points as New Orleans withstood 32 points, 16 rebounds and eight assists from Denver's two-time defending MVP Nikola Jokic.

Frustrated Nuggets coach Michael Malone was ejected with 2:03 remaining after jawing with an official.

The victory put the Pelicans in second place in the Western Conference, one game behind the Phoenix Suns, who had little trouble in a 133-95 victory over the Spurs in San Antonio.

Deandre Ayton scored 25 points and grabbed 10 rebounds and Devin Booker and Mikal Bridges scored 20 points apiece as the Suns notched their seventh win in eight games.

The Spurs dropped their 11th straight.

In Detroit, Memphis star Ja Morant enjoyed another big game, scoring 33 points in the Grizzlies' wire-to-wire 122-112 victory over the Pistons.

In Sacramento, the Kings withstood a 41-point performance from Chicago's Zach LaVine in a 110-101 victory over the Bulls

Malik Monk led the Kings with 20 points off the bench with seven Kings players -- including all five starters -- scoring in double figures.

Mature England Ready for France Battle

DOHA (dispatches) - Harry Kane hailed England's serene progress to the World Cup quarter-finals after scoring his first goal of the tournament in a 3-0 win over Senegal in the last 16.

The Three Lions have now won a knockout game in three consecutive major tournaments for the first time to set up a mouth-watering clash against reigning champions France in the last eight on Saturday.

"Knockout games are never easy. We showed great maturity through the tournament," Kane told ITV after moving to within one goal of Wayne Rooney's record of 53 for England.

"The mentality was top from the beginning and we took our chances when they came."

At 29, Kane is one of the senior players in Gareth Southgate's squad on a night when youngsters Jude Bellingham, Phil Foden and Bukayo Saka again showed their promise.

Saka scored his third goal of the tournament, while Foden provided two assists and Bellingham was heavily involved in the opening two goals.

"We've got some super young players that we feel it's been right to give them their head and give them their opportunity," said Southgate.

"Jude, Phil, Bukayo, they are heading in a really good direction and these games are brilliant life experience for them. The progress they are making is phenomenal."

Suter Wins Lake Louise Super-G

LAKE LOUISE (Dispatches) - Olympic downhill gold medalist Corinne Suter won the World Cup super-G at Lake Louise on Sunday as Italian speed star Sofia Goggia proved human after all.

Switzerland's Suter, who had settled for second and third in the downhill won by Goggia on Friday and Saturday, clocked 1min 20.75sec -- her time withstanding a fierce challenge from Austrian Cornelia Huetter -- who was runner-up by just two-hundredths of a second.

Norway's Ragnhild Mowinckel was third in 1:20.91.

Suter predicted the tight margins of victory will be common this season.

"You have to go and find your limit," she said. "I think this season will be a very, very tight season. There are so many girls who are skiing so fast and can win. You have to push in each race."

After her two podium places this week, Suter said she was feeling good about the super-G even before it started.

"I knew it was a very good course that I liked after inspection," she said. "I was thinking it was faster and I just tried to do my best. It was a tight race again, but today I was the lucky one."

Goggia was gunning for a second straight Lake Louise treble, but a ragged start saw her just third-fastest when she finished and she was soon pushed off the podium.

Her time of 1:21.11 left her fifth, 36-hundredths of a second behind Suter.

Despite the disappointment, Goggia moved to second in the overall standings, 20 points behind American Mikaela Shiffrin.

Shiffrin, last season's overall World Cup winner, skipped Lake Louise, preferring to focus on technical training ahead of a giant slalom and slalom in Sestriere next week.

Huetter notched her second podium finish of the week. She finished third in Friday's downhill, but opted out of Saturday's race because of a headache that came with mild vision trouble -- a reminder of the concussion she suffered in a frightening crash at Crans-Montana in February.

Kilde at the Double in Super-G Win over Odermatt



LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Aleksander Aamodt Kilde won the World Cup super-G at Beaver Creek, beating Swiss rival Marco Odermatt by two-tenths of a second to complete a Colorado double.

Norway's Kilde, who had shaken off the effects of flu to edge reigning overall World Cup champion Odermatt by six-hundredths of a second in Saturday's downhill, clocked 1min 10.73sec to nab another win.

With a strong showing on the final section of a tight, technical course he overtook the 1:10.93 that Odermatt had posted, the victory edging him closer to Odermatt in the overall standings.

"It was tricky, quite dark, and there were lots of places where you could do mistakes," said Kilde, who won both races on Beaver Creek's Birds of Prey course last year, too.

"I just tried to keep it going, be smart and also charge down the piste. I tried to go clean." France's Alexis Pinturault was third, three-tenths of a second behind Kilde.

Kilde, who won both the downhill and super-G World Cup titles last season but had to settle for just a solitary bronze medal in super-G at the Beijing Winter Olympics, notched the seventh World Cup super-G win of his career.

He completed a strong showing on North American slopes, where he won a downhill at Lake Louise last weekend before a runner-up finish to Odermatt in the super-G in the Canadian Rockies.

Odermatt remained atop the overall standings with 420 points to Kilde's 380 as the circuit heads back to Europe.

Brazil Brush Aside S. Korea to Cruise Through World Cup Quarters

DOHA (Dispatches) - Neymar returned from injury to help inspire Brazil to a 4-1 victory over South Korea as the favorites cruised through to the quarter-finals of the World Cup.

The world's most expensive player had sat out his team's last two matches with a sprained ankle suffered in their first game in Qatar, a 2-0 win over Serbia.

But he came back for this last-16 tie as Tite's team clicked into gear and delivered an ominous message to their rivals, at least before easing off in the second half.

Vinicius Junior opened the scoring inside seven minutes before Neymar added another from the penalty spot to move to 76 goals for his country, leaving him just one away from equalling Pele's all-time record tally.

Richardson's brilliant goal made it 3-0 and Lucas Paqueta added another before half-time to leave South Korea shellshocked.

Paik Seung-ho pulled one back but by then Brazil were thinking about Friday's quarter-final clash with 2018 runners-up Croatia.

The five-time World Cup winners had not scored four goals in a knockout game at the tournament since 1998.

Here they played at times with the joy associated with the Brazilian national team, the players coming together to celebrate each goal by showing off their dance moves and their coach even joining in.

If they finished playing within themselves, their first-half display was superb and a fitting tribute to the great Pele.



Croatia Defeat Japan in Penalty Shoot-Out to Reach World Cup Quarters

DOHA (Dispatches) - Croatia reached the quarter-finals of the World Cup with a dramatic 3-1 penalty shoot-out win over Japan after a tense last-16 clash ended 1-1.

Mario Pasalic struck the winning penalty to send Croatia through after Ivan Perisic had pulled Croatia level in the 55th minute of normal time following Daizen Maeda's opener for Japan just before the break.

Croatia now face either Brazil or South Korea in the last eight and continued midfield icon Luka Modric's stay at his fourth and likely final World Cup.

Japan's bid to reach the last eight for the first time in their history came to a crushing end after another display of the sort which saw off Spain and Germany on their way to topping Group E.

However they could not claim one more big European scalp in the shape of the 2018 finalists and go home in the second round, as they did four years ago, after having three of their penalties saved.

Japan could easily have been ahead within three minutes when Shogo Taniguchi glanced a header wide from point-blank range, and 10 minutes later Daizen Maeda came close to turning in Junya Ito's brilliantly placed low ball from the right flank.

In the meantime Perisic had let off a shot from a tight angle which led to a goalmouth scramble, but had Croatia scored they risked the goal being ruled out for what looked like a clear push on Takehiro Tomiyasu.

Bruno Petkovic then wasted a great opportunity in the 25th minute, strolling through almost unopposed onto a long through ball only to dawdle and fail to get a pass off to Andrej Kramaric who was charging into the box.

