

Health Ministry Announced on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Stayed Unchanged at **144,658** With Another **Zero** Death Day Over the Past 24 Hours

# IRAN NEWS

TEDPIX, the Main Index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Gained 20,012 Points to 1.409m Points on Monday, as reported, over 8.73b Securities Worth 43.358 Trillion Rials (About \$150m) Were Traded at the TSE

VOL. XXVIII, No. 7660 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

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## 2 DOMESTIC


Improving People's Living Conditions a Top Priority



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Iran Able to Export Electricity to Europe and India



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## No One Allowed to Comment On Iran Territorial Integrity

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Condemning the accusation featured in a joint statement issued by the PGCC member states with the presence of China, Iran Foreign Ministry Spokesman said that Iran won't allow anyone to comment on its territorial integrity. Speaking at his weekly presser, the Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani answered some questions raised by reporters over the latest regional and international developments. "We condemn any baseless accusations raised in the final statement of the 43rd meeting of the heads of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council [PGCC] with the presence of the Chinese official.

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## Expanding Economic Ties With Asian States Among Iran Priorities



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian says Iran attaches great significance to further expansion of its economic cooperation with Asian partners. The ceremony was attended by the Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization, foreign envoys to Iran and political personalities and figures. In the beginning, Amirabdollahian seized this opportunity, on the behalf of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to congratulate the 30th anniversary of the expansion of the Organization to the respected nations and governments of the member states of the Organization and the Secretary-General of ECO.

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## 4 INTERNATIONAL


Greek MEP Held as Qatar Graft Probe Expands



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## 8 SPORT

Warriors Cool Off Red-Hot Celtics



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## Iran Sanctions European Individuals, Entities

TEHRAN (IP) - Foreign Ministry announced the imposition of sanctions against some individuals and institutions in Europe included 5 institutions and 10 natural persons in its sanctions list. The Foreign Ministry issued a statement regarding the imposition of sanctions against certain individuals and institutions in the European Union. In the statement, it is stated: "The Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Republic of Iran, according to the approvals of the relevant authorities, within the framework of the relevant rules and sanctions mechanisms and as a reciprocal action,..."

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## Alireza Chaichi Yazdi, CEO of Iran Alloy Steel Company

# A Synthesis of Experience and Science

### Productivity, the basic factor of development

Regardless of the positive and negative impact of various and numerous fluctuations in the economy of Iran and the world in recent years, as well as the restrictions caused by the epidemic conditions of the Covid-19 virus and dozens of other factors on the supply and demand system of steel, one of the most important components to strengthen the presence and role-playing Steel industries in domestic and international markets pay special and real attention to the category of productivity and productivity management. Consumption management, energy management, quality management, human resources management, technology management, and especially environmental management are considered to be the most important parameters related to this category, which on the one hand requires the special attention of capable managers of the industry, and on the other hand, to become more productive. It requires the interaction and cooperation of the national fields of the country, including universities, organizations and institutions of management science. In the meantime, the issue of environment and environmental management in steel industries, due to its importance among all countries and the trend towards green steel production and reducing the amount of carbon dioxide, has a more important position for the continuation of presence in international markets. It won't be long before it becomes a secret condition to be present in this market. Taking a step in the path of the fourth generation of the industrial revolution, the use of artificial intelligence and new digital technologies are considered to be other important and effective components in this sector, which due to the important role of this factor in the field of productivity, it is necessary to pay special attention to it. In this regard, considering the extent and volume of activities and costs that this issue can involve, it is necessary that policymaking, planning and implementation be done in a centralized and comprehensive way by the country's upstream policy areas and even the relevant associations and organizations. This issue prevents incomplete movements and incorrect and fruitless expenditures that He pointed out the environmental conditions of the region and... Obtaining many honors, certificates and awards in this field, including receiving the national environmental code, being selected as the country's selected green industry, obtaining the IATF certificate, the province's exemplary industry in the field of electricity consumption management, the province's green industry, etc. Productivity management in Iran Alloy Steel Company. To maintain and develop its markets, both in domestic and international markets, taking into account the thinking of productivity, protecting the environment, maintaining and continuously improving quality, product diversity, being in sync with the best industrial and digital technologies, fully responding to It has always put the technical-commercial needs of customers at the forefront of its activities, Iran Alloy Steel Company has always put the technical-commercial needs of customers at the forefront of its activities.



Iran Alloy Steel Company came on stream in Iranian calendar year of 1378 (1999) in Yazd city. The products of this company, which are mainly alloy and special steels, are produced in accordance with world standards such as American (ASTM), English (BS), German (DIN) and other international standards. The vision drawn for this company in the horizon of 1405 (2026) is to become a smart, agile, excellent, value-creating organization for all stakeholders and the first choice of customers in alloy and special steels. It should be said that this will be achieved through sustainable development in the value chain of steel industries and mines and being in line with global developments in knowledge and technology. Valuable activities of companies such as Iran Alloy Steel not only help to develop their position in the domestic and international markets, but also are considered a factor for smoothing the path to reach the country's 1404 (2025) steel horizon. Despite the admirable development and progress in technologies and production technologies of alternative products for steel, the impact and application of this metal in all areas, from housing to food, from clothing to healthcare, from agriculture to animal husbandry, etc. is undeniable. With a very high approximation, it can be acknowledged that in various industries such as construction, automotive, oil and gas, petrochemical, mining, medicine and pharmaceuticals, sea, air and rail transportation, food, machinery and dozens of other large and small industries, still And steel is always one of the most strategic and widely used metals and raw materials, and therefore, in order to examine the role of the steel industry in the economy and even politics, it should be considered like oil and gold.



## Spox Blasts Violators of Iranian Nation's Rights

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The spokesman for the Foreign Ministry expressed wonder early on Monday over the presentation of the human rights prize by violators of the Iranian nation's rights to Iranian women.

Yes, the Iranian nation surely deserves to receive the human rights prize as their rights have been violated by the so-called human rights defenders for years, Nasser Kanaani wrote.

Those so-called advocates of human rights have an abysmal record of defending the human rights and the rights of the Iranian nation, he said.

## Improving People's Living Conditions a Top Priority

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN - Stating that improving people's living conditions is one of the priorities of next year's budget, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi clarified, "The statesmen's view on the improvement of salaries and wages should be based on the two principles of productivity and strengthening people's purchasing power so that a fair system can be observed in payments".**

Speaking on Monday morning at the 12th extraordinary meeting of the cabinet to review the budget notes for the next year, President Raisi noted the improvement of people's living conditions with the approach of preserving and strengthening the purchasing power of the society as one of the priorities of the next year's budget and emphasized, "The statesmen's view on the improvement of salaries and wages should be based on the two principles of productivity and strengthening people's purchasing power so that a fair system can be observed in payments".

The President stated, "The budget should be defined based on incomes and resources as well as expenses so that the government and the Majlis formulate and approve a clear and rational budget and we do not face a budget deficit throughout the year".

Meanwhile on Sunday evening and in the cabinet meeting, emphasizing the need to pay attention to the people's capacities in advancing the government's plans, the President said, "The budget bill should be drafted with attention on people's contributions so that the government can benefit from people's cooperation in realizing the budget's goals in the economic, cultural and social fields".



Raisi emphasized on paying attention to the country's priorities and needs in the preparation of the 1402 budget bill in the meeting of the cabinet on Sunday evening.

The President stated that the government should pay attention to balance in growth in the drafting the budget bill, and emphasized on paying attention to people's capacities in advancing the government's programs and said, "The budget bill should be drafted with attention on people's contributions so that the government can benefit from people's cooperation in realizing the budget's goals in the economic, cultural and social fields".

In this regard, Raisi urged those responsible for preparing the budget to pay special attention to various economic capacities, such as maritime economy, digital economy, tourism economy, and other areas, in order to provide the necessary income for the next year's budget.

Emphasizing the necessity of "paying attention to basic measures and infrastructures" in drafting the budget bill, the President ordered an independent package to be drafted to seriously follow up on these measures and increase the speed of the country's progress.

## Speaker Urges In-Time Solution To Challenges

TEHRAN (IP) - Majlis Speaker stresses the in-time solving of the country's challenges saying that if the time expires, the solution will be of no use.

Speaking on the occasion of Research Weak in Iran, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said: "Today, we have to admit that we have failed to solve problem in some issues, and sometimes we have the power to solve a problem, but we don't solve it in time, and a problem that is not solved in time loses its value."

Qalibaf highlighted innovative brave managers as today's necessity of the country and said that Iran needed brave managers who were strong and trustworthy.

"Everyone, especially those who are in charge of a supervisory position, should encourage managers in making decisions," he stressed.

He defined innovation as the ability to snatch all of the opportunities mingled with risk: "Transformation in organizations is one of the opportunities that is followed by risk, and here we need brave creative forces, and the governance system must support this courage so that we can have transformation and innovation."

## Tehran Hosting Iran-Afghan Children Painting Exhibition

TEHRAN (MNA) - A children's painting exhibition of Iran and Afghanistan titled "My Dreams" is underway in the capital city of Tehran.

The joint exhibition features paintings of 20 Iranian and Afghan children.

In this exhibition, 60 artworks on crayon, watercolors, gouache, and oil techniques have been showcased.

The event is held with the aim of supporting children, demonstrating their creativity and abilities, showing friendship and empathy, and harmony among children as well as creating a center of love and affection among families.

The exhibition "My Dreams" kicked off on December 9 and will wrap up on December 16.

## Student Bodies Spurn Bid to Suspend Iran From UN Women's Commission

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Several major Iranian student bodies rage against a US-led bid to have Iran suspended from a UN women rights commission, inviting commission members instead to travel to the Islamic Republic and personally observe "the reality" about women's lofty position within the Iranian society.

The student bodies made the plea in a statement on Friday ahead of a vote, proposed by the United States, to have Iran suspended from the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women over, what Western countries and media outlets describe as, "mistreatment" of women in the Islamic Republic.

"Unfortunately, we have been bearing witness for years to international institutions' contradictory approach towards various issues," the statement read.

It cited the Western media hype that has surrounded the death of an Iranian woman, named as Mahsa Amini, in September, and the commission's double-standard attitude towards the tragic incident, "which has been proven on the basis of documents and evidence" to have not been caused through any fault of the Iranian law enforcement forces.

The student bodies then took the commission to task for not paying attention to the brutal treatment of women elsewhere in the world, including the United States, where, according to The Washington Post, a woman is killed every week by law enforcement.

"Does anyone question the statistics on the number of women, who are killed by the American police?" the statement further asked.

The bodies also questioned why the Israeli regime maintains its position on the Commission, despite its ongoing carnage of Palestinian women and children.

"The image that is portrayed by the media of women's situation in the Islamic Republic contradicts the truth. The image [portrayed] of women's rights in Iran is subjected to media terrorism," the statement notes.

"We do not allow the truth to be sacrificed," the student bodies said in the statement, adding, "We invite you (the Commission's members) to [rather] travel to Iran [in person]...in order to come face to face with the reality of the Iranian society."

## Iran Designates UK Individuals, Entities

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Ministry in a statement blacklisted four UK entities and 13 individuals.

Based on the approvals of the relevant authorities, within the framework of the relevant rules and sanctions mechanisms, and as a reciprocal action, the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has sanctioned UK individuals and entities for their deliberate actions in supporting terrorism and terrorist groups and promoting terrorism, violence, and hatred that cause riots, violence, terrorist acts, and human rights violations against the Iranian people.

**The following institutions were sanctioned:**

1. RAF Menwith Hill Air Force Harrogate
2. UK Naval Support Facility (NSF)
3. British Committee for Iran Freedom (BCFIF)
4. The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change

**The following individuals were sanctioned:**

1. Robert Jenrick, United Kingdom Minister for Immigration
2. Tony Radakin, Navy officer
3. Elliot Sampson, Air Marshal Martin
4. Ken McCallum, Director General of MI5

5. Phil Husband, Governor of HM Prison Durham
6. Steve Kilvington, Assistant Head Capability Strategy at UK Ministry of Defense
7. John Spellar, Member of Parliament of the United Kingdom
8. David Alton, Member of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom
9. Mateo Afford, Member of Parliament from the conservative party
10. David Jones, Member of Parliament from the conservative party
11. Wayne David, Member of Parliament of the United Kingdom
12. Mark Williams, former member of the British Parliament
13. Geoffrey Bindman, head of the British Institute of Human Rights

The mentioned sanctions include the ban on issuing visas and entering the Islamic Republic of Iran and confiscation of their property and assets in the territory under the jurisdiction of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

All Iranian institutions, according to the approvals of the relevant authorities, will take the necessary measures to implement these sanctions.

## FM Urges China to Respect Iran's Territorial Integrity

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has called on the Chinese Government to respect the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The FM wrote in Chinese language on his Twitter account on Monday that the three islands of Abu Musa, the Lesser Tunb, and the Greater Tunb are inseparable parts of Iran and belong to the motherland forever.

He further tweeted that Iran does not retreat in dealing with other parties when it comes to the necessity of respecting Iran's territorial integrity.

The tweet comes after Chinese President Xi Jinping along with Arab leaders of the member states of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PjGCC) issued a statement, urging the Islamic Republic to hold talks with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on the fate of the three Iranian islands.

Different Iranian officials, including lawmakers, condemned the stance, emphasizing that the islands have been and will be Iranian forever.

## 3 islands in Persian Gulf Belong To Iran Forever

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The three islands of the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa in the Persian Gulf have been, are, and will be for Iran; and the Islamic Republic will stand firmly against those who want to challenge the fact, an Iranian lawmaker said.

Ali-Reza Salimi, a member of the Presiding Board of the Iranian Parliament, said the meeting of the Islamic Consultative Assembly that the Chinese authorities especially the president are warned not to be deceived by certain littoral states of the Persian Gulf region.

Salimi criticized a joint statement by China and Saudi Arabia during Chinese President Xi Jinping's presence in Riyadh against the Islamic Republic, saying that President Xi showed during the trip that he is more naïve than he was expected.

The three islands have been, are and will be Iranian and everybody, who wants to question the issue, will face firm response by the Islamic Republic of Iran, he warned.

The Chinese government should abide by its commitments under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), he said, adding that the second article of the SCO treaty refers to the territorial integrity of Iran.

Mojtaba Zonnuri, another Iranian legislator, cautioned China to avoid getting in line with the plot hatched by the Zionist-Arab axis against Iran and try to be back on track.

Salman Es'haghi, a parliamentarian, warned Chinese investors to read what happened to Jamal Ahmad Khashoggi, a Saudi journalist, dissident, author and columnist, who was killed in cold blood by Saudi authorities in Turkiye.

Mohammad-Reza Ahmadi, representative of Rasht city in parliament, urged Chinese officials to pay heed to what they comment on Iran's territorial integrity.

Mohammad Sabzi, another legislator, advised Arab littoral states of the Persian Gulf to be cautioned about their way of speaking with the Islamic Republic, because Tehran does not retreat from its rights concerning territorial integrity.

## Ireland Says There's Collective Desire To Resume JCPOA Implementation

LONDON (IRNA) - Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney has underlined that there is a collective desire to resume full implementation of the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Ahead of the upcoming meeting of the foreign ministers of the member states of the European Union, Coveney told correspondents on Monday that in addition to topics related to the human rights issues and claims on Iran's contribution to Russia in the Ukraine war, another important matter concerning the Islamic Republic is an effort to find the best way on resuming the implementation of the JCPOA.

Despite tensions and the sanctions to be agreed upon today, he said, there is a tendency to strive and find a way to advance the Iran nuclear agreement.

He refused to point out the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA in May 2018 as well as the continuation of violating the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 by Washington, claiming that the implementation of the deal will help ensure that Iran would not access nuclear weapons.

The months-long talks in Vienna, Austria, to revive the JCPOA and lift anti-Iran sanctions reached a stage that needed the United States' response to rational demands of the Islamic Republic to pave the way for achieving a sustainable and reliable deal.

However, the experiences of the nuclear negotiations in recent months showed that the White House under pressure of the Zionist lobbies and due to its domestic woes lacks the necessary decision-making ability to finalize the agreement.

## Iran, Iraq Consult on Expansion of Economic, Commercial Ties

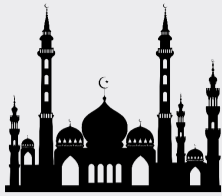
TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran Ambassador to Baghdad Mohammad-Kazem Ale-Eshaq and Iraq Trade Minister Athir Davud Al-Qadiri in a meeting on Sunday exchanged viewpoints on various regional developments and bilateral cooperation.

According to Iraq's Hazal Yaum (Today) news agency, Ale-Eshaq and Al-Qadiri in their meeting particularly focused on ways for further expansion of bilateral economic and commercial ties.

They also surveyed some particular files, including cooperation to launch joint committees, and Iran's cooperation with Iraq Trade Ministry companies.

The Iranian ambassador and the Iraqi minister also talked about Iran's participation in Baghdad International Exhibition this year, and holding a specialized exhibition in Iraq by different Iranian specialist industrialists.





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:58
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:11
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:36
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:06

70. So the magicians were thrown down to prostration: they said, "We believe in the Lord of Aaron and Moses".  
71. (Pharaoh) said: "Believe ye in Him before I give you permission? Surely this must be your leader, who has taught you magic! be sure I will cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides, and I will have you crucified on trunks of palm-trees: so shall ye know for certain, which of us can give the more severe and the more lasting punishment!"  
Surah 20. Ta-ha (70 - 71)

## Iran Able to Export Electricity to Europe and India

IRAN NWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN – Head of Board of Directors of Iran Electrical Industry Syndicate (IEIS) says Iran is able to export electricity to Europe and India with developing its power plant and transmission networks infrastructures as well as managing domestic consumption.**

Payam Baqeri said that Iran can export electricity to East Europe via Russian route, emphasizing that Iran is located in a region which can transmit electricity from north to Europe and from east to Afghanistan, Pakistan and even to India and from south to the Persian Gulf littoral states but it requires development of power plant and transmission networks infrastructures and managing the domestic consumption.

On connection of Iran's electricity grid to the neighboring states in line with materializing programs of national energy hub, he said that exchange of electricity has become serious in the downstream programs and also in the announced policies in the resistance economy, as it bespeaks of its significance.

Baqeri noted that due to Iran's potentials and its geographical location as well as the needs of the surrounding countries to electricity and due to Iran's capability in the electricity industry, he can strongly say that Iran is a country that can turn into an electricity hub not only in the region but also above it.

He added that one of the series of plans which should be considered is synchronization of the national electricity network to the regional states like Russia



as the feasibility studies in this regard have been conducted, and since Russia's electricity network is sustainable and it is actually a powerful network, the connection to this network will have many advantages for both states.

Baqeri noted that Iran is linked electrically to all of countries which have land borders with it but in order to become the electricity hub of the region, it needs to take bigger steps and connection to the Russian network can be one of the steps.

He said that currently most volume of Iran's electricity export is to Iraq and it can increase this amount of export to Iraq with developing the required infrastructures and at the same time the country can import electricity from Armenia and Turkmenistan through connecting to their networks and it can help the country to become electricity hub in the region.

He said there is possibility for exporting electricity to the Persian Gulf states via marine cables and studies are underway and these plans have been also in the past and studies have been conducted.

Baqeri said that Iran currently has some 90,000 megawatts of installed capacities and it makes the country number one in the region and it is one of the important potentials of national electricity potentials.

## Iran Registers Major Rise In Int'l Transit

TEHRAN (IRNA) - A recent report by the Iranian Ministry of Economy signals a major growth in transit via the Iranian oil.

Iran has been the number one world issuer of TIR carnets among member countries of TIR Convention in 2021, the report says citing figures by the International Road Transport Union (IRU).

It said that Iran issued 125, 604 TIR carnets in 2021 to stand at the world top spot.

TIR carnet is a document according to which the goods are sealed in the exporting country and are unsealed in the destination with no need for unsealing and undergoing customs procedures in the middle countries.

The reports elaborated on the main factors contributing to the rise in Iran's international transport, including among others the facilities provided by the Iranian customs administration, implementation of selectivity plan in Iranian southern port of Shahid Rajaei, further activating transit corridors such as the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC) and Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) Corridor, and implementation of E-TIR project and the dispatch of the first Indian cargo to Russia via Iran by this scheme.

## MSC Fully Responsible In Field of Environment



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

ISFAHAN – Director General of Isfahan Department of Environment Mr. Ahmad Reza Lahijanzadeh, being accompanied by senior officials of Department of Environments of towns of Mobarakeh and Lanjan and some experts in the field of environment, visited the production lines of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) and got acquainted with achievements and current projects of the company in the field of environment.

Speaking during his visit, Lahijanzadeh expressed his satisfaction over his presence in Mobarakeh Steel Company and said that through years that the department has monitored investments and activities of MSC in the field of environment, they have witnessed that the company has been fully responsible in the field of environment and they can dare to say that by 2025 when all environmental projects of the company bear fruits, the company will turn into a successful model for other national industries and even in the world level.

He then pointed to his visit to the wastewater treatment unit of MSC and said that MSC has invested considerably in the field of collecting the urban wastewater, and fortunately it provides major part of its required water through wastewater treatment and it is a valuable achievement.

He said that all reports and visits show that MSC has done great jobs in the field of collecting dusts resulted by producing and managing wastewater and this achievement can be shown and taught to others through visit of students and elites to this company.

Then the CEO of MSC Mr. Mohammad Yaser Tayybnia expressed his satisfaction over the visit of Mr. Lahijanzadeh to the company and said that MSC since its foundation has spent over one billion dollars in the field of protecting the environment.

He went on to say that the company, in a five-year comprehensive plan and following its activities in the field of environment like implementing the project of online monitoring which is underway in two phases and in collaboration with the knowledge-based companies, has achieved good progresses and it has done great actions based on the excellence model of EFQM 2020 to prevent emission of environment pollutants and managing the energy consumption.

## Iran Seafood Export Surges 68%

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Agriculture Javad Sadatinejad said that the export of seafood has seen a 68 percent growth in the first seven months of the Iranian calendar year (March 21 to October 22).

Referring to the importance of seafood exports, Sadatinejad highlighted that the export of seafood has seen a 68 percent rise in the first seven months of the Iranian calendar year (March 21 to October 22).

He underlined that exports of aquatic products have advanced by 28% in regard to weight and 68% in value compared to the same period last year.

## Major Increase in Water Supply to Dams

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Water supply to dams in Iran rose significantly in the water year starting in September compared to the same period last year mainly due to good precipitation in the country in early December, according to a new report published in the local media.

The Sunday report by the semi-official Tansim news agency said that water supply to dams across Iran reached 3.043 billion cubic meters (bcm) in the period between September 22 and December 10.

It said the figure was an increase of 14% compared to the same period last year.

That comes as water supply to Iranian dams had risen by only 1% year on year from the start of the water year to November 26 to reach a total of 2.7 bcm, said the report.

The figures confirmed reports suggesting that early December rains in Iran had boosted water storage in the country's reservoirs.

The report cited data by Iranian Energy Ministry's Water Resources Management Company. It said that some 4.055 bcm of water had been released from Iranian dams from September 22 to December 10, down 4% from the same period in 2021.

The data showed that Iranian dams had been filled to an average of around 37% of their capacity on December 10.

The figures come weeks after Iran issued warnings about dropping water levels in dams that could lead to shortage in drinking water supplies in large cities like the capital Tehran.

## China Still Seeks Expansion of Trade Ties With Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) - Saeid Eshtiaqi, a board member of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) said that economic relations between Iran and China are on an upward trajectory and the Asian country is still seeking expansion of ties with the Islamic Republic.

"This country [China] has stood by Iran in difficult times and has been among Iran's friendly countries," Eshtiaqi said. He noted that the vice premier of China is going to visit Iran in the coming weeks.

Referring to the signing of the comprehensive 25-year cooperation agreement between Iran and China, the official said: "We should use the opportunities presented by this agreement to our interests."

The ICCIMA board member further stated that Iran's oil exports to China have increased in recent months, adding: "This country was one of Iran's major target markets at the height of the sanctions and did not leave Iran alone as a friend and supporter in times of hardship."

Emphasizing that China is still seeking to develop its economic relations with Iran, Eshtiaqi said: "Iran is one of China's trading partners, and we must first solve our internal problems and develop our relations with other countries to improve bilateral relations."

According to the data released by China's customs administration, the value of Iran's non-oil exports to China reached \$5.37 billion in the first nine months of 2022, registering an 11-percent rise year on year.

The Islamic Republic exported \$4.84 billion worth of goods to China in January-September 2021.

Based on the mentioned data, Iran and China traded \$12.32 billion worth of commodities in the mentioned nine months to register an 18-percent increase compared to \$10.49 billion in the same period in 2021.

China's exports to Iran in the first nine months of 2022 also grew by 23 percent compared to the previous year to reach \$6.95 billion. The Asian country had exported \$5.65 billion worth of goods to Iran in the same period of the previous year. Iran-China non-oil trade stood at \$14.8 billion in 2021, according to China's customs administration.

## Tehran-Baghdad Trade Expected to Hit \$10b by Yearend

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce Yahya Ale Eshaq said trade challenges between the two countries have been mostly resolved and bilateral trade is expected to reach \$10 billion by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2023).

Iran and Iraq have set a target of \$20 billion in annual trade, and businessmen and authorities of both countries are determined to meet that target, Ale Eshaq said.

According to the official, Iran and Iraq have had the experience of reaching \$14 billion in annual trade in previous years.

He added that the international trade recession and lower Iranian electricity and energy sales to Iraq were the main reasons for the decline in trade exchanges between Iran and Iraq.

Ale Eshaq stated that the ban on the export and import of certain goods according to the laws of the two countries has also been a major reason for the decrease in the trade volume.

Referring to the Iraqi prime minister's recent visit to Iran, he noted that various areas of cooperation including joint investments, oil and gas and collaboration in the economic sector were discussed during this trip.

"In general, Iran and Iraq have agreed to improve relations and change the monetary and banking conditions so that the central banks of the two countries will ease the current situation and solve the problems," he added.

The value of Iran's exports to Iraq rose 20 percent during the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) as compared to the preceding year.

Iran exported \$8.916 billion worth of commodities to its neighbor in the mentioned year, making Iraq the Islamic Republic's second-biggest trade partner.

Exports to Iraq accounted for 18.3 percent of the country's total non-oil shipments in the previous year.

Iran and Iraq signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on economic cooperation back in January 2021, at the end of the fourth meeting of the two countries' Joint Economic Committee.



### Notice of tender for export sale

No. 19/1401/Z

Hereby Golgohar Mining & Industrial Co. announces selling and export 60,000 metric tons of Iron Ore Pellet (%Fe:65.00) on basis of F.O.B at Rajaei Jetty Bandar Abbas - Iran. Interested bidders should find tender documents at Golgohar website: [www.gog.ir](http://www.gog.ir). All bids on conformity to tender instructions must be submitted no later than 14:00 P.M. on 25<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2022 to the Golgohar complex in Sirjan. (50 km in Shiraz road) Bidders are invited to the transactions commission department of the seller with an introduction letter of interested buyer and personal identification of the representative. Tender results shall be announced at 10:00 A.M. on 26<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2022 at the office of the Seller.

Analysis %		
Min	65.00	Fe
Ave	1.00	FeO
Max	0.05	P
Max	0.01	S
Max	3.5	SiO2
Max	0.7	Al2O3
Max	0.9	CaO
Max	2.5	MgO
Ave 250		CCS(kg/p)
Min 90		8-16 mm%
-6mm		Ave 5
Max 4.0		A.1%
Min 94		T.1%
19-24		Prosity%
Min 90		Reducibility%



## Volcano Erupts in Guatemala, Forcing Road Closure



GUATEMALA CITY (Dispatches) - One of the most active volcanoes in Central America has erupted again, spewing lava and ash and forcing authorities in Guatemala to close a major road.

The volcano named Fuego -- Spanish for fire -- rumbled into activity overnight Saturday into Sunday, with molten rock oozing down its slopes and ash belching two kilometers (more than a mile) into the sky.

A road that goes south from central Guatemala has been closed as a precaution, said Carlos Aquino, a spokesman for the highway police.

The volcano is about 16 kilometers (10 miles) from Antigua, the country's picturesque former capital and biggest tourist attraction.

## Lockerbie Plane Bombing Suspect Taken Into U.S. Custody



LONDON (Dispatches) - A Libyan man accused of making the bomb that killed 270 people after it blew up Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie in Scotland in 1988 is in custody in the United States, Scottish and U.S. law enforcement officials said.

Abu Agila Mohammad Mas'ud Kheir Al-Marimi was taken into custody about two years after former U.S. Attorney General Bill Barr first announced the United States filed charges against him.

A Justice Department spokesperson confirmed to Reuters on Sunday that the United States has custody of the suspect. Mas'ud is expected to make his initial court appearance in a federal court in Washington.

## Greek MEP Held as Qatar Graft Probe Expands



BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - A European Parliament vice president, Greek socialist MEP Eva Kaili, was charged with corruption and remanded in custody on Sunday after Belgian investigators found "bags of cash" in her home.

Belgian police are investigating allegations that figures working on behalf of Qatar, the Gulf monarchy and World Cup host, have paid European politicians huge bribes to influence the Brussels policy debate.

Kaili, who has spoken publicly in support of Qatar's recent labor reforms, was one of four suspects to have been charged and detained.

Two more have been released and the house of at least one more MEP has been searched by investigators.

The Belgian federal prosecutor's office did not identify the four by name, but a judicial source confirmed to AFP that Kaili was among those charged.

"Four individuals have been arrested by the Brussels investigating judge who is leading the investigation," the federal prosecutor's office said in a statement.

"They are charged with participation in a criminal organization, money laundering and corruption. Two persons have been released by the investigating judge."

The arrests followed raids in Brussels which prosecutors said turned up 600,000 euros (\$630,000) in cash. Police also seized computers and mobile phones.

The second search of an MEP's house is understood to have involved a Belgian member, since the president of the parliament, Roberta Metsola, was invited to witness the raid.

The judicial source identified him as Marc Tarabella, a Belgian socialist and vice-chair of the parliamentary delegation "for relations with the Arab peninsula". He has not been charged.

Under the Belgian constitution the president of the European Parliament must attend if one of the country's MEPs is targeted by a search, Metsola's office confirmed.

"We can confirm that EP President Metsola has returned from Malta to Brussels on Saturday evening to be present at a house search of a Member of European Parliament," the spokesman said.

"The European Parliament and President Metsola stand firmly against corruption, are actively and fully cooperating with law enforcement and judicial authorities to assist the course of justice."

Kaili has been stripped of her responsibilities as a vice president of the parliament, notably that of representing Metsola in the Middle East, but she is still an MEP and would normally enjoy immunity from criminal prosecution.

But there is an exception in cases where a suspect is caught red-handed in the act of committing an alleged crime and, according to the judicial source, Belgian police detained Kaili in possession of "bags of cash" and thus she was brought before the judge.

Among the six arrested on Friday, after at least 16 police raids of premises in Brussels, were the former MEP Pier-Antonio Panzeri and his fellow Italian Luca Visentini, the general secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

According to Belgian news reports, Kaili's father is also implicated, caught transporting cash "in a suitcase".

"It is suspected that third parties in political and/or strategic positions within the European Parliament were paid large sums of money or offered substantial gifts to influence parliament's decisions," the prosecutor's statement said, without pointing fingers at Qatar.

## Russia Drones Smash Power Network in Odesa



KYIV (Dispatches) - All non-critical infrastructure in the Ukrainian port of Odesa was without power after Russia used Iranian-made drones to hit two energy facilities, leaving 1.5 million people without power, officials said.

"The situation in the Odesa region is very difficult," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address.

"Unfortunately, the hits were critical, so it takes more than just time to restore electricity... It doesn't take hours, but a few days, unfortunately."

Since October, Moscow has been targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure with large waves of missile and drone strikes. Norway was sending \$100 million to help restore Ukraine's energy system, Zelenskyy said.

Serhiy Bratchuk, spokesperson for Odesa's regional administration, said electricity for the city's population will be restored "in the coming days," while complete restoration of the networks may take two to three months.

Bratchuk said an earlier Facebook post by the region's administration, advising some people to consider evacuating, was being investigated by Ukraine's security services as "an element of the hybrid war" by Russia.

That post has since been deleted. "Not a single representative of the authorities in the region made any calls for the evacuation of the inhabitants of Odesa and the region," Bratchuk said.

Odesa had more than 1 million residents before the Feb. 24 invasion that Russia calls a "special military operation" to "denazify" its smaller neighbour.

Kyiv says Russia has launched hundreds of Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones at targets in Ukraine, describing the attacks as war crimes due to their devastating effect on civilian life. Moscow says its attacks are militarily legitimate and that it does not target civilians.

Ukraine's prosecutor general's office said two power facilities in Odesa region were hit by Shahed-136 drones.

## "Unprovoked" Firing From Afghan Forces Kills Civilians

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - At least six civilians have been killed by "unprovoked" firing from Afghan forces near the Chaman border, Pakistan's military said, in the latest deadly flare-up at the border between the neighboring countries.

The Pakistani army's media wing said on Sunday that the fire wounded 17 people, and it blamed the casualties on the "unprovoked and indiscriminate fire" of heavy weapons by Afghan forces on civilians.

The violence hitting Chaman in southwestern Pakistan follows a series of deadly incidents and attacks that have raised tensions with Afghanistan's Taliban rulers. Chaman is the main border crossing for trade between the two countries.

In Afghanistan, a spokesman for Kandahar's governor, Attaullah Zaid, appeared to link the clashes between Pakistani and Taliban forces with the construction of new checkpoints on the Afghan side of the border. He said one Taliban fighter was killed and 10 were wounded. Three civilians were also injured, he added.

Pakistan's army said troops responded to Afghan fire, but its media wing didn't give further details. It said Pakistan has approached authorities in the Afghan capital, Kabul, to highlight the severity of the border incident.

A doctor with a government-run hospital in Chaman, Akhtar Mohammad, told The Associated Press that live rounds injured 27 people who were brought into the hospital for treatment. Of these, six died and seven were in critical condition.

A resident on Pakistan's side of the border, Wali Mohammad, took his wounded cousin to the hospital in Chaman. He said there were a number of explosions followed by rapid gunfire.

"We were in the street like any other day off when suddenly a big explosion was heard and debris hit many people, including one of my cousins," said Mohammad.

A deadly shooting in November shuttered the border at Chaman for eight days, causing heavy commercial losses and leaving thousands of people stranded on both sides.

Later in the month, Pakistan's embassy in Kabul came under gunfire days after Pakistan's Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar travelled to Kabul to meet her Afghan counterpart Amir Khan Muttaqi.

## Serbs in Kosovo Clash With Police as Ethnic Tensions Flare

MITROVICA (Dispatches) - Serb protesters in northern Kosovo blocked main roads for a second day following a night-time exchange of fire with police after the arrest of a former Serb policeman, amid rising tensions between authorities and Kosovo's Serb minority.

In recent weeks Serbs in northern Kosovo, a hotbed of Serb nationalism, have responded with violent resistance to moves by Pristina that they see as anti-Serb.

EULEX, the European Union mission tasked with patrolling northern Kosovo, said a stun grenade was thrown on one of its armoured vehicles on Saturday evening, but no one was injured.

Josep Borrell, EU foreign policy chief, warned the bloc will not tolerate violence against members of its mission.

"#EU will not tolerate attacks on @EULEXKosovo or use of violent, criminal acts in the north. Barricades must be removed immediately by groups of Kosovo Serbs. Calm must be restored," he wrote on Twitter.

The latest protests were triggered by the arrest of a former police officer on Saturday. He was part of a mass resignation of Serbs from the force last month, after Pristina said it would require Serbs to scrap Serbian license plates dating to before the 1998-99 Kosovo War that led to independence.

For a second day on Sunday, trucks and other heavy-duty vehicles blocked several main roads leading to two border

crossings with Serbia. Both crossings were closed for traffic.

Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti has asked NATO's mission KFOR to remove the barricades.

"We call KFOR to guarantee the freedom of movement (and remove roadblocks)...KFOR is asking for more time to finish this ... so we are waiting," Kurti said.

Late on Saturday Kosovo police said they came under fire in different locations close to a lake bordering Serbia. The force said it had to return fire in self-defence. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

Police in Pristina said former policeman Dejan Pantic was arrested for allegedly attacking state offices, smashing the windows of the election commission offices, and police officers and election officials on Tuesday.

Serb mayors in northern Kosovo municipalities, along with local judges and some 600 police officers, resigned last month in protest over a government decision to replace Belgrade-issued car licence plates with ones issued by Pristina.

On his Instagram page, Serbia's President Aleksandar Vucic said "there will be no surrender," in Kosovo, but added Belgrade "will continue the fight with all legal means, for peace." On Saturday, Vucic said Belgrade would ask KFOR to let Serbia deploy troops and police in Kosovo, although he acknowledged there was no chance of permission being granted.



## Erdogan, Putin Discuss Syria Border Corridor, Gas Hub by Phone



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has held a phone conversation with his Russian counterpart, President Vladimir Putin, in which he called for a 30-kilometre (19-mile) security corridor at the Turkish border with Syria, according to his office.

The two leaders also discussed grain supplies and a potential regional gas hub in Turkey on Sunday, December 11, both countries said.

In a statement, Erdogan's office reiterated the "importance and urgency" of creating a buffer zone in northern Syria in accordance with a 2019 agreement between Turkey and Russia, which is the main backer of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The call came three weeks after Turkey launched air and artillery strikes in Syria and Iraq following an explosion in Istanbul on November 13 that killed six people and wounded dozens of others. Ankara blamed the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and its Syrian affiliate the People's Protection Units, or YPG. Both groups, considered "terrorists" by Turkey, have denied involvement.

Under the 2019 deal signed with Turkey, Russia promised to establish a buffer zone between the Turkish border and YPG forces that would be controlled by the Syrian army and Russian military police. The agreement was not fully implemented although both Russian and Syrian government forces are present in the border region, as well as some United States troops.

Russia has closely cooperated with Turkey in northern Syria in the past and in recent months has pushed for reconciliation between Ankara and Damascus. In recent weeks, Turkey has threatened to follow up strikes on northern Syria with a ground offensive.

Turkey, meanwhile, has acted as a mediator with the United Nations on an agreement that guarantees grain exports from both war-hit Ukraine and Russia, two of the world's biggest producers.

In the call, Erdogan said Ankara and Moscow could start work on exporting other food products and commodities through the Black Sea grain corridor, it added, without providing further details.

"President Erdogan expressed his sincere wish for the termination of the Russia-Ukraine war as soon as possible," the Turkish presidency said on Sunday.



## Hearing Loss Treatment Moves Forward Despite Early Disappointment



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - An innovative approach to treating hearing loss might be closer to reaching the market, despite a setback in the testing process, the researchers behind the technology say.

In early clinical trials, a drug known as FX-322 produced significant improvement in speech perception in several participants with noise-induced hearing loss after a single injection into the inner ear -- with some reporting benefits that lasted as long as two years, according to its developer, Frequency Therapeutics of Lexington, Mass.

Its drug candidate, FX-322, is designed to be injected in microscopic amounts into the inner ear. People with hearing loss can receive one or more injections, depending on the severity of their symptoms.

The company said the drug is intended to stimulate the growth of hair cells in the cochlea that enable hearing after those cells have died off.

While preliminary trials appeared to do that, participants in Phase 2 efficacy trials with mild to moderately severe inner-ear hearing loss caused by noise exposure, advancing age and other factors -- who received four weekly injections -- did not experience improvement in some measures of hearing, the company said.

And although study participants did see improvement as measured by word recognition scores, repeated weekly injections appeared to reduce the benefits compared with a single injection, it said.

The company blamed design of the study and not the drug for the disappointing results, Kevin Franck, its senior vice president of strategic marketing and new product planning, told UPI in a Zoom call.

"There has never been a drug to treat hearing loss, and these measures have never been put to the test in a placebo-controlled trial, because you can't do a placebo-controlled study with hearing devices -- you either get the device or you don't," said Franck, who also is a trained audiologist.

"Every time we did [a study], we were breaking new ground, so, of course, there are going to be setbacks," he said.

Still, as a publicly traded company, Frequency Therapeutics, which described the negative results as "unexpected," saw its share prices plummet in the weeks that followed. Shares had peaked at \$54 on Feb. 22, 2021, on strong expectations, but rapidly fell starting in March 2021 and remain just above \$2.

Frequency Therapeutics had a net loss of \$64.2 million for the nine months ended Sept. 30. Such losses are typical for startup companies without a product on the market, analysts said.

Almost 25% of its shares are held by institutions, led by The Vanguard Group with 5% and Blackrock with 4.2%, according to Yahoo Finance.

As noted in its corporate profile, the company has a license and collaboration agreement with Astellas Pharma for development and commercialization of FX-322, as well as collaboration and licensing agreements with Massachusetts Eye and Ear, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, The Scripps Research Institute and Cambridge Enterprises.

With investors concerned about the viability of FX-322, the company faced potential funding challenges, but its executives said they remained confident in the technology.

"We weren't going to let one problem with study design throw off the promise of a drug that's got so much potential to help a lot of people," Franck said.

Frequency Therapeutics is the midst of new Phase 2 trials for individuals with noise-induced hearing loss and other forms of sudden deafness, with results expected in the first quarter of next year, according to a news release.

## Humans Have Been Bonding With Cats for Thousands of Years



LONDON (Dispatches) - That special link you may have with a purring, four-legged friend has been going on between the species for millennia, new research shows.

The human-cat relationship was probably forged over a shared interest in rats more than 10,000 years ago, investigators say. As farming became a way of life, cats served as ancient pest control, killing rodents and making a bond with people that continues to this day.

For the study, the researchers from the University of Missouri studied these relationships using DNA, finding that rodents were the catalyst for the bond that led humans to bring cats with them on their travels.

The research team collected and analyzed DNA from cats in and around the Fertile Crescent, the area of the Middle East surrounding the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, where humans first switched from hunter-gatherers to farmers.

The team also studied cat DNA throughout Europe, Asia and Africa, comparing nearly 200 different genetic markers.

"One of the DNA main markers we studied were microsatellites, which mutate very quickly and give us clues about recent cat populations and breed developments over the past few hundred years," said Leslie Lyons. She is a feline geneticist and professor of comparative medicine in the university's College of Veterinary Medicine.

"Another key DNA marker we examined were single nucleotide polymorphisms, which are single-based changes all throughout the genome that give us clues about their ancient history several thousands of years ago," Lyons added in a university news release. "By studying and comparing both markers, we can start to piece together the evolutionary story of cats."

Lyons said the study strongly supports the theory that cats were likely first domesticated only in the Fertile Crescent before migrating with humans all over the world.

After feline genes were passed down to kittens throughout generations, the genetic makeup of cats in western Europe is now far different from cats in southeast Asia, a process known as "isolation by distance."

"We can actually refer to cats as semi-domesticated, because if we turned them loose into the wild, they would likely still hunt vermin and be able to survive and mate on their own due to their natural behaviors," Lyons said. "Unlike dogs and other domesticated animals, we haven't really changed the behaviors of cats that much during the domestication process, so cats once again prove to be a special animal."

Studies like this support Lyons' broader research goal of using cats as a biomedical model to study genetic diseases that impact both cats and people. This includes polycystic kidney disease, blindness and dwarfism.

"Comparative genetics and precision medicine play key roles in the 'One Health' concept, which means anything we can do to study the causes of genetic diseases in cats or how to treat their ailments can be useful for one day treating humans with the same diseases," Lyons said.

Lyons has worked for many years to develop comprehensive feline DNA databases, including genome sequencing from cats all around the world.

Along with colleagues, Lyons in 2021 found that the cat's genomic structure is more similar to humans than nearly any other non-primate mammal.



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## Iraq Produces 300,000 bpd From Maysan Oilfields

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - The Iraqi Ministry of Oil announced on Friday that the oil production capacity from oilfields in Maysan governorate reached 300 thousand barrels per day, according to the Iraqi News Agency (INA). The Ministry of Oil mentioned in a statement that this achievement is an important addition, especially as it comes in light of exceptional circumstances, economic and health challenges, and many crises facing oil production in the world. The ministry clarified that it is interested in investing in associated gas – a form of natural gas found with deposits of petroleum, either dissolved in the oil or as a free gas cap above the oil in the reservoir – with an average ranging between 250-300 million standard cubic feet per day.



## India Shows Higher Resilience to Global Shocks

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's economy grew at 6.3 per cent in September quarter of 2022-23 as compared to 13.5 per cent in the preceding June quarter, mainly on account of contraction in output of manufacturing and mining sectors.

India's economy grew at 6.3 per cent in September quarter of 2022-23 as compared to 13.5 per cent in the preceding June quarter, mainly on account of contraction in output of manufacturing and mining sectors.

The World Bank has revised upwards India's economic growth forecast from 6.5 per cent for India to 6.9 per cent for 2022-23, saying the world's fifth largest economy was showing higher resilience to global shocks.

In the first upgrade of India's growth forecast by an international agency amid the global turmoil, the World Bank said in its latest India Development Update that the revision was due to higher resilience of the Indian economy to global shocks and better-than-expected second quarter numbers.

The upward revision comes as a breather since the World Bank had been lowering India's financial year 2022-23 growth forecast in its World Economic Outlook report since the last three times.

India grew 13.5 per cent in the first quarter of 2022-23, overtaking the UK to become the fifth-largest economy in the world. Multiple international bodies have studied the prospect of India's economy growing steadily over the next year. Earlier, the October edition of the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook also projected India's GDP growth for 2022-23 and 2023-24 at 6.8 per cent and 6.1 per cent, respectively.

In October, the World Bank had slashed India's GDP forecast by one percentage point to 6.5 per cent from its June estimate of 7.5 per cent, citing the impact of ongoing war in Ukraine, rising global interest rates and high inflation.

India's economy grew at 6.3 per cent in September quarter of 2022-23 as compared to 13.5 per cent in the preceding June quarter, mainly on account of contraction in output of manufacturing and mining sectors.

The report, titled "Navigating the Storm," stated that while India's growth prospects will be affected by the deteriorating external environment, the country's economy is better positioned than most other emerging markets to withstand global spillovers.

Amid existing global challenges like tightening monetary policy cycle, slowing growth and elevated commodity prices, the Indian economy will experience lower growth in the 2022-23 financial year compared to 2021-22. However, the Washington-based bank reiterated that despite such challenges, India will register a strong GDP growth and remain one of the fastest growing major economies in the world, due to robust domestic demand.

## Saudi Minister Sees No Clear Results Yet From Russia Price Cap

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi energy minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said the impact of European sanctions on Russian crude oil and price cap measures "did not bring clear results yet" and its implementation was still unclear.

The Group of 7 price cap on Russian seaborne oil came into effect December 5 as the West tries to limit Moscow's ability to finance its war in the Ukraine.

Russia has said it would not abide by the measure even if it has to cut its production.

"What is happening now in terms of sanctions and price caps imposed and all of it really did not bring clear results, including measures implemented on Dec. 5, we see a state of uncertainty in implementation," Prince Abdulaziz told a forum held following the country's 2023 budget announcements in Riyadh.

Prince Abdulaziz said Russia's reaction and what actions it would take in response to these tools was another aspect that needed to be taken into consideration when looking at the state of play in global markets.

"These tools were created for political purposes and it is not clear yet whether they can achieve these political purposes," he said, referring to the price cap.

Other factors affecting the market going into 2023 include China's COVID-19 policies. The impact on China's economy from easing Covid restrictions still "needs time", he said.

Central banks actions to tame inflation were also still a factor.

"Central banks are still preoccupied with managing inflation, no matter the cost of these measures and their possible negative impact on global economic growth."

The OPEC+ alliance decision to cut production by two million barrels per day on October 5 was proven to be the correct one when recent developments are taken into consideration, he said.

The alliance, which groups together members of The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia, last met on December 4 and decided to keep output unchanged amid a weakening economy and uncertainty over how the Russian price cap would affect the market.

Prince Abdulaziz said the alliance would continue to focus on market stability in the year ahead.

He also said he insisted that every OPEC+ alliance member take part in decision-making.

## China Could Export Record-High Fuel Volumes This Month

LONDON (Dispatches) - Looking to take advantage of export demand and refining margins to offset weak domestic consumption, Chinese refiners could export a record-high volume of transportation fuels this month as they also seek to use up the export quotas allocated by the government.

Chinese exports of gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel could reach in December between 6.5 million tons to 7.1 million tons, according to oil research and consultancy firms and trading sources quoted by Reuters.

Diesel exports are expected to lead what could be a record volume of fuel exports, with an estimated 3 million tons of possible exports this month, according to analysts.

The current record for Chinese diesel exports – at 2.83 million tons – was in March 2020, just before the crash in global oil demand at the start of the pandemic.

Even with the U-turn in the Covid policy in China, domestic fuel demand is not expected to rebound immediately, market participants told Reuters.

So refiners, with enough quotas, will look to export more fuels in the coming weeks.

Despite lukewarm domestic demand, Chinese refiners are boosting production and exports to profit from high diesel margins in a very tight global market. The refiners now have the biggest batch of fuel export quotas issued for this year by authorities. China allocated 15 million tons of new fuel export quotas to its major refiners at the end of September, and the quota could be rolled over into early next year.

## Thailand Hits 10m Visitors in 2022 as Tourism Recovers

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Thailand celebrated the arrival of its 10 millionth international visitor of 2022 on Saturday, according to the tourism authority, as the kingdom consolidated the recovery of its Covid-battered travel sector.

Thailand welcomed some 40 million people in 2019, but then the pandemic hit and travel was decimated as nations tightened border controls to contain the coronavirus.

With those restrictions easing worldwide Thailand's travel numbers have begun a slow recovery and the government expects to generate nearly \$16 billion in tourism revenue this year.

Traditional dancers and drummers at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi International Airport on Saturday welcomed passengers arriving on a Saudi Arabian Airlines flight that authorities believe clocked the 10-million milestone.

"The sky is open," Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha said in a speech at the airport.

"We would like to build confidence that Thailand is still one of the (top) tourist destinations of people around the world."

Finance minister Arkhom Termpittayapaisith said this week that visitor numbers were expected to grow next year too.

Government figures suggest Thailand would welcome roughly 23 million tourists in 2023, while some analysts believe a full recovery in tourist numbers could happen in 2024.

Thai hotel owners and restaurateurs have breathed a sigh of relief as business has slowly picked up.

Marisa Sukosol, president of the Thai Hotels Association, welcomed the 10 million travellers milestone "after two years and a half of pain".

"I think next year we will see continuous momentum of growth," she said, pointing to the return of tourists from Russia and across the Asia-Pacific region.

But she cautioned against over-optimism – economic stagnation as well as lingering pandemic threats continue to impact the tourism sector.

While Thailand has benefited from the loosening of travel restrictions by other nations, its tourism industry has also been affected by the global economic slowdown and persistent inflation.

Recovery in the tourism sector is also heavily dependent on China relaxing international travel rules, Thai officials have said.

China was previously the biggest source of foreign tourists for Thailand.

## Odesa Grain Traders Don't Plan To Suspend Grain Exports

KYIV (Dispatches) - The Ukrainian port of Odesa was not operating after the latest Russian attack on the region's energy system, Agriculture Minister Mykola Solsky said, but added that grains traders were not expected to suspend exports.

Two other ports - Chornomorsk and Pivdennyi - authorised to export grains from Ukraine under a deal between Russia and Ukraine were partially operating, he said.

"Chornomorsk port is now operating at about 80% of capacity," Solsky told Reuters in a phone call.

More than 1.5 million people in the southern Odesa region were without power after Russian drone strikes hit two energy facilities, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said in a video address late on Saturday.

Solsky said that Odesa port was not operating at the moment because the power generators had not been switched on yet. Grains traders continued to ship grains via the two other ports, he said.

"There are problems, but none of the traders are talking about any suspension of shipments. Ports use alternative energy sources," Solsky said.

Since October, Moscow has been targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure with large waves of missile and drone strikes.

Odesa regional authorities said electricity for the city's population will be restored "in the coming days," while complete restoration of the networks may take two to three months.

Ukraine is among the world's largest producers and exporters of corn and wheat but its exports have fallen significantly due to the Russian invasion.

After an almost six-month blockade caused by the invasion, the three Black Sea ports in the Odesa region were unblocked at the end of July under the deal between Moscow and Kyiv brokered by the United Nations and Turkey.

Kyiv had separately sought to have the agreement expanded to include more ports, but that has not been concluded so far.

The three ports involved in the deal - Odesa, Chornomorsk and Pivdennyi - have the combined capacity to ship around three million tons of grains a month.

Ukraine wanted to include the ports of the southern Mykolaiv region, which shipped 35% of Ukrainian food exports before Russia's invasion.

Mykolaiv was Ukraine's second-largest grain terminal according to 2021 shipment data, so its addition would allow for a much larger volume of grains and oilseeds to be exported.

Grain exports from Ukraine in the first eight days of December fell 47.6% from a year earlier to 1.09 million tons, agriculture ministry data showed.

## As Pakistan's Forex Reserves Dwindle A Dollar Black Market Emerges



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - To safeguard the country's dwindling reserves, Pakistan's central bank recently placed restrictions on access to foreign currency. This as per recent reports has resulted in the emergence of a black market for dollars.

Pakistan's foreign reserves have reportedly plunged to a four-year low of \$6.7 billion.

As per Bloomberg, on the surface, this hasn't impacted the exchange rates, but once you delve deeper you come face to face with the reality.

The markets still have the current exchange rates on display but the money-changing firm reports that they have no dollars. However, if you're prepared to pay 10 per cent more than the going rate, you can get a greenback.

According to Asmat Ullah, CEO of Lahore-based money exchange company Ravi Exchange Company, "a third market has now developed", with the interbank foreign currency market and money-changing businesses being the first two.

As the chief executive of Karachi-based financial firm Alpha Beta Core Solutions, Khurram Schehzad, puts it whenever restrictive measures are implemented, "the grey economy picks up".

With the alleged black market, Pakistan joins other developing nations like Nigeria, Argentina, and Lebanon that have experienced parallel exchange rates.

While a 10 per cent premium may not seem like much, the black market's formation could force the conventional authorities to relinquish control of the foreign exchange, which would hurt foreign investment and the business climate. Additionally, the dollar premium on the black market may indicate further rupee depreciation in the future.





## UK Claims on Tehran-Moscow Military Cooperation Unacceptable

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Russian embassy in London has ruled out claims made by the UK on delivery of Iran-made weapons to Russia, describing London's policy as in line with the United States agenda. The embassy issued a statement, dismissing accusations leveled by Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Affairs of the United Kingdom James Cleverly.

The British side is well aware that the allegations about military cooperation are shameful and far from mind, the statement underlined. "We categorically reject recent comments by UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, who, following in the footsteps of US representatives, accused the Russian Federation and Iran of some 'sordid' deals in the context of the Ukrainian crisis," it read.



## Soaring Current Account Surplus Fails To Cover Up Cracks in Russian Economy

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's current account surplus more than doubled year-on-year to \$225.7 billion in January-November from \$108.6 billion, the central bank said, giving much-needed fiscal wriggle room as the country's economy heads into 2023 on shaky ground.

This year, Russia is on track to post a record high current account surplus after its imports of goods and services fell due to Western sanctions while globally high commodity prices boosted its export revenues.

Exports rather than import compression are responsible for the majority of the rise, the Institute of International Finance has said.

Following a sharp reduction, imports are gradually recovering, the central bank said. As an oil price cap and export embargo kick in, the surplus will likely decline in 2023.

That drop could put further strain on Russia's economy, already saddled with subdued consumer demand, falling disposable incomes and the impact of President Vladimir Putin's partial mobilisation order on workforce numbers.

The government this week voiced concerns that labour shortages across the country could undermine any chance of Russia mounting a sustained economic recovery in the months ahead.

"The factor that will significantly and radically worsen the situation next year is mobilisation," Evgeniy Nadorshin, chief economist at PF Capital, said at a debt market conference.

Russia's economy is doomed to see a fall in productivity, with consumption and investments also expected to drop, Nadorshin said, predicting a 5-10% economic contraction in 2023.

"We are dealing at best with the second toughest crisis in the 21st century," he added. "Domestic consumption and GDP are being set back by 10 years or more and I don't see any prospects for growth after the recession ends."



Officials and analysts have been gradually improving GDP forecasts for 2022, suggesting that restrictions imposed against Moscow over its actions in Ukraine will lead to a less sudden, but more prolonged contraction than first expected.

Alfa Bank economists this month estimated the GDP decline at 6.5% next year, anticipating falls in demand and investment. The economy ministry forecasts a 0.8% contraction.

## Expanding Economic Ties...

FROM PAGE 1

Undoubtedly, the accession of seven new countries in 1992 is considered an important milestone in the history of the Organization, he said, adding that ECO has a special position for the Islamic Republic of Iran as one of the founding countries of the Organization.

Deepening and expanding economic cooperation with neighbors, countries in the region and Asian countries is one of the priorities of economic diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Amirabdollahian emphasized.

"Multilateral and regional organizations such as ECO enjoy an important role in [the implementation of] this strategy," he added.

"Deepening and expanding economic cooperation with neighbors, the regional countries, and Asian countries is among the priorities of the Iranian government's diplomacy," the top diplomat said in Tehran.

Amirabdollahian was addressing the 30th anniversary of expansion of the intergovernmental Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in 1992, which saw the body being joined by Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

"Multilateral and regional organizations such as ECO enjoy an important role in [the implementation of] this strategy," he added.

Iran seizes upon whatever opportunity it can to "reinforce convergence" within the organization, the minister noted.

"Fortunately, there is consensus among all of ECO's member states about the organization's active and passive capacities for economic cooperation and convergence," Amirabdollahian noted, calling the capacities "commendable, remarkable, and effective."

The Tehran-headquartered ECO was established by the Islamic Republic, Pakistan, and Turkey in 1985.

The main purpose of the organization is to promote economic, technical, and cultural cooperation among the member states.

Amirabdollahian noted that the member countries' economies performed synergistically concerning energy resources, skillful workforce, transportation networks, and food security as well as technological and innovative collaboration.

"This, together with common cultural, religious, and civilizational roots," he added, "has led to an increasingly brighter outlook for cooperation" among the organization's constituents.

## Active Users Surge On Iranian Social Media Platforms

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The number of active users on Iranian social media platforms has increased significantly thanks to support schemes introduced by the government and after bans were imposed on two U.S.-based networks over their role in fomenting street riots in the country.

In a post on Sunday, Iran's telecoms minister Issa Zarepour updated figures on the number of active daily and monthly users on four main domestic social media platforms.

The figures showed that daily active users on Rubika, a platform largely owned by Iran's first mobile operator MCI, had reached 15.2 million. The application's active monthly users had reached 35 million, said Zarepour.

He said that active daily and monthly users of Eitaa, a privately-owned social media company, had topped 9.2 million and 15.2 million, respectively.

The figures posted by the minister showed that some 3.3 million people were using Bele, a social media and payment platform operated by Iran's Bank Melli. The number of active monthly users on Bele reached 9.8 million on December 11, according to the same figures.

Soroush Plus was the fourth largest domestic social media platform in Iran in early December with 3.5 million active daily users and some 8.1 million active monthly users, said Zarepour.

The figures come more than two months after Iran imposed restrictions on access to Instagram and WhatsApp after they were blamed for the spread of riots across the country.

Zarepour unveiled a package of support measures for domestic internet businesses on November 1 after he announced that the government would provide funding for Iranian social media platforms to help them compete with foreign rivals.

## Nearly 10% of Marine Life Threatened With Extinction

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The effects of human activity from climate change to pollution are "devastating" marine life, with nearly a tenth of underwater plants and animals assessed so far threatened with extinction, the latest Red List of Threatened Species showed on Friday.

The report's release coincides with a UN summit on nature in Montreal where the UN chief Antonio Guterres has urged countries to end an "orgy of destruction" and pass a deal to halt and reverse habitat loss.

More than 1,550 of some 17,903 marine plants and animals assessed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature are at risk of extinction, according to the latest list which acts as a barometer of biodiversity and is published several times a year.

"It shows that we are having quite a devastating impact on marine species," Craig Hilton-Taylor, head of the IUCN Red List, told Reuters.

"Underwater, you can't really see what's going on. And so by assessing the status of the species it gives us a real indicator

of what is really happening there, and it's not good news."

Hilton-Taylor said the portion of marine species facing extinction was likely much higher than current data shows because those analysed so far have tended to be widespread fish species, not currently under threat.

Populations of the dugong, a plump, grey herbivorous mammal commonly known as the sea cow, have fallen to fewer than 250 adults in east Africa and fewer than 900 in the French territory of New Caledonia, the IUCN said.

Among the threats they face are the loss of their main food source, seagrass, due to oil and gas exploration and production in the case of Mozambique and pollution from nickel mining in the Pacific.

The latest list reviews abalone species, a type of mollusc sold as a luxury seafood item, for the first time and found that around 44 per cent of them face extinction. Increasingly severe and frequent marine heat waves have caused mass mortalities, by stoking disease and killing their food sources, IUCN says.

## Iran Sanctions...

FROM PAGE 1

In the statement, it is stated: "The Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Republic of Iran, according to the approvals of the relevant authorities, within the framework of the relevant rules and sanctions mechanisms and as a reciprocal action under sanctions the following institutions and persons in the European Union due to their deliberate actions in support of terrorism and terrorist groups, promotion and incitement to terrorism, violence, and spreading hatred, which have caused disturbances, violence, terrorist acts, and human rights violations against the Iranian nation."

### The following institutions are subject to sanctions:

- 1-Radio Farda (Persian section of Radio Free Europe)
- 2-Zamane Radio
- 3- Charlie Hebdo magazine
- 4- Water Engineering Trading GmbH (W.E.T.), participated in the production of chemical weapons used by the Saddam regime during the imposed war against the Iranian nation.
- 5- Gidlemeister Projekta GmbH, participation in the production of chemical weapons used by the Saddam regime during the imposed war against the Iranian people.

### The following persons are subject to sanctions:

- 1) Michael Trautermann, liaison commander of the German Air Force and Ramstein Air Base;
- 2) Colonel Holger Kunkel, commander of the German forces in Iraq;
- 3) Eric David, lawyer of the MKO terrorist group in Camp Ashraf and Liberty and the European Court of Justice;
- 4) Bernard Kouchner, French politician, and diplomat;
- 5) Hannah Neumann, Member of the European Parliament;
- 6) Rita Sussmuth, former Speaker of the German Parliament;
- 7) Claudia Roth, former vice president of the German Parliament;
- 8) Volker Beck, a former member of the German Parliament;
- 9) Norbert Lammert, a former member of the German Parliament;
- 10) Kramp Karrenbauer, former defense minister of Germany.

The mentioned sanctions include the ban on issuing visas and the impossibility of entering the above-mentioned persons into the Islamic Republic of Iran and the confiscation of their property and assets in the territory under the jurisdiction of the Islamic Republic of Iran. All institutions of the Islamic Republic of Iran, according to the approvals of the relevant authorities, will take the necessary measures to implement these sanctions.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, recalling the obligations of the European Union and the respective governments of the above persons and institutions, considers the support, facilitation, and failure to deal with the actions of these persons and institutions to be a violation of the international obligations of the European Union and the member states, and considers them responsible and accountable.

## Omega-3s, Folic Acid, CoQ10 Benefit Heart

LONDON (Dispatches) - Instead of singling out vitamins and minerals that may help heart health, researchers hope their comprehensive review of many studies will pave the way for clinical trials to identify the best mix of micronutrients to supplement people's diets -- since not all are beneficial and some, like beta carotene, may cause harm.

That's the gist of a major analysis, published Monday in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, by researchers from the United States and China.

Scientists said they developed "evidence-based maps" from summarizing 256 meta-analyses of randomized, controlled trials on micronutrients taken as dietary supplements.

These studies explored the effects of a wide variety of micronutrients on blood pressure, blood lipids, blood glucose, deaths from any cause, cardiovascular disease risks, and Type 2 diabetes risk.

After examining 27 different types of antioxidant supplements from 884 studies, involving 800,000-plus patients, the researchers said they found strong evidence that several offered cardiovascular benefit.

## No One Allowed to...

FROM PAGE 1

We reject once again the contents of the statement regarding the issues related to Iran's nuclear program... Iran emphasizes once again regional endogenous security based on compliance with international norms and non-interference of foreigners in regional affairs," Kanaani said.

"Once again, we emphasize that the Persian Gulf Trio islands are an integral and eternal part of Iran. We consider any claim about these islands as an interference in the internal affairs and territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We condemn such claims from any side," the spokesman underlined.

He went on to say, "We adhere to the neighborhood policy based on cooperation and common interests and we support any initiative in regional issues. We condemn and do not accept interference in Iran's internal affairs, and we will not allow anyone to interfere in Iran's internal affairs and comment on Iran's territorial integrity. Simultaneously, we will stick to regional cooperation based on principles and common interests, as well as neighborhood policy, and we will continue our efforts in this direction."

In response to a question about the anti-Iran measures taken by some Western countries in imposing sanctions against Iran following the recent riots in the country, Kanaani said, "We do not accept any intervention and meddling actions in the internal affairs of the country and consider such actions as unconstructive and contradictory to the United Nations Charter and international regulations and mechanisms."

Stating that countries do not have the right to interfere in the internal affairs of other independent countries, he added, "The Islamic Republic of Iran is rightful to react and take countermeasures, and it will use its recognized rights in the diplomatic field in this regard."

"Today, we will announce the list of new sanctions against some European Union and the UK institutions and figures," he noted.

In response to the accusations regarding Iran sending military equipment to Russia to use in the Ukrainian conflict, the Iranian diplomat said, "The cooperation between Iran and Russia is based on common interests in various fields and the defense cooperation of the two countries is not against any third country."

"As we have said many times we did not provide weapons or military assistance to any side in this war, and we emphasize again that Iran has always tried and is ready to use its relations and capabilities to help the two countries to reach a political solution," Kanaani added. "Claims against Iran are politically motivated and are made by countries that send weapons to one side of the war."



## Thomas and Spieth Beat Tiger and McIlroy

MIAMI (Dispatches) - Americans Justin Thomas and Jordan Spieth dominated Tiger Woods and top-ranked Rory McIlroy for a 3&2 victory in The Match, a made-for-television night event. World number eight Thomas and 14th-ranked Spieth won three of the first four holes and combined for seven birdies in 10 holes to capture the 12-hole match-play exhibition at Pelican Golf Club in Belleair, Florida. "It was awesome," Spieth said. "What a cool experience. We got comfortable out there and made some birdies."

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## FIFA Opens Probe Over Argentina-Netherlands Match Incident

DOHA (Dispatches) - FIFA announced it had opening disciplinary procedures against Argentina and the Netherlands after a series of ugly incidents marred their bad-tempered World Cup quarter-final. A World Cup record 18 yellow cards were shown as Argentina defeated the Dutch 4-3 on penalties Friday after a 2-2 draw at Lusail Stadium. The game featured multiple mass confrontations and heated exchanges as the Dutch came back from two goals down to force extra time. The charges against the Argentina football federation relate to player and staff misconduct and "order and security at matches", FIFA said in a statement.

# Warriors Cool Off Red-Hot Celtics

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - The Golden State Warriors sent a strong signal that they won't give up their NBA crown without a fight, thumping the Boston Celtics 123-107 in an NBA Finals rematch.

While the Warriors have struggled to build momentum in their title defense this season, the Celtics have streaked to the best record in the league.

But Golden State, with 34 points from Klay Thompson and 32 from Stephen Curry, were more than a match for a Celtics team that came into San Francisco riding a three-game winning streak.

"We just played these guys in the NBA Finals — you want to send a message," said Golden State forward Draymond Green, who acknowledged the Warriors were also eager to end a two-game slide.

Thompson got going early, scoring 24 points in the first half. Curry, who connected on 12 of 21 shots from the field and had six of the Warriors' 13 three-pointers, said defense keyed the win.

"From the start we tried to defend without fouling, just make it tough for them," Curry said. Jaylen Brown scored 31 points and pulled down nine rebounds for Boston. Jayson Tatum added 18 points and Malcolm Brogdon chipped in 16 off the bench.

"They have so many great guys that can put the ball in the basket," Curry said. "Tatum and Brown have played amazingly high-level basketball all year."

"You've got to live with certain shots they take, but you try to make them work for it all night. "Offensively we moved the ball, Klay got going early, but our defense connected with our offense, which is great."

Curry downplayed the idea that the victory carried special significance.

"It got us above .500," he said of a win that pushed the Warriors' record to 14-13.

Elsewhere, the short-handed Brooklyn Nets — led by a career-high 33 points from Cam Thomas — edged the Indiana Pacers 136-133 in Indianapolis.

The star duo of Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving were just two of seven Nets absentees, but after trailing by nine with 7:14 to play Brooklyn's backups came through.

Veteran guard Patty Mills added 24 points,

Edmond Sumner scored 21 and Day'Ron Sharpe chipped in 20 as the Nets won their third straight. With their stars sidelined — Durant for knee injury management and Irving with a tight adductor — the Nets withstood 21 three-pointers from the Pacers.

Tyrese Haliburton scored 35 points to lead seven Indiana players in double figures. The Nets trailed 120-113 with 5:04 remaining, but escaped when Andrew Nembhard couldn't get his three-pointer to fall in the final second.

Los Angeles Clippers guard John Wall felt the love and — thanks to a strong performance from Paul George and last-minute heroics from Nicolas Batum — got the win in his return to Washington.

George scored 36 points and Batum drilled a go-ahead three-pointer with 23.8 seconds remaining as the Clippers beat the Wizards 114-107.

It was a homecoming for Wall, who went to Washington as the top draft pick in 2010 and played nine seasons with the Wizards.

He received a standing ovation when he was introduced before the game and was honored with a video tribute during an early timeout.

He'd been back once before while with Houston, but the Covid pandemic meant no fans were at the game.

In Chicago, DeMar DeRozan scored 28 points and grabbed nine rebounds to lead the Bulls to a 144-115 rout of the Dallas Mavericks, who were without NBA scoring leader Luka Doncic.

Denver's NBA Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic had a triple-double of 31 points, 12 rebounds and 14 assists in the Nuggets' 115-110 victory over the Utah Jazz.

San Antonio celebrated the 26th anniversary of Gregg Popovich's first game as coach of the Spurs with a 115-111 victory over the Heat in Miami.



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## Holdener Claims Women's Slalom

SESTRIERE (Dispatches) - Petra Vlhova's bid for a first World Cup win of the season continues after Wendy Holdener and Mikaela Shiffrin nudged her into third place in the slalom in Sestriere.

The Olympic champion in the discipline topped the leader board after the first run but it was the Swiss skier Holdener who came through strongest in the second run to take the win, her second of the season.

Following her victory in Killington two weeks ago and second place in one of the Levi slaloms at the start of the season, Holdener posted a combined time of 1 minute 56.29 seconds to finish 0.47 seconds ahead of Shiffrin.

The American -- four time world champion in the discipline and Olympic champion in 2014 -- moved up from third after the first run and now sits level with Holdener at the top of the discipline standings.

Shiffrin is 19 points clear of Holdener in the overall standings.

Sitting third in both discipline and overall standings is Vlhova who must be wondering what she needs to do to taste victory this season.

Having led at halfway in Saturday's giant slalom only to finish third, the Slovakian repeated the trick again.

She led Holdener by 0.24sec after the first run but ended 0.70sec behind the Swiss.

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## Braathen Wins Men's Opening World Cup Slalom

VAL-D'ISERE (Dispatches) - Norway's Lucas Braathen won the first men's World Cup slalom of the season at Val D'Isere as his compatriot and first leg leader Henrik Kristoffersen suffered a nightmare second run.

Braathen, 22, was second after the first leg but produced a fine second run to win in a combined time of 1 minute 38.14 seconds in what is the third World Cup victory of his career.

"One hell of a race," said Braathen. "La Face de Belval is always a challenge, it was such a tough battle."

"It was a feeling like nothing else (to win)," he added.

Austria's Manuel Feller finished second -- just as he did in Saturday's giant slalom -- 0.84sec in arrears and Loic Meillard was third 0.98sec adrift.

Kristoffersen's hopes of victory evaporated early in the second leg with a series of mistakes and finished down the field in sixth.

Braathen seemed surprised by his compatriot's blow-out though he always felt he had a chance of sneaking a win.

"He's (Kristoffersen) a great technical skier, on a very technical hill. But I knew it was possible to claim the victory," said Braathen.

Victory was also the perfect antidote for Braathen after Brazil's surprise elimination from the World Cup by Croatia on Friday -- he is half Brazilian.

"I don't feel crying, I feel smiling," he said.

"I cried enough that night. Glad I did some justice today in Val D'Isere!"

Two stars of the discipline did not even make it to the second leg.

France's Olympic champion Clement Noel and Austrian silver medallist Johannes Strolz, both straddled a gate on their first leg runs.

"I did not ski well," said Noel.

"It was not how I wished it to be. I am frustrated to begin the season like this."

As is his custom, runaway overall World Cup leader Marco Odermatt -- winner of Saturday's giant slalom -- did not race the slalom.

## Not Regret Leaving Ronaldo Out Against Morocco



in the last 16 where the 21-year-old Ramos scored three in only his fourth appearance. Ronaldo stormed off the pitch after the final whistle crying effusively while being comforted by his team mates.

DOHA (Dispatches) - Portugal manager Fernando Santos said that he would not change his decision of leaving Cristiano Ronaldo on the bench even after his team was knocked-out from the World Cup due to a 1-0 defeat against Morocco in their quarter-final clash.

Portugal's all-time leading goal scorer with 118 goals in 195 appearances, Ronaldo was benched for Tuesday's 6-1 win over Switzerland

Ronaldo stormed off the pitch after the final whistle crying effusively while being comforted by his team mates.

"I do not regret (leaving Ronaldo on the bench)," coach Santos told a news conference on Saturday.

"It wouldn't change anything, in terms of the team I can't be thinking with my heart. "I used the team that played really well against Switzerland and there was no reason to change it (against Morocco)."

"The strategic decision that I had to make was one of the hardest, but I can't think with my heart, I have to think with my head.

"It's not that Ronaldo is no longer a great player, that has nothing to do with it."

Morocco's Atlas Lions extended their dream run and roared into the history books by becoming the first-ever African and Arab country to reach the final four of the tournament thanks to a Youssef En-Nesyri goal in the first-half.

Santos refused to comment on whether he will resign and said that he will talk to the Portuguese FA president over the next week about his future.

## Kane Has To Live With Penalty Miss

AL KHOR (Dispatches) - England skipper Harry Kane said he will have to live with the penalty miss that condemned his team to a World Cup quarter-final exit against reigning champions France on Saturday.

The striker had drawn his side level in the Al Bayt Stadium with a successful spot kick that saw him match Wayne Rooney's record haul of 53 goals for England.

He then had the chance to make it 2-2 late on after Mason Mount was barged over by Theo Hernandez in the area but this time he blazed his effort high over the crossbar.

After the final whistle Kane dropped to his haunches and stared at the ground before walking tearfully away to be comforted by England manager Gareth Southgate.

"I'm not someone who thinks too much about it, I prepare the same whether I get one penalty or two penalties in a game," Kane told the BBC about facing his Tottenham Hotspur team mate Hugo Lloris from the spot for the second time.

"I can't fault my preparation or the detail before the game, it didn't feel any different. I felt confident taking it but didn't execute it the way I wanted to.

"Of course it's something I will have to live with and take on the chin. But all we can do is be proud of each other and know that the team is in a really good place for the future."



## Southgate Needs Time to Consider His Future

AL KHOR (Dispatches) - Gareth Southgate said he would take his time before he makes a decision over his future as England coach after the bitter disappointment of their World Cup quarter-final defeat against France.

Defending champions France won 2-1 at the Al Bayt Stadium, with England captain Harry Kane blazing over from the penalty spot when handed a chance to equalise late in the game, having earlier scored from the spot.

England reached the semi-finals of the World Cup in 2018 and the final of last year's European Championship but their long wait for a major trophy will now stretch beyond 56 years.

Southgate said he would now have to take stock.

"Whenever I've finished these tournaments I've needed time to make correct decisions because emotionally you go through so many different feelings and the energy that it takes through these tournaments is enormous so I want to make the right decision, whenever that is, for the team, for England, for the FA," he said in the early hours of Sunday.

"And I've got to be sure that whatever decision I make is the right one and I think it's right to take a bit of time to do that because I know in the past how my feelings have fluctuated in the immediate aftermath of tournaments."

