

**A Group of Iranian Women
Gathered in Front of the United
Nations Office in Tehran, Protesting
Against the Anti-Iranian Attempts
To Remove Iran From the United
Nations Commission of Women**

IRAN NEWS

**Britain on Tuesday Said It Had
Sanctioned 12 Russian Military
Commanders as Well as Iranian
Businessmen Involved in the Alleged
Production and Supply of Military
Drones Used in the Ukraine War**

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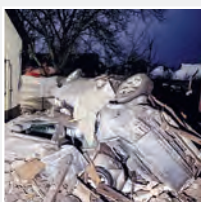


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Iran Slams Statement On Women's Access To Online Platforms

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's High Council for Human Rights has denounced a meddlesome and politically-motivated statement issued by the United States and eight other countries over Iranian women's access to online platforms, saying it is definitely "doomed to failure."

The rights council issued a statement on Tuesday in reaction to a joint statement that was released last Thursday by the governments of the United States, Australia, Canada, Chile, Iceland, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

"The political and instrumental approach of Western countries to human rights, including rights of women and girls, which only aims to exert pressure on independent countries, is doomed to failure," the council said.

It is a bitter irony that the US foreign secretary and some of his Western counterparts accuse Iran of violating the rights of women and girls in a meddlesome joint statement and with an insolent tone while claiming to defend and support women's rights, it added.

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Gas Swap With Russia Can Earn Iran at Least \$6b a Year

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran can make at least \$6 billion per year from a potential gas swap deal with Russia which would allow the country to consume gas imported from Russia in its north and deliver the same amount to other customer countries, according to figures by Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

IRENEX figures cited in a report by the official IRNA news agency showed that if Iran takes delivery of some 15% of Russia's surplus gas under a swap or import deal, the country could save up to \$6 billion per year on fuel supplied to power plants in its populous northern regions.

That could enable Iran to significantly ramp up its exports of fuels like gas oil and mazut, said the report by IRNA, adding that the projected income figure does not include transit fee revenues that could be earned by Iran in a swap deal with Russia.

It said that Iran has a capacity of importing some 3 billion cubic meters per year of natural gas from Russia through pipelines in Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.

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Tehran, Beijing Finalize MoUs To Implement 25-Year Deal



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran and China finalize 16 understandings between the two countries to implement their 25-year roadmap for strategic partnership, Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Ehsan Khandozi says.

"Executive measures in the field of oil and gas, banking, investment and strategic projects were put on the agenda to be approved in the next meeting of the presidents of the two countries in the new future," Fars news agency quoted him as saying Tuesday.

The agreements were reached during his meeting which vice premier of the People's Republic of China Hu Chunhua who is currently visiting the Islamic Republic.

"Given that the political and economic will of the two countries is to improve their capacities despite the international restrictions and sanctions pressures, we have seen a nearly 20% increase in trade and the outlook for 2023 is much higher than which is now," Khandozi said.

Iran and China have agreed to develop a 25-year roadmap for strategic partnership, with the idea first conceived in the 1990s.

According to economists, it represents "a potentially material shift to the global balance of the oil and gas sector" and could mark a "seismic shift in the global hydrocarbons sector" where no US dollars would be involved in commodity transaction payments.

Meanwhile in meeting with Chunhua, Iran's First Vice President emphasized the need to respect the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic as an inviolable principle.

Speaking at the Iran-China comprehensive cooperation meeting on Tuesday, Mohammad Mokhber described the relations between the two countries as long-standing and historical.

Tehran-Beijing relations have a high status for the leaders of the two countries, he said.

Mokhber considered the meeting between the presidents of Iran and China in Samarkand as a turning point in the relations between the two countries, appreciating the Chinese president for supporting Iran's presence in organizations such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS group (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa).

Iran and China have the same positions in confronting unilateralism, he said, adding that good and constructive negotiations are going on between the two countries regarding various issues.

Referring to Iran's oil and gas reserves and the vast capacities of Iran in various sectors such as transit, Mokhber said Tehran is ready to expand its cooperation with Beijing in various sectors such as energy, transit, and joint production.

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No Ban on Importing Car From China

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's industries ministry (MIMT) has denied media reports suggesting the country could ban imports of cars from China.

An MIMT statement issued on Monday said, however, that French companies will be kept out of the Iranian car market despite a decision to resume imports of finished cars into the country after nearly four years.

The statement came after some media reports claimed that Iran might decide to block car imports from China after Beijing and several Arab countries issued a communiqué at the end of a joint summit in Saudi Arabia last week that was not well received in Tehran.

It also came just a week before Iran is to take delivery of a first shipment of foreign-made cars four years after it banned imports to support local manufacturers.

The MIMT statement said that unlike French companies that decided to comply with US sanctions on Iran in 2018, car manufacturers from China have continued to cooperate with local partners over the past years.

It reiterated that Iran will maintain an outright ban on any car imports or joint manufacturing schemes involving French carmakers. France-based automotive companies Peugeot and Renault decided to leave the Iranian car market in 2018 under pressure from the US and despite being involved in major contracts with Iranian car manufacturers.

Iran Gets \$34b of Oil Revenue in 7 Months

TEHRAN (MNA) - U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) in a recent report has put Iran's oil revenues earned in the first seven months of 2022 at \$34 billion, only five billion less than Iran's total oil revenue in 2021.

Based on the EIA report, Iran's average monthly income from oil sales in January-July has been \$4.85 billion, 49 percent more than the average monthly income in the previous year which was \$3.25 billion.

Iran's oil revenue in the said seven months is twice the whole income in 2020, indicating that the impacts of the U.S. sanctions against Iran are weakening.

Iran earned \$17 billion in oil revenue in 2020 and \$39 billion in 2021, and according to EIA, the Islamic Republic's oil revenue will reach \$58 billion in 2022.

EIA has put the total oil income of 13 OPEC members in the mentioned months at \$500 billion.

Based on the report, OPEC's income in the first seven months of this year is only \$70 billion less than the \$570 billion recorded for this organization in the previous year. The members of the organization sold \$500 billion of oil in January-July 2022.

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Kiev Offers No Proof Over Iran's Drone Supply To Russia

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani says Ukrainian officials have failed to provide any evidence for their claim that Russia is using Iranian drones in its war on Ukraine.

Ashtiani made the remarks following a technical meeting between Ukrainian and Iranian specialists.

"The Ukrainian side did not present any evidence of Russia's use of Iranian drones in the war with this country at the technical meeting," he said.

He emphasized that claims about Russian forces' alleged use of Iranian-made drones in the war in Ukraine are not important because they are based on "baseless statements and rumors."

"Iran and Russia have had a long history of military cooperation which was in no way linked to the issue of Tehran's drone supply during Moscow's special operation in Kiev," Ashtiani added.

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

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EU Agrees New Iran Sanctions

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The European Union's foreign ministers have agreed to impose new sanctions on a number of Iranian individuals and entities over alleged crackdown on recent protests and drone deliveries to Russia for use in the Ukraine war.

According to a statement issued by the EU foreign ministers, 20 individuals along with one entity -- the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting -- have been sanctioned over alleged human rights abuses, while four more people and as many entities blacklisted over the issue of drones.

The bloc's new sanctions include asset freezes and a travel bans to the EU.

The ministers condemned what they called the "widespread" use of force by the Iranian authorities against protesters.

Foreign-backed riots have hit various Iranian provinces since 22-year-old woman Mahsa Amini died at the hospital on September 16, three days after she collapsed at a police station. An investigation has attributed Amini's death to her medical condition, rather than alleged beatings by the police.

The violent riots, meanwhile, have claimed the lives of dozens of people and security forces, while also allowing terrorist attacks across the country. In the last two months, the terrorists have set fire to public property and tortured several Basij members and security forces to death.

The new sanctions came after Iran imposed a round of sanctions on dozens of the EU and British officials and entities over their support and instigation of recent deadly riots in the country and their meddlesome statements about the Islamic Republic's internal developments and support for terror in Iran.

The EU foreign ministers also criticized Iran over claims of drone deliveries to Russia and alleged such weapons are being used by Russia against Ukrainian civilian population and infrastructure.

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

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Smuggling Issues Discussed At TCCIMA Meeting

TEHRAN (MNA) - The 28th meeting of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA)'s Business Environment Improvement Committee was held during which the negative impacts of smuggling on domestic production and business environment were discussed.

The attendees of the meeting stressed the need for paying attention to the needs in the market in order to prevent the expansion of smuggling, the TCCIMA portal reported.

They mentioned import bans and restrictions, price suppression, multiple forex rates, and the weak competitiveness of domestic products as the major reasons for the increase in smuggling into the country.

Speaking at the gathering, Mohammadreza Najafimanesh, the head of the committee, said the major approach of the country's anti-smuggling headquarters regarding the smuggling phenomenon has been penalizing and this is not an appropriate way for resolving the issue.

No Ship Can Exit Persian Gulf If Hormuz Strait Closure Occurs

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy Rear Admiral Ali Reza Tangsiri warned against the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, saying if it occurs, Islamic Republic will not let any ships leave the Persian Gulf.

“We’ve not been and are not after closing the Strait of Hormuz,” but if they shut the Strait down, no ships would be allowed to exit the Persian Gulf, the IRGC Navy commander announced.

During the Iraqi imposed war against Iran in 1980-88, 530 Iranian vessels were attacked and the Iranian forces assaulted their 130 ships in a reciprocal measure; then the United States entered the imposed war directly, so “we also attacked two American helicopters and one vessel,” the commander underlined.

Tangsiri went on to say that Iran has missiles that the enemy cannot even think of.

He noted that the Americans have to sail through the courses that Iran has defined in the Persian Gulf.

When it comes to defense and security issues, the Islamic Republic of Iran does not need foreigners, because the Iranians have stood on their own feet, Tangsiri said.

Today, the Iranian military forces have stood firm against the enemy, he said, adding that they will sacrifice their lives to protect the flag of the Islamic Republic.

Equipment and weapons put on display at the drills are not like those to be used in real operations.

He added that extra-regional countries will seize Iran's three Persian Gulf islands, to



which Arab regimes lay claim, only over the dead body of the country's Armed Forces.

Tangsiri said the Iranian Armed Forces would never allow the enemies to take away the Iranian territories that the nation's ancestors preserved.

He was reacting to a hostile statement issued jointly by the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and China, which reiterates a territorial claim to three Iranian islands, namely Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb and the Lesser Tunb.

The commander pointed to historical documents confirming Iran's sovereignty over the islands.

“In old maps in ancient languages, the Persian Gulf has always been called by the same name. Of course, the Arabs who have no enmity with us call this region the Gulf, but those who are hostile to us call it the ‘Arabian’ Gulf, while in all the maps it is called the Persian Gulf,” he explained.

“Extra-regional enemies in the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean can lay their hands on our country over my dead body and the dead bodies of my comrades. Of course, the enemy knows that it is incapable of defeating us,” Tangsiri said.

Iranian officials have sharply condemned the statement issued by the GCC and China.

Iran Probes Role of London-Based TV Channels in Riots

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran has kicked off investigating the role of London-based TV channels in instigating riots in the country, an official said.

Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi said that a court of justice in the capital of Iran has filed a lawsuit to probe into the role of London-based TV channels [Iran International TV and BBC Persian] in instigating riots in the country.

Further details on the influence of the TV channels in the riots will be released later, he noted.

Riots broke out in Iran in mid-September after the death of Mahsa Amini. The 22-year-old fainted at a police station in Tehran and was pronounced dead three days later in a hospital.

Rioters went on rampage across the country, brutally attacking security officers and causing massive damage to public property as Western powers, especially the United States, provided support.

Funded by Saudi Arabia, the so-called ‘Iran International TV’ channel was founded in London in 2017 as part of a propaganda campaign against the Iranian government. Recently, Tehran designated the channel as a terror organization over its role in fanning the flames of violence during riots in Iran.

China Not to Renege On Its Promises to Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – “I do not think that China will renege on its commitments in joint contracts with Iran,” said Ali Nikzad, the deputy parliament speaker of Iran.

What matters to us is China's abidance in its agreements with Iran and adherence to the principles and territorial integrity of our country,” Ali Nikzad said.

Nikzad added that “We will definitely not compromise with anyone on our national interests and territorial integrity.”

The deputy parliament speaker was referring to the recent statement by the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) with the presence of China's President during the recent visit of the President of China to Saudi Arabia.

In relevant remarks, the Iranian foreign minister Hossein Amirabdollahian reiterated in a tweet in the Chinese language on Monday that Iran will definitely not compromise with anyone on its territorial integrity.

Industry Minister Gets Second Yellow Card From Majlis

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade failed to convince parliament members with his remarks on the increase in car prices by car manufacturers.

Majlis gave its fifth yellow card in the 13th government to the Minister of Industry. Four main factors affect car price, the most important of which is supply and demand.

According to Reza Fatemi Amin, the supply is affected by the production and import of cars, and the demand is unfortunately affected by foreign exchange rates.

He added: We have to create a balance between supply and demand in the market, and the more the balance is created, the less the market fluctuates.

Fatemi Amin also announced that the country is about to import cars and next week, the first cars made in other countries will be imported.

Syria Stresses Bolstering Parliamentary Relations With Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – Referring to deep-rooted relations between Syria and Iran, the Speaker of the People's Assembly of Syria stressed the importance of exchanging experiences between the Iranian and Syrian parliaments.

Hammoudeh Sabbagh's remarks came in his meeting with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Consular Affairs, Alireza Bigdeli on Monday, and the accompanying delegation, SANA reported.

Sabbagh underlined the necessity of developing and bolstering parliamentary relations between the Syrian People's Assembly and the Iranian Shura Council.

He also spotlighted the importance of exchanging experiences between the two sides to achieve more coordination, improve joint parliamentary work and continue to unify the common position of the two countries, and support each other at international and regional forums and conferences.

For his part, Bigdeli affirmed that the relations between the two countries are strong and built on a solid basis.

He added that his visit to Syria includes coordination with various institutions to facilitate the means of transportation for the nationals of the two countries, and this requires the two parliaments to work on taking joint steps and to benefit from the energies and capabilities of each other to achieve a better benefit in the future.

Iran, India FMs Stress Expansion of Bilateral Cooperation



TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian and Indian foreign ministers stressed the need to expand bilateral cooperation between the two countries in various fields.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and his Indian counterpart, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, held a phone talk on Monday night on some regional and international issues as well as bilateral relations between the two countries.

The two foreign ministers stressed the need to expand bilateral cooperation between Iran and India in various fields.

Amirabdollahian emphasized the need to pursue bilateral agreements to further develop relations between Tehran and New Delhi.

Referring to the good relations and cooperation between the two countries, the Indian foreign minister also expressed his views on bilateral and international cooperation between Tehran and New Delhi.

KAA Active Beyond Borders

TEHRAN (IP) - The Commander of Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters (KAA) stated that Iran is active in Iraq with some technical and engineering services being carried out in Syria.

Brigadier-General Hosein Housh Sadat attended a press conference on Tuesday on the sidelines of the opening of a Control Center to monitor the construction project.

Hossein Housh Sadat told reporters: We are providing technical and engineering services in Venezuela, and negotiations are underway for the implementation of oil projects in the country.

He noted that Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters started to build South Pars Gas Field and the project was successfully concluded, adding that right now, 70% of the country's gas condensates are supplied from the field.

Referring to the construction of the Persian Gulf Star Refinery, south of Iran by KAA, he added: 23% of diesel and 40% of gasoline in the country is supplied through this refinery.

Meanwhile on the sidelines of the presser, the Control Center of the Khatam Anbiya Construction Headquarters opened a well and the CEO of the Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters's Communication Institute explained: “360-degree cameras with high zoom have been installed in 60 camp projects across the country, which, in addition to monitoring the projects, allow talking for consultation with the technical managers of the projects from the camp monitoring room at any moment.”

In the ceremony held on Tuesday, he stated that 40 more cameras are supposed to be installed in other projects of the camp, adding that the installations were done on the safe communication platform of the camp.

Since the installation of the cameras in the past year, the physical progress of the projects has increased by 47percent he added.

He said: Previously, cameras only were installed to protect the perimeter of the projects, but due to the special emphasis of the camp manager on the use of information technology and real-time monitoring of construction operations, now 60 projects have been equipped with real-time surveillance cameras.

Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters has participated in thousands of economic projects in the past three decades and currently has 325 projects worth 900 thousand billion toman under construction.

These projects include the construction of roads, railways, tunnels, underground structures, ports, and marine structures, and the construction of oil, gas, and water transmission lines.

One of the most important of the projects is the participation of the headquarters in the construction of the Persian Gulf Star Gas Refinery with 6,700 km of gas and oil lines.

Enemy to Be Defeated Through Reliance on People's Might

TEHRAN (MNA) - “Today the IRGC knows how to deal with the enemy in all fields,” the IRGC top commander said, adding that “We will defeat the enemy with awareness.”

The Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami made the remarks in the research week conference, which was held with the participation of a group of commanders and officials at the headquarters of the IRGC General Command in Tehran on Monday.

Major General Salami stated that the enemy is pursuing its sinister goals with planning and according to a strategy but said that “today the enemy's front has failed against the Islamic Revolution and the Iranian nation despite having numerous tools and media outlets because of Iran's might.”

He added, “Our Islamic system has grown too strong after experiencing numerous



events and incidents during the past four decades.”

Stating that today the IRGC knows how to treat with the enemy in all fields, the IRGC chief said, “At the current stage, all our enemies have come to the battlefield to defeat the Islamic Revolution, but despite having all the tools, they could do nothing against us. All the routes on land, air, and sea are closed to them.”

“Witnessing all the routes to invade the country are closed, the enemies have invaded the virtual space and minds and beliefs. We must thwart conspiracies with our knowledge of the enemy, awareness, and understanding of the tactics of psychological and media warfare used by the enemy.”

He further emphasized, “Our assets to fight against the enemies are the people, and the Revolutionary Guards are always the servants of the people as the main assets of the Islamic Revolution.”

11th Iran Int'l Airshow, Aerospace Exhibition Kicks Off

TEHRAN (MNA) – The 11th Iran International Airshow & Aerospace Exhibition kicked off in Kish Island of Iran on Tuesday.

Over 90 Iranian and foreign companies take part in the 11th Iran International Airshow & Aerospace Exhibition from

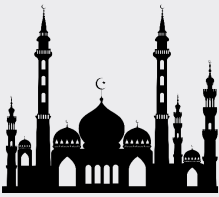
13 to 16 December 2022, in the Persian Gulf Kish Island.

Some 80 Iranian and 10 foreign firms from China, Russia, and Ethiopia are attending the four-day event, aiming at presenting aviation and aerospace industries' capabilities and introducing the latest aviation achievements and technologies.

The exposition also aims to utilize the opportunities in the domestic and international arenas to interact with Iranian and foreign

companies, displaying the potential of the aviation industry and knowledge-based companies.

The Kish Air Show also known as Persian Gulf Airshow is an aviation exhibition that is held biennially on Kish Island. The first edition of the exhibition was held in 2002, as 11 foreign companies from France, Russia, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, Germany, the Czech Republic, Italy, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Slovakia, and Switzerland took part in the expo.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)

■ Evening (Maghreb)

■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)

■ Tomorrow's Sunrise

11:59

17:12

05:36

07:06

72. They said: "Never shall we regard thee as more than the Clear Sings that have come to us, or than Him Who created us! so decree whatever thou desirest to decree: for thou canst only decree (touching) the life of this world.

73. "For us, we have believed in our Lord: may He forgive us our faults, and the magic to which thou didst compel us: for Allah is Best and Most Abiding."

Surah 20. Ta-ha (72 - 73)

China's Direct Investment In Iran "Insignificant"

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Investment and Consultancy Center of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (TCCIMA) says China has financed in several projects in Iran but its direct invest in Iran has been very insignificant because business and investment security in Iran is very low and countries do not tend to have direct investment in places where investment security has not been reinforced or its infrastructures are not prepared.

Speaking to ILNA, Ferial Mostofi said that China's trade agreement with the Persian Gulf littoral states is in line with their economic interests, adding that such commercial agreements between the countries are something normal and Iran should not expect China to stop deal with other countries.

She added that China and other countries pursue their national interests and restoring trade based on this policy and Iran should also pursue this logical trend but in Iran economy is sacrificed by politics while this has nothing with other countries.

Mostofi reiterated that with restricting economy and communications to one or some certain countries, the country cannot reach high economic growth or inclusive economic development. She noted that reliance on merely one country in the international relations is not logical and there is no doubt China like other countries will consider their own interests and pursue providing their own and their people's

needs and Iran should act in a way that China and other countries should depend on it because of their demands and needs.

She reiterated that in the political world amicable relation is meaningless, noting that bilateral ties should be win-win one and to the benefits of two or some involved countries.

Mostofi then touched upon oil sales to China and said that China does not buy Iran oil with normal prices common in the international markets, in other words, Iran sells its oil to China under the market price and one cannot blame China because Iran is under sanctions and it is in a special condition and it has to give more discounts to win competition with its rivals.

She reiterated that if Iran had normal condition, there was no need to give concessions to any country without getting concessions.

On Iran's share of China's trade, she said that China's economy is very big and it is incomparable with Iran, adding that China is the second economy in the world and its trade volume is amazing as its trade with the U.S. and Europe is over \$2,000b while its trade with Iran at the best has not exceeded \$50b and it is natural China to require many trade partners in any part of the world.

Mostofi added that before sanctions, the trade balance with China was positive in favor of Iran but now condition has changed because Iran's economy is single-product. She reiterated that in Iran, finance and investment are confused and people have the same concept on them but they are two different issues as China has financed in some projects in Iran but its direct investment has been insignificant because of low investment security in the country.

She went on to say that China's companies and traders do not risk their position for trade with Iran as the country is under the U.S. sanctions and even it is on the FATF black list and as long as Iran does not join the FATF, Chinese bank will do their best to minimize their cooperation with Iranians to avoid risk of U.S. punishment.

Int'l Bourse of FTZ Underlying Attraction of Forex Resources for Country

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The executive director of establishing international bourse of free trade zones of Iran says the launch of the bourse is considered a unique opportunity for implementing mechanisms for financial trans-regional cooperation and announced readiness of the big economic bodies of the country for participation in share-holding in this bourse.

Elham Sakhaee said that according the approval of the High Council of the Stock Exchange in September and its notification to the Securities Exchange Organization of Iran (SEO) in October, the move for establishment and operation of International Bourse of Free Trade Zones started and she predicted that according to the received applications, production, industrial and commercial holdings, banks, insurances, bourses and capital market bodies, free and special economic trade zones as well as investment and development organizations of the free zones are of the important founders of the international bourse in free trade zones.

She added that having good foreign exchange resources is of the main conditions for share-holding in the international bourse and pointed to the considerable demands after call for participation in establishing the international bourse and this approach of the applicants bespeaks of readiness and economic thirst of the country for entering the global economy in case of international openings.

Sakhaee then pointed to several meetings with private and state managers in the field of the capital market in the country for preparing mechanisms for this international bourse of the country and added that International Bourse of Free Trade Zones in full coordination with national bourses can play the role as the most important mechanism for attracting, providing and guaranteeing the forex resources for the foreign investment projects in the country. She reiterated that mechanism is one of the main pre-requisites for foreign investment participation.

She went on to say that one of the important functions of these international capital-financial institutions in the national economies is to guide international, regional and trans-regional investment companies with investment opportunities especially in the free and special economic zones as well as assuring foreign investors with supportive, incentive and guaranteed packages.

Sakhaee then pointed to the special geographical locations of free and special economic zones of Iran and their bordering with neighboring countries, adding that the launch of International Bourse of Free Trade Zones will play a key role for boosting cooperation and investment.

Iran Exports to Nigeria Grow 36% In 8 Months

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Deputy Head of the Iran-South Africa Merchants Club said that the country's export of products to Nigeria in the first eight months of the current year in 1401 registered a 36 percent growth.

Iran exported more than 195,000 tons of goods, valued at \$115.4 million, to Nigeria from March 21 to Nov. 22, showing a 36 percent hike as compared to the last year's corresponding period, Seyyed Rouhollah Latifi stated.

Nigeria is a lucrative market for Iranian businessmen and merchants both in terms of population and religion and culture, he added.

He pointed to the products imported into Nigeria last year in 2021 and noted that \$67.6 billion worth of products were imported into this African country in 2021, \$52.4 and \$15.2 billion of which related to the goods and technical-engineering services respectively.


Turning to Iran's export of products to Nigeria, Latifi stated that the country exported 266,000 tons of goods, valued at \$125.3 million, to Nigeria in 1400 (ended March 20, 2022), showing a 605 percent growth as compared to the same period of last year.

This is while Iran's export of products to Nigeria in the first eight months of the current year registered a 36 percent growth as compared to the last year's corresponding period, he added.

Iran, Qatar, Looking to Increase Transport, Trade Links

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's minister of roads and urban development Mehrdad Bazrpash and Qatar's Minister of Transport Jassim bin Saif bin Ahmed Al Sulaiti held meetings on Monday to discuss enhancing mutual transportation development. The two sides negotiated to expand cooperation in the sphere of transportation and agreed on the implementation of previously agreed documents between the two countries that had been signed off in February.



These include arrangements for Qatar to become a regional hub as part of the INSTC. Qatar is to the immediate south of Iran across the Persian Gulf, and has its own significant port infrastructure at Hamad, south of Doha. Hamad is capable of handling up to 7.8 million tons of products annually, while the bulk of trade passing through the port consists of food and building materials. That makes Hamad a key infrastructure development play as both agricultural and construction materials for project developments elsewhere in the region begin to get underway. Covering an area of 26km², the port has existing livestock, vehicle and general terminals, an offshore supply depot, a facility for the Qatari coast guards, and a grain facility. This makes Hamad a key consolidation point for merging goods and onward transit to other Middle East destinations as well as East Africa.

In addition to Hamad Port, discussions have been held about establishing a mutual free trade zone, amalgamating the Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Iran and Qatar, an energy deal was reached between Iran's Tavanir and Qatar's Electricity and Water Company, while three agreements on ports and maritime affairs included one on maritime transport, one between the two countries' port authorities, and another on a project to connect Iran and Qatar via an underwater tunnel. In September, the two countries also agreed the world's largest saffron trade deal, a commercial contract for the transfer and processing of 200 tons of Iranian saffron with an initial value of US\$300 million.

Iranian-Qatari trade has boomed and is up 35% this year.

Petchem Park to Be Built in Chabahar

TEHRAN (MNA) - The managing director of Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (PGPIC) announced that a petrochemical park will be built in Chabahar coastal county, in the southeast of the country.

Making the remarks in the coordination meeting for the construction of a specialized park for chemical fertilizers and related industries between the PGPIC and Mokran Coastal Development Headquarters, Abdol-Ali Ali Askari said that 600 hectares of land on the eastern side of Negin Mokran Industrial Estate was allocated for the construction of a specialized park for chemical fertilizers and related industries.

Iranian Catalyst Saves \$6m

TEHRAN (Shana) -- Ilam Petrochemical Company saved Iran \$6 million by successfully testing the catalyst made by the Petrochemical Research and Technology Company (PRTC) in its high-density polyethylene unit.

According to Ilam Petrochemical Plant, Seyyed Gholam Hassan Garshasbi, the CEO of Ilam Petrochemical Company, underlined the conclusion of a memorandum of understanding with the Petrochemical Research and Technology Company, in line with the policy of supporting domestic and knowledge-based companies, and said: "Ilam Petrochemical Company has successfully tested the catalyst in the high-density polyethylene (HDPE) unit made by PRTC saving \$6 million of foreign currency."

He continued: "This catalyst, while competing with Chinese and Japanese samples, with the advantages of availability, economic efficiency and preventing hard currency from leaving the country, is now used in the heart of the HDPE unit reactor of Ilam Petrochemical Plant."

He emphasized the optimal use and handing over projects to the private sector in the future and added: "The purpose of building a specialized park is to prevent crude sales and complete the value chain of refining, chemical and petrochemical products, avoiding creating challenges for the continuation of oil and gas production, optimal use of chemical fertilizers to prevent environmental damage, manage water consumption and increase the efficiency of agricultural production and develop export markets."

Pointing out that the duration of the project will be three years and it will be implemented in three phases, he said: the amount of chemical fertilizer production in this park will be 700,000 tons and \$420 million will be spent for its construction.

Addressing the PGPIC's annual assembly in late October, the managing director of the company had said his company generated over four billion dollars of revenues in the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22).

Ali Askari called the holding a development-oriented company, and stated: "PGPIC is the only petrochemical company that is prominent in the world and ranks 23rd among the top 100 petrochemical companies."

Referring to the petrochemical industry as one of the major driving forces of the country's economy, he added: "This industry can provide a lot of value to the country by creating development in production and downstream industries despite the sanctions."

Petrochemical is Iran's most important industry after oil and gas, and plays a key role in domestic economic growth as it creates value-added and reduces the sale of oil and gas on which the economy has been dependent for decades.

Iran-Tajikistan 8-Month Trade Up 190% yr/yr

TEHRAN (MNA) - The value of trade between Iran and Tajikistan increased by 190 percent in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Morteza Emadi said that the two countries traded 146,531 tons of commodities worth \$140.498 million in the said eight-month period, indicating also 151 percent growth in terms of weight year on year.

He further put Iran's eight-month export to Tajikistan at 130,069 tons worth \$93.1 million and named petrochemicals, glass wool, dried fruits, aquatic feed, and agricultural and horticultural products as the major exported items.

Last week, the 15th Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Committee meeting kicked off in Tehran.

Co-chaired by Iranian Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehrabian, and Tajik Minister of Energy and Water Resources Daler Juma, the two-day event was aimed at strengthening economic relations between the two countries especially through promoting cooperation between the private sectors of the two sides.

On the first day of the meeting, the two sides discussed ways to expand economic, commercial, technical, scientific, and cultural cooperation and followed up on the agreements previously reached between Iran and Tajikistan.

Two Dead and Four Injured In Peru Protests

LIMA (Dispatches) - Two teens were killed and four people injured in Peru during protests demanding the country hold general elections following the ouster of former President Pedro Castillo, police and local authorities said.

President Dina Boluarte was sworn in last week after Castillo was sacked by Congress and arrested for attempting to dissolve the legislature in an effort to prevent an impeachment vote against him.

Demonstrators, many of them Castillo supporters, have for days demanded that Peru hold elections rather than allow Boluarte to stay in power until Castillo's term ends in 2026. Some protesters also call for Congress to be shuttered.



Macron Postpones French Pension Overhaul to January

PARIS (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron said that he was pushing back his presentation of a major pensions overhaul denounced by labor unions, citing recent leadership changes at two opposition parties.

Both the Greens and the right-wing Republicans have elected new chiefs, and Macron said he would consult with them before unveiling details of the major reform on January 10, instead of Thursday as planned.

"This will give a few more weeks for those... who have taken over to discuss some of the key elements of the reform with the government," Macron said during the latest gathering of his so-called "national refoundation council."



Fighting Rages In East Ukraine



KYIV (Dispatches) - Russian forces pounded targets in eastern and southern Ukraine with missiles, drones and artillery, Ukraine's General Staff said, while millions remained without power in subzero temperatures after further strikes on key infrastructure.

In a flurry of weekend diplomacy, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke with the leaders of the United States, France and Turkey ahead of planned Group of Seven (G7) and EU meetings on Monday that could agree further sanctions on Russia.

There are no peace talks and no end in sight to the deadliest conflict in Europe since World War Two, which Moscow describes as a "special military operation" and Ukraine and its allies call an unprovoked act of aggression.

Russia does not yet see a "constructive" approach from the United States on the Ukraine conflict, RIA news agency quoted Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Vershinin as saying on Monday. The two countries have held a series of contacts in Turkey.

U.S. President Joe Biden told Zelenskyy during a call on Sunday that Washington was prioritising efforts to boost Ukraine's air defences, the White House said. Zelenskyy said he had thanked Biden for the "unprecedented defence and financial" help the United States has provided.

On the ground in Ukraine, the Black Sea port of Odesa on Monday resumed operations that had been suspended after Russia used Iranian-made drones on Saturday to hit two energy facilities. Power is slowly being restored to some 1.5 million people, but the situation remains difficult, national grid operator Ukrenergo said in a statement on Monday.

Zelenskyy said other areas experiencing "very difficult" conditions with power supplies included the capital Kyiv and Kyiv region and four regions in western Ukraine and Dnipropetrovsk region in the center of the country.

The Kyiv region administration said 14 settlements there still had no power and 37 more were partially without power.

There were no reports of fresh strikes or blackouts overnight into Monday.

United Nations aid chief Martin Griffiths arrived in Ukraine on Monday to see "the impact of the humanitarian response and new challenges that have arisen as infrastructure damage mounts amid freezing winter temperatures", his office said.

In its daily update on the military situation, Ukraine's General Staff said its forces had repelled Russian assaults on four settlements in the eastern Donetsk region and on eight settlements in the adjacent Luhansk region.

Russia kept up its attacks on Bakhmut, which is now largely in ruins, as well as Avdiivka, and Lyman, and launched two missile strikes against civilian infrastructure in Kostyantynivka. All those settlements are in the Donetsk region - one of four that Moscow claims to have annexed from Ukraine after "referendums" branded illegal by Kyiv.

Qatar Graft Probe Damages European Parliament

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The European Union's credibility is at stake, EU foreign ministers warned on Monday, following allegations Qatar lavished cash and gifts on European Parliament officials to influence decision-making.

Greece on Monday froze the assets of a key suspect in the case, Eva Kaili, a vice president in the European Parliament and one of four people arrested and charged in Belgium at the weekend, a source with knowledge of the matter said.

Kaili's office did not respond to a request for a comment. Qatar has denied any wrongdoing.

Belgian prosecutors searched 16 houses and seized 600,000 euros (\$631,800) in Brussels on Friday as part of the probe.

The four unnamed suspects have been charged with "participation in a criminal organisation, money laundering and corruption," prosecutors said in a statement on Sunday.

The European Parliament said at the weekend it had suspended Kaili from her duties, while the Greek socialist PASOK party announced it was expelling her from its ranks.

According to sources familiar with the case, the three other accused are all Italian citizens -- former EU lawmaker Pier Antonio Panzeri, general secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation Luca Visentini, and Kaili's partner Francesco Giorgi, who is a parliamentary assistant.

There were no replies to calls and emails made by Reuters to their respective offices or homes in Belgium.

"This is an unbelievable incident which has to be cleared up completely with the full force of law," German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said as she arrived for a regular meeting with her EU counterparts in Brussels.

"This is about the credibility of Europe."

Irish Foreign Affairs Minister Simon Coveney echoed her concern. "It is damaging. We need to get to the bottom of it."

Belgian prosecutors said they had suspected for months that a Gulf state was trying to buy influence in Brussels.



China Slams U.S. Sanctions Over Alleged Rights Abuses in Tibet

BEIJING (Dispatches) - U.S. sanctions on two senior Chinese officials over alleged human rights abuses in Tibet were illegal and seriously harmed Sino-U.S. ties, the Chinese foreign ministry said.

China rejects accusations that it has used harsh policies to quell ethnic dissent and control religious activities in the rugged Himalayan region of Tibet.

The comments came after the U.S. Treasury department said on Friday it imposed sanctions on Wu Yingjie, the chief of the ruling Communist Party in Tibet between 2016 and 2021, and Zhang Hongbo, a senior public security official in the region.

Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said the steps were a gross interference in China's internal affairs and a violation of basic norms of international relations. "We urge the U.S. side to immediately withdraw the so-called sanctions," he told a regular briefing.

They did serious damage to Sino-U.S. relations, Wang said, adding that China would safeguard its legitimate rights and interests.

"The United States has no right to impose sanctions on other countries at every turn and is not qualified to play the world police," Wang added.

Wang also criticized comments on Saturday by Nicholas Burns, the U.S. ambassador to China, as being "full of lies and prejudice".

Burns had said the United States remained "deeply concerned" over what it saw as China's failure to live up to its international commitment to protect rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in areas such as Hong Kong, Tibet and Xinjiang.

"We urge the U.S. side to stop using human rights issues to smear China, to stop using human rights issues to interfere in China's internal affairs and to undermine China's stability," Wang added.



Yemen War Has Killed or Maimed Over 11,000 Children

DUBAI (Dispatches) - More than 11,000 children are known to have been killed or maimed in Yemen's civil war since it escalated nearly eight years ago, the United Nations said.

"The true toll of this conflict is likely to be far higher," said the children's agency UNICEF about the casualties of the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

"Thousands of children have lost their lives, hundreds of thousands more remain at risk of death from preventable disease or starvation," said UNICEF executive director Catherine Russell.

About 2.2 million Yemeni children are acutely malnourished, one quarter of them aged under five, and most are at extreme risk from cholera, measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases, UNICEF said.

Yemen's war broke out in 2014 and quickly saw Huthi rebels seize the capital Sanaa, prompting Saudi-led forces to intervene to prop up the government the following year.

Hundreds of thousands have died since, either as a result of fighting or indirectly through unsafe drinking water, disease outbreaks, hunger and other impacts.

The agency's latest numbers confirm 3,774 child deaths between March 2015 and September 2022.

A UN-brokered truce lasted for six months until October 2, but warring parties then failed to agree on an extension.

Since then at least 62 children have been killed or wounded, said UNICEF.

"The urgent renewal of the truce would be a positive first step that would allow critical humanitarian access," Russell said.

"Ultimately, only a sustained peace will allow families to rebuild their shattered lives and begin to plan for the future."

The UN agency also said 3,904 boys had been recruited into the fighting over the years, and that more than 90 girls had been given roles including working at checkpoints.

UNICEF appealed for US\$484.4 million (RM2.14 billion) in funding to tackle the humanitarian crisis.

"If the children of Yemen are to have any chance of a decent future... all those with influence must ensure they are protected and supported," said Russell.



Kabul Hotel Attack Ends as Three Gunmen Killed



KABUL (Dispatches) - Armed men opened fire inside a hotel in central Kabul popular with Chinese nationals in an attack that ended when at least three gunmen were killed by security forces, the Taliban-run administration said.

Two foreigners were injured while trying to escape by jumping from the hotel balcony, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid wrote on Twitter.

Kabul's Emergency Hospital, run by an Italian non-profit near the attacked hotel in the Shahr-e-Naw area, reported receiving 21 casualties - 18 injured and three dead on arrival.

Taliban sources said the attack was carried out at Longan Hotel where Chinese and other foreigners usually stay.

Videos posted on Twitter by a journalist in Kabul and verified by Reuters showed smoke billowing out of one of the floors amid sounds of gunshots, while a person was seen trying to escape the attack by jumping out of a hotel window.

Kabul police spokesman Khalid Zadran said the attack took place around 2.30 p.m. local time, with residents in the area saying they heard a powerful explosion followed by gunfire.

The attack came a day after China's ambassador met the Afghan deputy foreign minister to discuss security-related matters and sought more attention on the protection of its embassy.

China's state-run Xinhua news agency said the attack happened near a Chinese guesthouse and its embassy in Kabul was closely monitoring the situation.

The embassy did not respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Several bombings have taken place in Afghanistan in recent months, including an attack on the Pakistan embassy earlier this month and a suicide blast near the Russian embassy in September. Both attacks were claimed by the Islamic State.

The Taliban, which seized power after U.S.-led foreign forces withdrew in August 2021, have said they are focused on securing the country.

Cash Crops: Dutch Use Bitcoin Mining To Grow Tulips

AMSTERDAM (Dispatches) - Tulips and bitcoin have both been associated with financial bubbles in their time, but in a giant greenhouse near Amsterdam the Dutch are trying to make them work together.

Engineer Bert de Groot inspects the six bitcoin miners as they perform complex sums to earn cryptocurrency, filling the air with a noisy whine along with a blast of warmth.

That warmth is now heating the hothouse where rows of tulips grow, cutting the farmers' reliance on gas whose price has soared since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The servers in turn are powered by solar energy from the roof, reducing the normally huge electricity costs for mining, and cutting the impact on the environment.

Meanwhile both the farmers and de Groot's company, Bitcoin Brabant, are earning crypto, which is still attracting investors despite a recent crash in the market.

"We think with this way of heating our greenhouse but also earning some bitcoin we have a win-win situation," flower farmer Danielle Koning, 37, told AFP.

The Netherlands' love of tulips caused the first stock market crash in the 17th century when speculation bulb prices caused prices to soar, only to later collapse.

Now the Netherlands is the world's biggest tulip producer and also the second biggest agricultural exporter overall after the United States, with much grown in greenhouses.

But the low-lying country is keenly aware of the effect of the agricultural industry on climate change, while farmers are struggling with high energy prices.

Mining for cryptocurrency meanwhile requires huge amounts of electricity to power computers, leading to an environmental impact amid global efforts to tackle climate change.

De Groot, 35, who only started his business earlier this year and now has 17 clients including restaurants and warehouses, says this makes bitcoin and tulips a perfect fit.

"This operation is actually carbon negative, as are all the operations I basically build," says the long-haired de Groot, sporting an orange polo shirt with his firm's logo.

"We're actually improving the environment."

He is also selling tulips online for bitcoin via a business called Bitcoinbloem.

The collaboration started when Koning saw a Twitter video de Groot had made about bitcoin mining, and called him up.

Now there are six servers at their hothouse, whose exact location Koning asked to keep secret to avoid thieves targeting the 15,000-euro machines.

Koning's company owns half of them and keeps the bitcoin they produce, while de Groot is allowed to keep his three servers there in exchange for monthly visits to clean dust and insects out of the servers' fans.

With a 20 degree Celsius difference between the air entering the machine and leaving them, this provides the heat needed to grow the tulips, and to dry the bulbs that produce them.

"The most important thing we get out of it is, we save on natural gas," says Koning. "Secondly, well, we earn Bitcoin by running them in the greenhouse."

Huge energy costs have driven some Dutch agricultural firms that often rely on greenhouses to stop growing this year, while others have even gone bankrupt, says Koning.

Meanwhile, the philosopher Nassim Nicholas Taleb, who developed the idea of the unpredictable but historic "black swan" event, has compared Bitcoin to the "Tulipmania" that engulfed the Netherlands nearly 400 years ago.



NASA Moon Capsule Orion Splashes Down After Record-Setting Voyage

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - After making a close pass at the Moon and venturing further into space than any previous habitable spacecraft, NASA's Orion capsule splashed down Sunday in the final test of a high-stakes mission called Artemis.

As it hurtles into Earth's atmosphere at a speed of 25,000 miles (40,000 kilometers) per hour, the gumdrop-shaped traveler will have to withstand a temperature of 2,800 degrees Centigrade (5,000 Fahrenheit) -- about half that of the surface of the sun.

Splashdown in the Pacific off the Mexican island of Guadalupe was scheduled for 1739 GMT (9:39 am local time).

Achieving success in this mission of just over 25 days is key for NASA, which has invested tens of billions of dollars in the Artemis program due to take people back to the Moon and prepare for an onward trip, someday, to Mars.

So far the first test of this uncrewed spacecraft has gone very well.

But it is only in the final minutes of this voyage that the true challenge comes: seeing if Orion's heat shield, the biggest ever built, actually holds up.

"It is a safety-critical piece of equipment. It is designed to protect the spacecraft and the passengers, the astronauts on board. So the heat shield needs to work," said Artemis mission manager Mike Sarafin.

A first test of the capsule was carried out in 2014 but that time the capsule stayed in Earth's orbit, so it came back into the atmosphere at a slower speed of around 20,000 miles per hour.

A US Navy ship, the USS Portland, has been positioned in the Pacific to recover the Orion capsule in an exercise that NASA has been rehearsing for years. Helicopters and inflatable boats will also be deployed for this task.

The falling spacecraft will be slowed first by the Earth's atmosphere and then a web of 11 parachutes until it eases to a speed of 20 miles (30 kilometers) per hour when it finally hits the blue waters of the Pacific.

Once it is there, NASA will let Orion float for two hours -- a lot longer than if astronauts were inside -- so as to collect data.

"We'll see how the heat soaks back into the crew module and how that affects the temperature inside," said Jim Geffre, NASA's Orion vehicle integration manager.

Divers will then attach cables to Orion to hoist it onto the USS Portland, which is an amphibious transport dock vessel, the rear of which will be partly submerged. This water will be pumped out slowly so the spacecraft can rest on a platform designed to hold it.

This should all take about four to six hours from the time the vessel first splashes down.

The Navy ship will then head for San Diego, California where the spacecraft will be unloaded a few days later. When it returns to Earth, the spacecraft will have traveled 1.4 million miles since it took off November 16 with the help of a monstrous rocket called SLS.

At its nearest point to the Moon it flew less than 80 miles (130 kilometers) from the surface. And it broke the distance record for a habitable capsule, venturing 268,000 miles (432,000 kilometers) from our planet.

Recovering the spacecraft will allow NASA to gather data that is crucial for future missions.

This includes information on the condition of the vessel after its flight, data from monitors that measure acceleration and vibration, and the performance of a special vest put on a mannequin in the capsule to test how to protect people from radiation while flying through space.



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Korea's Defense Industry Expected to Avoid Recession Next Year

SEOUL (Dispatches) – South Korean defense companies are expected to grow fast, riding on the ongoing global arms race. Samsung Securities said on Dec. 10 that military spending accounted for 2.2 percent of the global total GDP last year. The United States accounted for 38 percent of the spending and China's was US\$293 billion, about one-third of the United States'.

In most European states, military spending made up less than 1.5 percent of national GDP. This year, however, the ratio is rising fast in the wake of the war in Ukraine. Poland is going to raise its ratio to 3 percent next year. Germany, Denmark and Sweden are going to reach at least 2 percent in the near future.



U.S. Fed Poised for Smaller Rate Hike With Eye on Wage Growth

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The U.S. Federal Reserve (Fed) is poised to slow its interest rate hikes this week, economists say, as central bankers' most forceful moves in decades to fight inflation ripple through the economy.

But the half-point jump analysts expect to see in the Fed's benchmark lending rate will still be a steep rise, as it struggles to cool demand in the United States to bring consumer costs down.

Households in the world's biggest economy have been contending with red-hot prices, with conditions worsened by surging food and energy costs after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

To make borrowing more expensive, the Fed has raised interest rates six times this year, including four bumper 0.75-point increases, bringing the rate to between 3.75% and 4%.

"We think the stage is set for a (half-point) hike this month," said Oren Klachkin of Oxford Economics, as sectors sensitive to interest rates like housing reel and inflation show signs of easing.

The decision will be announced after a two-day meeting of the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC). Policymakers are keeping a close eye on wage growth, given concerns that higher salaries will add to inflation pressures.

"The primary concern for the Fed here is really wage growth," said Martin Wurm of Moody's Analytics, adding that the Fed is unlikely to ease policy until there is consistent development on this front.

"That doesn't necessarily mean it's going to keep hiking forever, but it does mean that the rate will increase for a little bit and ... stay elevated throughout the next year," Wurm told Agence France-Presse (AFP).

With a higher benchmark rate, it becomes more expensive to borrow funds for big-ticket purchases such as cars and property or to expand businesses.

Despite the Fed's forceful moves, consumer inflation stood at 7.7% in October while job gains remained robust, sending jitters through markets on worries that the central bank would prolong its aggressive campaign.

"The strong jobs market, rising wages and the strong household balance sheet ... are key areas of support" for demand, said economist James Knightley of ING.

Household wealth has increased by \$30 trillion since the start of the pandemic, he noted, allowing consumers to dip into their savings as the cost of living spikes.

"However, we are also seeing greater use of consumer credit and credit cards to fund spending, which could hint at some signs of stress and that household efforts to maintain their standard of living are starting to be exhausted," Knightley told AFP.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell has warned that monetary policy will likely have to remain tight "for some time," even if the time to ease the pace of rate hikes may come as soon as in December.

The timing of this moderation is less significant than questions of how much more officials need to raise rates, and how long they should keep policy restrictive, he added in a speech.

Philippines Braces for Another BSP Rate Hike

MANILA (Dispatches) - Interest rates in the Philippines are expected to continue rising but at a slower pace, with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) seen most likely hiking its policy rate by 0.5 percentage point to 5.5 percent on Dec. 15.

ING Bank senior economist Nicholas Mapa said they expected the BSP to do so considering its "tenuous" external position. Mapa noted that the central bank was now penciling in a current account deficit of \$20.5 billion for 2022, wider than its previous forecast of \$19.1 billion.

As of the end of September, the BSP recorded a deficit of \$5.8 billion in the country's transactions with the rest of the world. Mapa said that despite a recent rally of the Philippine peso against the US dollar, the BSP would raise its policy rate by 0.5 ppt and also match any move the US Federal Reserve would make in 2023.

The local currency has gained almost 2 against the greenback since closing at 57.36:\$1 on Nov. 17, the previous Monetary Board (MB) meeting, to 55:37:\$1 on Dec. 9.

The economic research team at Goldman Sachs agrees, noting that the Philippine economy remained strong and that inflation remained high.

"Growth momentum remains strong amid ongoing improvements in manufacturing and labor market conditions, and headline inflation continues to rise, touching a high of 8 percent year-on-year in November due to higher food prices and rising service costs," the American banking giant said.

Still, Goldman Sachs said there was a risk that the actual BSP decision would turn out to be smaller at 0.25 ppt considering the recent easing in exchange market pressures and comments by BSP Governor Felipe Medalla that MB members might be split between a 0.25-ppt and 0.5-ppt increase in the next meeting. Robert Dan Rocas, chief economist at Security Bank Corp., said the latest inflation data and the expected 0.5-ppt hike by the US Fed both point to the same move by the BSP.



Turkey Aims to Make \$16b in Exports to Iraq in 2023

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey aims to reach \$16 billion in exports to Iraq in 2023 to put it in second place in the ranking of countries to which it makes the highest sales, Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK) Turkey-Iraq Business Council Chairperson Halit Acar said.

Acar told Anadolu Agency (AA) that Turkey-Iraq relations are progressing and exports to the country are increasing day by day. Sharing that \$12.6 billion was exported to Iraq in the 11 months of this year, Acar said that while Iraq was the fifth in the list of the countries with the highest exports in 2021, it rose to third place this year.

Stating that the highest exports to Iraq were made from Istanbul with \$2.6 billion, Gaziantep with \$1.8 billion and Mardin with \$833 million, Acar said: "We aim to export over \$14 billion by the end of 2022."

"Last year, we made an export of \$11.2 billion. When we look at it as of the year, we see an increase of 25%."

Stating that products such as cereals, pulses, oil seeds, chemicals, paper and forestry materials, furniture and steel are exported to Iraq, Acar said, "There are great opportunities in Iraq. A new government was formed about 1.5 months ago. The current government is planning to invest in many areas and I hope that Turkey will definitely take a share in these areas."

He said that Turkey has high standards of production and has companies that have proved their success in the sectors they operate, one of them being the construction sector.

Pakistan Ranks Atop List of 82 Nations Most Influenced by China

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - A new study that measures Beijing's expanding global sway has revealed that Pakistan is the country in the world which is most influenced by China.

The China Index, a database relaunched on December 8 by DoubleThink Labs, a Taiwan-based research organization has ranked Pakistan atop a list of 82 other nations around the world and said that its links and dependency on China with regard to foreign

and domestic policy, technology, and the economy make it particularly susceptible to Chinese influence.

Following Pakistan, Cambodia and Singapore are listed at the second spot while Thailand at third position, as per the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) report. The Philippines is listed at the seventh spot while Malaysia lies in the 10th position. South Africa and Peru are tied at the fifth spot on the index.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are at the eighth and ninth spots on the index. These two countries share a border with China's Xinjiang Province and are the Central Asian countries most influenced by Beijing.

Meanwhile, Germany is the highest-ranked European country at 19th spot while the United States leads North America in the 21st position, as per the news report. While compiling the China index, the research team focused on nine categories to monitor influence around the world, which includes higher education, domestic politics, economic ties, foreign policy, military cooperation, media, technology and cultural links.

Speaking to RFE/RL, Min Hsuan-Wu, the co-founder and CEO of Doublethink Labs, said that the database has been created to raise awareness about different aspects of China's influence. Wu stressed that the system will help to have more understanding that challenges some assumptions about levers of Chinese influence, particularly around economics and trade.

"A major goal of [of this database] is to raise awareness around the world about the different aspects of Chinese influence and what that can actually look like," RFE/RL quoted Min Hsuan-Wu as saying.

"We have taken a much broader and nuanced look at what influence can be, which can tell us more about what Beijing is actually doing and the different ways it can apply pressure," Min Hsuan-Wu added.

China Supports Int'l Organizations in Promoting Openness In Global Economy

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China firmly supports international organizations in further playing their role as platforms for promoting openness in the global economy, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said.

Li's remarks came as he held the seventh "1+6" Roundtable in Huangshan City, Anhui Province, with President David Malpass of the World Bank Group, Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva of the International Monetary Fund, Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala of the World Trade Organization, Director-General Gilbert F. Houngbo of the International Labor Organization, Secretary-General Mathias Cormann of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and Chairman Klaas Knot of the Financial Stability Board.

"China is ready to work with the six international organizations and all parties to chart the course of openness and cooperation and promote steady growth of the world economy," Li said.

He called on major economies and major international economic institutions to draw on the experience of meeting major common challenges such as the international financial crisis, step up coordination on macro policies and international cooperation, and balance inflation prevention and steady growth.

Major economies should take into account the impact on developing economies when adjusting their macro policies, and work together to maintain world economic and financial stability, Li said, stressing the significance of ensuring stable food and energy markets.

Li said trade and investment liberalization and facilitation are the engines of economic growth, benefiting all countries, calling on all parties to uphold multilateralism, support free and fair trade, keep global industrial and supply chains stable and smooth, and jointly promote world economic integration.

Li said China has both benefited from and contributed to worldwide opening up, and is a defender of and participant in the existing international order and economic and trade rules.

Calling for boosting inclusive and sustainable development, Li said the international community should help developing countries pursue development.

China will continue to take part in the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative, and hopes that major creditor countries will follow the principle of "common actions and fair burden-sharing" and jointly participate in debt treatment, Li said.

Li said China is committed to the path of peaceful development and stands ready to work with other parties to firmly safeguard the basic norms of international relations underpinned by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, and to jointly preserve world peace and tranquility.

UK Economy Will Get Worse Before It Gets Better



LONDON (Dispatches) - The UK economy will get worse before it gets better, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt has said after figures revealed it shrank further between August and October.

The economy contracted by 0.3% during the three months as soaring prices hit businesses and households and the UK is expected to be heading into recession.

He said: "These figures confirm that this is a very challenging economic situation here and across the world. 'And it will get worse before it gets better.'"

A country is in recession when its economy shrinks for two three-month periods in a row.

Over the three months, economic activity in the UK slowed across all the main sectors including production, construction and services.

The UK is widely expected to be in recession by the end of this year. The Bank of England recently said the UK is facing its longest recession since records began.

There was a brief respite in October alone when the economy grew by 0.5%, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), compared to September when output fell because of an additional bank holiday for Queen Elizabeth's state funeral. It meant that some businesses closed or had shorter opening hours.

Labour's shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves said the figures "underline the failure of this Tory government to grow our economy, leaving us lagging behind on the global stage". Darren Morgan, director of economic statistics at the ONS, said that some companies had said that strike action had affected their business.

"We speak to about 40,000 businesses every fortnight and one in eight of them tell us they were affected by industrial action in October," Mr Morgan told the BBC's Today programme.

"They told us the most common impacts were they were not able to get the necessary goods or services and were unable to operate fully."

5.4m Tons of Goods Transited From Iran in 8 Months

TEHRAN (MNA) – A total of 5.4 million tons of foreign goods transited from Iran’s borders during the first eight months of the current Iranian year.

According to the head of the Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, affiliated with the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, a total of 5.4 million tons of foreign goods transited

from Iran’s borders during the first eight months of the current Iranian year (March 21-Nov. 21), registering an 8% rise compared with the similar period of last year.

“Last fiscal year [ended March 2022], the figure stood around 10 million tons,” Darioush Amani said, adding that plans are to increase it to 20 million tons per year by 2025, Financial Tribune reported.



Japan’s ispace Launches World’s First Commercial Moon Lander

TOKYO (Dispatches) - A Japanese space startup launched a spacecraft to the moon after several delays, a step toward what would be a first for the nation and for a private company.

ispace Inc’s HAKUTO-R mission took off without incident from Cape Canaveral, Florida, after two postponements caused by inspections of its SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.

More than a hundred people at a viewing party in Tokyo roared in applause when the rocket fired and lifted into the dark skies.

“I’m so happy. After repeated delays, it’s good that we had a proper launch today,” said Yuriko Takeda, a 28-year old worker at an electronics company who joined the gathering.

“I have this image of the American flag from the Apollo landing, so while this is just the launch, the fact that it’s a private company going there with a rover is a really meaningful step.”

The national space agencies of the United States, Russia and China have achieved soft landings on Earth’s nearest neighbour in the past half century but no companies have.

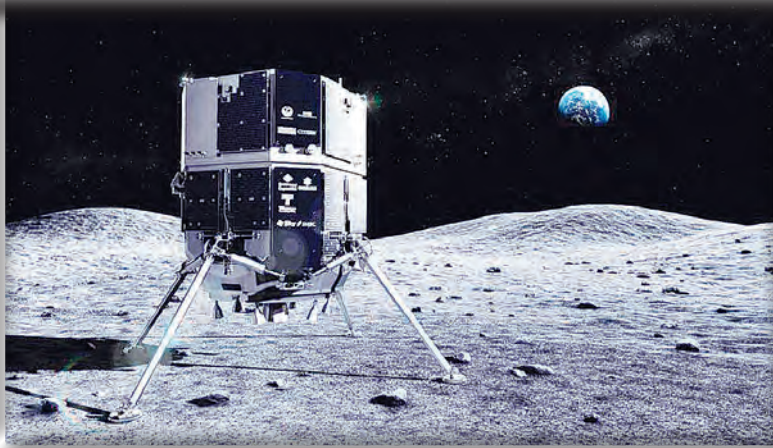
Mission success would also be a milestone in space cooperation between Japan and the United States at a time when China is becoming increasingly competitive and rides on Russian rockets are no longer available in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

It would also cap a space-filled few days for Japan, after billionaire Yusaku Maezawa revealed on Friday the eight crew members he hopes to take on a SpaceX flyby of the moon as soon as next year.

The name HAKUTO refers to the white rabbit that lives on the moon in Japanese folklore, in contrast to the Western idea of a man in the moon. The project was a finalist in the Google Lunar XPRIZE before being revived as a commercial venture.

Next year is the Year of the Rabbit in the Asian calendar. The craft, assembled in Germany, is expected to land on the moon in late April.

The company hopes this will be the first of many deliveries of government and commercial payloads. The ispace craft aims to put a small NASA satellite into lunar orbit to search for water deposits before touching down in the Atlas Crater.



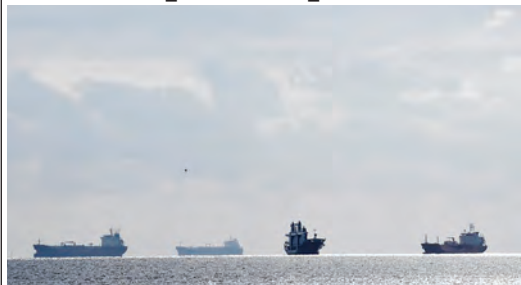
The M1 lander will deploy two robotic rovers, a two-wheeled, baseball-sized device from Japan’s JAXA space agency and the four-wheeled Rashid explorer made by the United Arab Emirates. It will also be carrying an experimental solid-state battery made by NGK Spark Plug Co (5334.T).

“The Rashid rover is part of the United Arab Emirates ambitious space programme,” said Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, who is also vice-president of the United Arab Emirates and who watched the launch at the Mohammed bin Rashid Space Centre.

“Our aim is knowledge transfer and developing our capabilities and to add a scientific imprint in the history of humanity,” he tweeted.

Privately funded ispace has a contract with NASA to ferry payloads to the moon from 2025 and is aiming to build a permanently staffed lunar colony by 2040.

Russia Oil Embargo, Price Cap Disrupts Tankers



LONDON (Dispatches) - The European Union embargo on Russia’s oil and an international cap on the price of the country’s crude is disrupting the maritime transport sector.

The EU last Monday enforced an embargo on Russian crude shipments, the bloc’s latest sanction in retaliation for Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine.

This week also saw the start of a \$60 cap on a barrel of Russian crude, agreed by Western nations.

Aimed at depriving Russia of key income, the measures have also slowed transportation of its oil by sea.

This is because Turkey has started to request proof of insurance from tankers loaded with Russian crude, slowing their passage through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits and onto international markets.

The Financial Times has reported that Russia has assembled a “shadow fleet” of more than 100 vessels seeking to circumnavigate the Western sanctions regime.

These ships are reportedly using non-Western insurers and selling oil at higher prices to countries that have not subscribed to the new sanctions.

A 1936 treaty guarantees the freedom of navigation to merchant vessels passing through Turkey’s two straits.

But it also gives Turkey the right to regulate security -- a provision it is now using to make sure the oil ships are insured against spillage and other accidents.

The London P&I Club, a leading provider of maritime protection and indemnity insurance, claims “the Turkish government’s requirements go well beyond the general information that is contained in a confirmation of entry letter.

“It requires... (confirmation) that cover will not be prejudiced under any circumstances, including where there is a sanctions breach on the part of the assured.”

Marcus Baker, global head of Marine & Cargo at insurance broker Marsh, said the price cap “adds another layer of complexity to an already pretty complex situation”.

He also told AFP: “The slowdown that might happen because of this added administrative burden may have the desired effect that the G7 wanted anyway.”

The price ceiling was agreed by the Group of Seven rich countries, which includes Britain, Japan and the United States, as well as the EU and Australia.

Meanwhile as much as 95 percent of the P&I insurance market is run by insurers in the EU and Britain, who suddenly can no longer insure cargoes of Russia oil sold for more than \$60 per barrel.

The market price of a barrel of Russian Urals crude is around \$65, suggesting the cap may have only a limited impact in the short term.

Tehran, Beijing...

FROM PAGE 1

He also pointed to the opening of the Chinese Consulate General in Bandar Abbas, saying that the special economic zones of Qeshm, Chabahar, and Arvand can become areas for joint cooperation between Iranian and Chinese companies.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mokhber considered preserving and respecting the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran as an important issue for Iranian officials and people, saying that it is necessary for all countries to observe this inviolable principle.

Hu Chunhua, for his part, pointed to China’s will to develop comprehensive strategic relations with Iran, saying that China supports the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iran and its fight against foreign interference [in internal affairs].

Accordingly, the two sides should support each other decisively and strengthen their cooperation and coordination in fighting terrorism, the Chinese official said.

Referring to the 25-year joint cooperation program of the two countries, he noted that Beijing is willing to strengthen its cooperation with Tehran so that the process of developing relations between the two countries continues.

Meanwhile yesterday in a meeting with the Chinese deputy prime minister, President Ebrahim Raisi criticized the Chinese president’s stances during his recent visit to Saudi Arabia.

Raisi said, “Some of the positions declared by the Chinese president during his recent visit to [the Persian Gulf] region have caused displeasure for the Iranian nation and government.”

He added that Iran’s serious demand is that China makes up for those stances.

He emphasized the importance of the Chinese delegation’s visit to Iran for the development of economic and trade cooperation between the two countries, and also stressed the efforts of the two sides to implement the important agreements reached in the previous meetings of the two nations’ officials.

The Chinese deputy prime minister, for his part, conveyed the warmest greetings from the President of his country to the Iranian president and emphasized

China’s resolve to develop relations with strong Iran as a permanent and unalterable strategy of his country.

“China’s resolve to strengthen and deepen relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran will continue no matter what the regional and international developments are,” Chunhua said.

“China has always respected the Islamic Republic of Iran’s national sovereignty and territorial integrity and supports Iran’s efforts to secure its basic interests,” the deputy prime minister of China said.

He also presented a report on the results of his meetings with Iranian officials to the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

With the operationalization of tens of billions of dollars worth of joint investment and the development of industrial, energy, transit, and financial and banking cooperation, the two countries are taking a big step towards implementing strategic and development partnerships.

Relations between Iran and China go as far back as the ancient Silk Road, but they are gaining strategic significance because the West’s refusal to work with Iran under the US pressure and its efforts to clip China’s wings and stop its economic and political rise is automatically pushing Tehran and Beijing into an alliance of sorts.

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, American businesses have been prevented from trade with Iran, while their European counterparts have withdrawn amid US threat of sanctions. That has helped Chinese companies move in and fill the void.

As a result, Iran and China have forged a unique partnership which is almost impossible or not easily viable with any other country.

China is still Iran’s biggest oil client despite Washington’s bid to bring Tehran’s exports down to zero.

Iran’s rail sector had become a magnet for rail engineering and rolling stock firms from all over the world before US sanctions in 2018 forced them to withdraw. The pullout left the Chinese with a less contested business terrain.

China’s close involvement in the build-out of Iran’s manufacturing infrastructure is seen entirely in line with its mammoth One Belt, One Road initiative.

Iran Gets \$34b of...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran has been ramping up its oil production and exports over the past year as the country has been implementing new strategies to overcome U.S. sanctions.

The Islamic Republic’s oil revenues increased by eight times in the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-August 22) with respect to the same period of the previous year, according to official statistics.

Earlier in November, Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji said the country reached the highest record of oil, gas condensate, and petrochemical exports since 2017 (when the U.S. started re-imposing sanctions on Iran’s oil industry) in the eighth Iranian calendar month of Aban (October 23-November 21).

“Iran’s oil industry is now at the forefront of the economic war and the toughest sanctions have been imposed on this industry,” he said, noting that the industry has thrived despite the mentioned pressures.

Iran Slams Statement...

FROM PAGE 1

According to the statement, some countries look at women and their rights only as a means to achieve their own political interests and preferences and impose their own incorrect perception of women and women’s rights on other nations and cultures.

These states do not hesitate to victimize women and girls and violate all their rights, it said.

It emphasized that various reports and research conducted by Western institutions have shown that the rights of women and girls are violated in Western states, particularly the US, more than in other parts of the world.

The Iranian body said the degradation of women’s dignity and identity and turning them into means of exploitation, extreme violence and obvious discrimination against women and girls, the very high number of female prisoners, the forced separation of refugee mothers from their children as well as a discriminatory view and torture of black, colored and migrant women and girls are only among examples of arrogant states’ approaches to the issue.

It is better for Western countries to adopt new strategies in their states to observe the rights of women and girls if they are really concerned about the issue, it added.

In their joint statement, the US and eight other countries claimed that the Iranian women and girls are facing “extreme violence” ever since riots broke out in the wake of the tragic death of 22-year-old woman Mahsa Amini in mid-September.

It accused Iranian authorities of continuing and even escalating their brutal suppression of protestors, including through their use of technology-facilitated gender-based violence, since the outbreak of the riots in the country, and condemned what it called a violent crackdown on protestors, including on digital platforms and through Internet restrictions.

The Iranian rights body said the US and Western states have proved that they do not care about the rights of women and girls in Iran at all as they have fully supported terror attacks against thousands of Iranian women, men and children, as well as their killing, particularly during Iraq’s war against Iran in 1980s, when they imposed oppressive and illegal sanctions with adverse consequences on health and welfare and prevented the presence of successful Iranian women and girls in global sports and scientific fields.

“Behind their hypocritical statements and remarks, they only pursue inhumane and anti-human rights political interests and goals,” it added.

It also called on Western states to abandon unilateral and oppressive sanctions against women, girls and children instead of doing a political show.

Gas Swap...

FROM PAGE 1

Russia has been faced with a major surplus of natural gas since early 2022 when the country was forced to cut exports to Europe because of sanctions related to the war in Ukraine.

Iranian and Russian authorities have indicated they have been involved in talks in recent months to work out a gas swap mechanism. Experts say a potential gas swap deal between Iran and Russia would significantly deepen energy ties between the world’s two main gas suppliers.

Kiev Offers...

FROM PAGE 1

The anti-Iran claims first emerged in July, with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan alleging that Washington had received “information” indicating that the Islamic Republic was preparing to provide Russia with “up to several hundred drones, including weapons-capable UAVs on an expedited timeline” for use in the war.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian in November dismissed media controversy over Iran’s alleged support for Russia in the Ukraine war, adding, however, that Tehran had provided Moscow with a limited number of drones months before the war in Ukraine.

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

EU Agrees...

FROM PAGE 1

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The European Union imposes sanctions on 29 Iranian individuals and three entities, including the 24-hour English-language Press TV.

The European Union last month imposed sanctions on a number of Iranian institutions and individuals, including the 24-hour English-language Press TV, over alleged “rights violations” following the recent foreign-backed riots in the country.

Yamaguchi Unstoppable at Badminton World Tour Finals Decider

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Reigning world champion Akane Yamaguchi outpaced Tai Tzu Ying to claim the women's singles badminton title at the season-ending World Tour Finals in Bangkok.

The Badminton World Federation shifted its US\$1.5 million flagship event to the Thai capital's Nimibutr Arena after original host China dropped the tournament due to its tough Covid restrictions.

Japanese badminton ace Yamaguchi was victorious in closely fought straight games, 21-18, 22-20, over her Taiwanese opponent.

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Bruguera Steps Downs as Spain's Davis Cup Captain

MADRID (Dispatches) - Former world number three Sergi Bruguera has stepped down as captain of Spain's Davis Cup team by "mutual consent", the Spanish tennis federation (RFET) confirmed.

Bruguera, who won back-to-back French Open titles in 1993 and 1994, had guided the Spanish Davis Cup team since 2017.

The 51-year-old won the first edition of the national team competition in its new format in 2019, relying on a formidable Rafael Nadal.

8 IRAN NEWS

SPORTS

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 14, 2022

Eagles Clinch Playoff Place as Cowboys Avoid Upset to Texans

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Jalen Hurts threw for two touchdowns and ran for another as the NFL-best Philadelphia Eagles punched their ticket to the playoffs with a 48-22 victory over the fading New York Giants.

Hurts improved his MVP credentials by throwing for 217 yards and hitting DeVonta Smith on a 41-yard fourth-down TD strike and AJ Brown on a 33-yarder as the Eagles (12-1) scored on their first three possessions. The third-year quarterback also ran for 77 yards, highlighted by a 10-yard TD scamper late in the third quarter.

Miles Sanders ran for 144 yards and scored on runs of three and 40 yards as the Eagles handed the Giants their worst loss under first-year coach Brian Daboll. Philadelphia secured their second straight postseason appearance and fifth in six seasons.

Daniel Jones and Tyrod Taylor threw touchdown passes for the Giants (7-5-1). They have one win in their last six games (1-4-1) and their hopes of their first playoff berth since 2016 are slipping with four games remaining.

Tampa Bay Buccaneers 7-35 San Francisco 49ers

Brock Purdy threw two touchdown passes and ran for another score in his first career start and San Francisco's vaunted defense spoiled Tom Brady's Bay Area homecoming.

Purdy outplaying the NFL's most accomplished quarterback ever was partially overshadowed by another key injury for the 49ers (9-4). A week after losing quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo to a broken left foot that opened the door for Purdy to start, the Niners lost star receiver Deebo Samuel to an ankle injury that forced him to be carted off the field in tears. That was about the only thing that didn't go right for the 49ers, who thoroughly dominated Brady and the Bucs (6-7) to win their sixth straight game.

Global Swimming Federation FINA Rebrands As World Aquatics

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - International swimming governing body FINA voted to rebrand itself as World Aquatics after 114 years, acknowledging that most people had no idea what its name stood for.

FINA -- French for Federation Internationale de Natation -- said the move was meant to symbolise inclusivity for all aquatic disciplines, not just swimming.

"These days, swimmers are only one, important, part of our FINA family. We need a name that reflects the whole FINA family," FINA president Husain Al-Musallam said after an extraordinary general congress in Melbourne.

"I will always tell you that our athletes must come first, so I would never make a big decision like this without consulting our athletes," he said.

"Their response has been very clear. More than 70 percent of the athletes that we have spoken with have said that they would like us to change FINA's name. Many of them could not even tell us what the letters in FINA stand for."

The new World Aquatics identity will be rolled out at the first events of 2023.

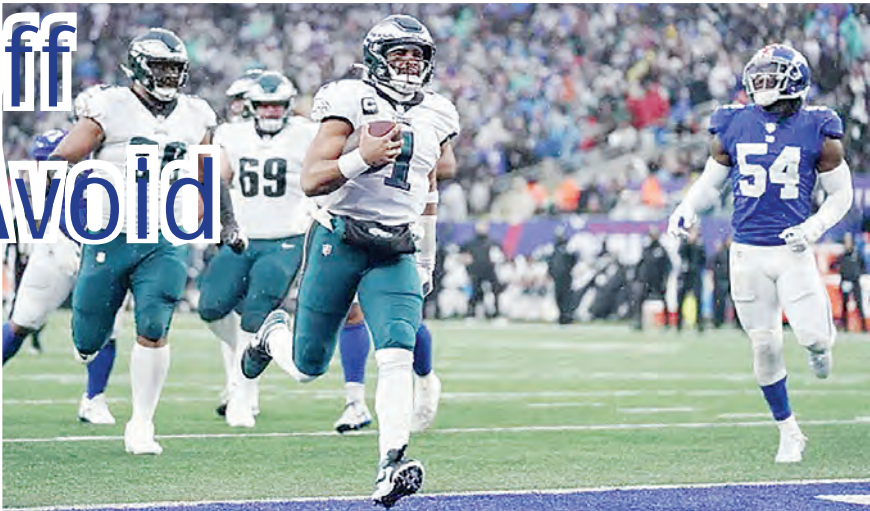
"Our new vision and mission also reflect how World Aquatics and our members have already begun expanding our work beyond competition and swimming as a life skill, to include sustainability, environmental advocacy and wellbeing," Al-Musallam said.

"Our new brand and visual identity will also enable us to connect with new audiences and encourage new generations of athletes across our disciplines to be united by water, safely, fairly and sustainably."

FINA delegates also voted to amend its constitution, including the creation of an independent Aquatics Integrity Unit to come into operation on January 1.

They also agreed to lift female representation on the FINA Bureau -- essentially its committee - to 38 percent.

"This is a big and significant step. Of course, there is more work to do; our target must be a 50-50 split," said Al-Musallam. "Today's vote brings us closer to this goal."



Houston (1-11-1) appeared in position to end a seven-game losing streak after Dak Prescott threw an interception inside the Dallas 10 with 5:37 to go and the Texans leading by three. But the Cowboys (10-3) stiffened against a makeshift Texans offense, stuffing backup quarterback Jeff Driskel on a fourth-down run to give Prescott another shot starting just outside his own goal line.

New York Jets 12-20 Buffalo Bills

Josh Allen threw a touchdown pass and ran for a score on consecutive possessions and the Buffalo Bills persevered through wet, chilly and windy conditions to beat a banged-up Mike White and the AFC East-rival New York Jets.

The AFC-leading Bills (10-3) won their fourth straight since a two-game skid, which included a 20-17 loss at the Jets. The Jets (7-6) have lost four of six in a slump that has made their playoff chances shaky. New York, who haven't qualified for the postseason since 2010, entered the week as the AFC's seventh seed, a win ahead of New England and the Los Angeles Chargers. New York were undone by having White briefly sidelined twice by injuries to his ribs. As a precaution, coach Robert Saleh said White was sent to the hospital after the game to be evaluated.

Kansas City Chiefs 34-28 Denver Broncos

L'Jarius Sneed intercepted Broncos backup quarterback Brett Rypien late in the fourth quarter, Patrick Mahomes atoned for a three-interception day by leading Kansas City on a clock-chewing drive, and the Chiefs held on for a win over Denver, who lost QB Russell Wilson to a concussion.

The Chiefs (10-3) extended their dominance of Denver with their 14th consecutive win over the Broncos (3-10), who made a game of it by scoring three touchdowns in a four-minute stretch spanning halftime after falling behind 27-0. Mahomes threw for 352 yards and three touchdowns, including a no-look hook pass on one of Jerick McKinnon's two TD receptions.



Popovici Among Star Cast For World Championships

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Swimming's new teenage sensation David Popovici insists he will be an underdog at the World Short Course Championships in Australia this week, saying he's still looking to gain experience.

The 18-year-old Romanian is the sport's hottest young prospect and a headline draw at the event in Melbourne from last evening.

His star has rapidly risen after a phenomenal year that saw him smash the long course 100m freestyle world record, touching in 46.86 seconds at the European Championships in August.

It sliced 0.05sec off the old mark held by Brazilian Cesar Cielo since 2009, set in the era of buoyant body suits.

The heroics came after Popovici became the first man to complete the 100m/200m freestyle double at the World Championships in nearly 50 years, burgeoning his reputation as early gold medal favourite for the Paris 2024 Olympics.

But short course swimming, held in a 25-metre pool instead of the usual 50, with more emphasis on the turns, is not something he's accustomed to.

"I don't think it's a bluff to say that I don't like swimming short course events, I am sort of built for long course competition," he said on the eve of the championships.

"The turns and starts are more intense in short course, so this is a great opportunity to gather information and to gain experience and to be the best version that I can be."



Ronaldo Dedication to Portugal Unchanged

DOHA (Dispatches) - Cristiano Ronaldo said that he had always been dedicated to being a part of the Portuguese national team, which was knocked out of the World Cup a day earlier, but he was coy about his future in the national side.

The 37-year-old, a five-times Ballon D'Or winner, had arrived in Qatar with a mission to prove he could still make a difference on his national team. He ended the tournament, however, coming on as a second-half substitute in Portugal's 1-0 quarter-final loss to Morocco.

"I just want you all to know that much has been said, much has been written, much has

been speculated, but my dedication to Portugal has not changed for a moment," Ronaldo said in a Facebook post.

"I was always one more person fighting for everyone's goal and I would never turn my back on my teammates and my country."

Before the World Cup, he had refused to say whether the tournament in Qatar would be his last and said he was already looking ahead to the 2024 European Championship. His Facebook post on Sunday, however, ended on an ambiguous note.

"For now, there's not much more to say. Thank you, Portugal. Thank you, Qatar. The dream was beautiful while it lasted... Now, we have to let time be a good adviser and allow everyone to draw their own conclusions," he wrote.

Brazil's Best Shooters Should Have Taken Penalties First

AL RAYYAN (Dispatches) - Brazil's quarter-final defeat on penalties came as a huge shock after the tournament favorites were knocked out by Croatia but the South American side lost because their best shooters did not step up first in the shootout, Juergen Klinsmann said on Monday.

Croatia, the 2018 runners-up, stunned Brazil 4-2 on penalties after Marquinhos and Rodrygo failed to convert.

Brazil's joint all-time top scorer Neymar -- who was fifth in line in the shootout -- did not even get the opportunity to take his penalty after his team mates missed.

"We were freaking out, it was real drama. We tried to discuss the difference between the drama from the Brazil game compared to the Argentina v Netherlands game and we came up with some ideas," Klinsmann said at a Technical Study Group briefing.

"After conceding the equaliser in the 117th minute, Brazil had no time to switch gears. From the disappointment of conceding a last minute goal to the penalty shootout, there was no time to settle and approach the shootout positively.

"For Brazil, they should have maybe put their best shooter first, set the tone with the best penalty taker you have and then go down the rankings." That was not the case with their South American rivals Argentina, however, who recovered from the shock of conceding a last-gasp equaliser in normal time to the Netherlands before prevailing 4-3 in the shootout.

Lionel Messi was the first to step up for Argentina and converted his penalty with aplomb, immediately putting pressure on the Dutch as Emiliano Martinez saved the first two Dutch penalties from Virgil van Dijk and Steven Berghuis.



Wood Fires England to Series Win Over Pakistan

MULTAN (Dispatches) - Mark Wood grabbed four Pakistan wickets to give England a hard-fought 26-run win in the second Test in Multan and take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

The fast bowler finished with 4-65 as Pakistan were dismissed for 328 about 50 minutes after lunch on day four, having been set a challenging 355-run target.

Wood, who missed England's 74-run win in the first Test in Rawalpindi with a hip injury, turned the match in England's favor with the wickets of Mohammad Nawaz (45) and Saud Shakeel (94) in the space of 12 balls and one run.

Pakistan slumped to 291-7 at lunch, and after the break Agha Salman (20 not out) and Abrar Ahmed (17) tried to hit out for an unlikely win to keep the series alive.

But James Anderson had Ahmed caught, Wood dismissed Zahid Mahmood without scoring and Ollie Robinson ended the match with the wicket of number eleven Mohammad Ali for zero, sparking celebrations in the England camp.

Anderson and Robinson took two wickets apiece. The win gives England their eighth win in the nine Tests since Brendon McCullum took over as head coach and Ben Stokes as captain in May this year.

Those victories have been built around "Bazball", a term coined from McCullum's nickname, and describing the aggressive free-wheeling approach the New Zealander has instilled in the side since taking over.

England are now world champions in the 50-over and T20 versions of the game and rapidly ascending the Test rankings ladder. This becomes England's third series win in Pakistan after victories 1961 and 2000 -- although they haven't toured in 17 years because of security issues.

